Choosing Colleges in a Post-Affirmative Action Era:
Black Students' Perceptions of Institutional Diversity and Campus Climate

by

Kelly E. Slay

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Higher Education)
in the University of Michigan
2017

Doctoral Committee:

      Assistant Professor Julie R. Posselt, Co-Chair, University of Southern California
      Professor Phillip J. Bowman, Co-Chair
      Professor Tabbye Chavous
      Vice Provost Kedra Ishop, Office of Enrollment Management
      Assistant Professor Awilda Rodriguez

Kelly E. Slay

slayk@umich.edu

ORCID iD: 0000-0003-1303-4691

Dedication

To my grandparents, Delois, Charles, Pearlene & Henry:

It is on your shoulders that I stand. With this dissertation, I honor your sacrifice and prayers.

To each of my 13 nieces and nephews,

I hope my journey has made you see beyond the limits that others will try to place upon you. I pray that you always remember that with God all things are possible.

To Chandler, my future Michigan Wolverine:

Your admiration and respect has been a source of motivation throughout this project. Your love for the University of Michigan has compelled me to do all that I can to make it a more diverse and inclusive place for you and the next generation of Black students who will step foot on this campus.

Finally, to each of the Black undergraduate students who I have mentored over the past 6 years and the 35 student participants I interviewed for this study:

Thank you. You have given more to me than you realize. I hope this dissertation honors your truth.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Appendices

Abstract

Highly selective public institutions affected by affirmative action bans have struggled to enroll Black students despite myriad attempts at alternative strategies. Bans likely shift university recruitment practices and shape both campus climate and portrayals of institutional commitment to diversity. Increasingly public racial incidents on college campuses suggest the possibility that Black students' underrepresentation in selective post-affirmative action contexts may also be a function of choice—Black students' decision to opt out of institutions they do not perceive to be diverse or inclusive.

I conducted an in-depth case study focusing on practices used to encourage Black student enrollment as well as Black students' appraisals of institutional commitment to diversity and racial climate—both underexplored—as a way to understand the enrollment decisions of Black students admitted to the University of Michigan, a battleground for affirmative action. Guided by an interdisciplinary framework that incorporates models of college choice and social identity theories, including social identity threat and racial identity and concentrating on the yield stage of the admissions cycle, I interviewed 35 Black students (15 enrolled at U-M; 20 enrolled elsewhere) and 16 university professionals across four departments engaged in yield recruitment. I also observed 23 hours of yield events.

From the institutional perspective, I found that enrollment professionals were engaged in impression management—efforts to shape admitted Black students' positive impressions of the university, particularly with respect to diversity and climate. Targeted yield recruitment events and activities were one set of tactics to manage Black students' impressions. The discourse used

in those events represented another set of tactics. Perhaps signaling compliance with the state's affirmative action ban and awareness of the hostile climate for race-conscious policy, "diversity" was referred to broadly and communicated differently depending on the racial/ethnic identity of the enrollment professional as well as the demographic make-up of the student audience.

My findings from the student perspective highlight how Black students' perceptions of key race and diversity cues from the campus context they encountered during their recruitment experiences were significant in shaping their appraisals of the University of Michigan. The majority of participants expressed concern about the small size of the Black undergraduate population and perceived some level of potential threat (e.g., discrimination and racism) associated with their racial identity. However, among the 20 non-enrollees, only in a few instances were their impressions about diversity or racial climate the deciding factor in their decision to decline admission from the University of Michigan. Among the sample of enrollees, a large portion acknowledged their apprehensions about student racial diversity but still opted to enroll, citing their intention to leverage Black student organizations and cultivate community with same-race peers in order to mitigate potential threats and successfully navigate the stressful campus environment as a Black student.

Findings have theoretical implications for understanding the complex interplay between racial identity and consciousness of institutional barriers in college choice. Findings also have implications for enrollment management practices and efforts to increase the representation of Black students in selective, post-affirmative action contexts and in predominantly white institutions, broadly. By highlighting the recruitment activities undertaken to yield Black students and the individual perspectives of Black admitted students, the study also contributes to

a small body of literature on recruitment in higher education and deepens our understanding of

contemporary sociopolitical issues affecting Black students' college choice.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the edited volume, *The Racial Crisis in American Higher Education*, education historian James Anderson wrote that for America, the turn of the twenty-first century represented a "crossroads regarding the higher education of its students of color." The elimination of affirmative action policies, he warned, "would probably take African American and Latina/o enrollments at selective colleges most of the way back to the early 1960s levels…we cannot afford to turn back the clock…" (Anderson, 2002, p. 18). Though published more than a decade ago, the racial crisis that Anderson and his coauthors wrote about is very much upon us. The nation is currently undergoing a rapid demographic shift in which communities of color comprise a large and growing share of the U.S. population (Cohn & Caumont, 2016), contemporary forms of racism targeting these communities pervade institutional structures (Alexander, 2010; Pager, Western & Bonikowski, 2009; Perez, 2015), and by many accounts, American higher education is more racially and socioeconomically stratified today than any time in recent history (Ashkenas, Park & Pearce, 2017; Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Roach, 2013).

Since the mid-1990s, around the time when coordinated anti-affirmative action efforts emerged, a rising share of White students have attended the most selective colleges they can gain access to (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). Meanwhile, Black and Latino students remain concentrated at the least-funded, less-and non-selective institutions (Carnevale, & Strohl, 2013; Iloh & Toldson, 2013). Amid these changes, racial diversity has become a watchword in higher education, as articulated in mission

statements and enacted through various strategies (Berrey, 2011; Chang, 2002; Moses & Chang, 2006; Rowley, Hurtado, & Ponjuan, 2002; Wolfenden, 2013). But beyond this articulation Espinosa, Gaertner and Orfield (2015) point out that a gap remains between our increasingly diverse society and the diversity reflected in selective institutions in the U.S. This is especially the case when we critically examine Black students' enrollment in the most selective institutions (Ashkenas et al., 2017). Many African Americans[1] have benefitted from race-conscious affirmative action (Allen, 1988; Bowen & Bok, 1998; Long, 2004; Grodsky & Kalogrides, 2008) and have, by some estimates, suffered considerably from the gradual scaling back of these policies at public institutions (Garces, 2013; Grodsky & Kurlaendar, 2010; Jaquette, Curs, & Posselt, 2015; Kidder, 2013; Orfield et al., 2007). The stark declines in their enrollment comes at a time when aspirations for college are universal across racial/ethnic and socioeconomic groups (Goyette, 2008), Blacks enjoy greater overall access to postsecondary education (Posselt, Jaquette, Bielby & Bastedo, 2012), and their level of academic preparation for college has actually improved relative to previous decades (St John, Hu, & Fisher, 2010).

Black Enrollment in Post-Affirmative Contexts

While rising college costs have undoubtedly contributed to inequities in selective enrollment (Morrison, 2015), the growing retrenchment of race-conscious admissions policies—evidenced by pending court cases (Mencimer, 2016) and existing measures in nine states which ban affirmative action in higher education (Garces, 2014)—has had widespread implications at the undergraduate (e.g., Backes, 2012; Blume & Long, 2014;

---

[1] Black and African American are used interchangeably in this study as individuals may identify indiscriminately as "Black" and/or "African American." This study is primarily concerned with the unique experiences of oppression associated with African American identity in the US context. I recognize, however, that in some instances, Black individuals from other nationalities and ethnic identities may also

2

Hinrichs, 2012; Long, Saenz & Tienda, 2010; Palmer & Wood, 2013) and graduate levels

(Garces, 2012, 2013; Karabel, 1998). Among the growing number of institutions that

comply with affirmative action bans, the challenge to increase Black enrollment is

particularly acute at the most selective colleges (Backes, 2012; Howell, 2010;

Kahlenberg, 2014). Highly selective public institutions such as the University of

California-Berkeley, University of California - Los Angeles, and the University of

Michigan, have each struggled to enroll Black students despite their espoused

commitment to diversity and myriad attempts at alternative admissions and recruitment

practices (Agronow & Horn, 2010; Brown, Rashid, & Stern, 2010; Kaufmann, 2007;

Potter, 2014; Orfield et al., 2007; Roksa, Grodsky, & Hom, 2010). In fall 2015, Black

students made up just 2 percent of new freshman enrollment at UC Berkeley and 4

percent at UCLA (Ashkenas et al., 2017; Office of Planning & Analysis, 2015). In an

amicus brief filed in support of the University of Texas in the U.S. Supreme Court case,

Fisher vs. Texas, UC system administrators described the efficacy of their race-neutral

admissions policies:

> They have not enabled the University of California fully to reverse the precipitous
> decline in minority admission and enrollment that followed the enactment of
> Proposition 209, nor to keep pace with the growing population of
> underrepresented minorities in the applicant pool of qualified high school
> graduates. These effects have been most severe and most difficult to reverse at the
> University's most highly- ranked and competitive campuses (p. 15).

Likewise, at the University of Michigan, an institution that has been at the center

of the affirmative action debate in the past decade (Anderson, 2007; Garces & Cogburn,

2015), top administrators have acknowledged considerable challenges with ending and

reversing the historic decline in racial diversity (Coleman, 2010; Vegas, 2014). Since

2006, when voters approved a statewide affirmative action ban, Black, Latino, and

Native-American student enrollment has continued to fall[2] (Geva, 2014). In 2015, Black undergraduate enrollment was only 4.6 percent--the lowest in more than 30 years-- despite an increase in the Black college-age population in the state of Michigan (Fessenden & Keller, 2015; Lucas-Myers, 2014). Through an in-depth case study of institutional recruitment and yield and Black students' college choice at the University of Michigan, this dissertation aims to more fully understand persistently low Black enrollment at highly selective campuses[3] where affirmative action is banned.

Perspectives on Black Underenrollment in Highly Selective Institutions

Recent scholarship suggests at least two plausible explanations for persistent underenrollment by Black students in highly selective universities. The more studied narrative positions the university as the agent and underrepresentation as an access issue, while another positions Black students as agents and underrepresentation as a matter of patterns in their college choice. Indeed, the vast majority of research investigating the effects of affirmative action bans has focused on the implications for access to higher education for historically underrepresented groups using quantitative methods. Card and Krueger (2005) noted, for example, that admission rates of Black and Latino students in Texas and California fell by 30-50% from 1996-1998—the years immediately following the states' affirmative action bans.

---

[2] In the Fall 2015, the University of Michigan enrolled its most racially diverse freshman cohort since 2005. "Underrepresented minority" students made up 12.8% of the class. This amounts to 746 students out of 6,071, including 298 Black students.

[3] In focusing on selective institutions, my aim is not to affirm their position in prestige hierarchies. It is to highlight the stark inequities in Black student enrollment that exist at these institutions compared to non-, less- and moderately selective campuses and relative to their White and Asian peers. In addition, severe underrepresentation of Black students in public selective institutions raises questions about the public mission of these campuses and the ability of campuses to prepare the next generation of racially diverse leaders in the U.S.

Researchers have also studied admission practices, such as the effect of changing relative weights of application criteria in the admissions calculus (Long & Tienda, 2008; Potter, 2014). Admissions and enrollment staff at selective institutions have implemented this strategy, recognizing perhaps, that access to a rigorous college preparatory curriculum is tied to "historical, deep, systematic, and persistent inequities" (Allen, Bonous-Hammarth, & Teranishi, 2002, p. 1) in K-12 education and therefore is unequally distributed across race (Alon & Tienda, 2007; Perna, 2005; Perna, May, Yee, Ransom, Rodriguez & Fester, 2015; Solórzano & Ornelas, 2004).[4] Scholars have also examined admissions strategies aimed at emphasizing geographic and socioeconomic diversity such as the Top Ten Percentage Plan in Texas, which was implemented to mitigate the effects of affirmative action bans on access to opportunity and racial diversity at the state's public flagship campuses (Long, Saenz & Tienda, 2010). The results of the policy have been mixed at best, with researchers noting unintended consequences and the challenge with restoring racial diversity to pre-affirmative action ban levels (Harris & Tienda, 2010; Tienda, 2010, 2014).

Additional studies that emphasize underrepresentation as a matter of access indicate the ways in which selective, ban-compliant institutions prioritize conventional indicators of merit in undergraduate admissions, which negatively affects students of color (Contreras, 2005; Espinosa, Gaertner & Orfield, 2015; Santos, Cabrera, & Fosnacht, 2010). A recent study conducted by the American Council on Education

---

[4] Sociologists of stratification have also maintained that underrepresentation in higher education is a function of social origins wherein the relationship between class and race shapes K-12 curricular tracks that are accessible to students, higher education attainment and the status or quality (or selectivity) of the institutions students then attend. See, for example: Elman (2004); Lucas (2001); Grodsky & Jackson (2009); and Wells & Oakes (1996).

revealed that "among institutions that do not consider race in admissions standards, 76 percent and 54 percent place considerable importance on cumulative GPA and on SAT or ACT scores, respectively" (Espinosa et al., 2015, p. 36). Posselt and colleagues (2012) also found in their longitudinal analysis of selective college enrollment that, over time, "escalating" standards at selective institutions has disproportionately disadvantaged Black and Latino applicants in the admissions process (p. 1076). Students of color may, today, be more academically qualified than in previous cohorts, but so are today's White and Asian students, therefore contributing to the preservation of institutional stratification by race. Even leadership of extra-curricular activities, an integral factor in holistic admissions at selective campuses (Stevens, 2009) has worked to preserve racial disparities in selective enrollment (Posselt et al., 2012). "When elite universities began to use participation in structured activities as part of their assessment of students' merit for admission, it became a mechanism for stratification'' (Bennett, Lutz & Jayaram, 2012, p. 48). In short, the "access" narrative—explored most often through quantitative analyses—has characterized higher education institutions as the arbiter of access and the persistent underrepresentation of Black students at selective campuses as a direct consequence of (1) admissions practices that privilege factors related to racial inequities in K-12 education and/or (2) the law—of affirmative action bans themselves.

College Choice: An Additional Perspective

Institutional data and research on enrollment (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009; Hoxby & Avery, 2012; Kidder, 2012; Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka, 2011; Rodriguez, 2015; Wilbur, 2010) suggests a second explanation for persistent underenrollment by Black students in highly selective universities, which this study will

be among the first to empirically examine. This perspective suggests that inequities in Black enrollment at selective institutions may, in part, be a function of student choice. That is, compared to when affirmative action was legally permissible, more academically competitive Black students may *not choose* to apply to or even accept admission offers from highly selective institutions like the University of Michigan (Brown, 2006; Card & Krueger, 2005; Dickson, 2006; Kidder, 2012; Long, 2004). In the wake of affirmative action bans, researchers found changes in the selectivity of the institutions to which minority applicants sent their SAT test scores (Long, 2004; Thomas, 2004). Revisions to admissions policy also appears to have shifted where students submitted college applications (Grodsky & Kurlaendar, 2010), particularly in Texas where the Percentage Plan is said to have caused "acute crowding due both to a substantial rise in the number of applicants…and a shift in institutional preferences of top-decile graduates" (Long & Tienda, 2010, p. 63). Brown and Hirschmann's (2006) analysis of the implications of Washington state's affirmative action ban provides evidence that the decline in applications among Black, Latino, and Native American students was found to be the "primary mechanism" for the observed decrease in student of color enrollment at the state's flagship campus (p. 122).

Research Scope and Questions

There is also evidence that "yield"–the percentage of admitted applicants who actually matriculate—may be an additional choice-related factor contributing to low Black enrollment at UC Berkeley, UCLA, and the University of Michigan (Wilbur, 2005; Geiser & Caspary, 2005; Kidder, 2012). In California, for example, a "majority-minority" state where affirmative action was banned in 1996, data from the University of California

(UC) is illustrative: 58 percent of Black students admitted to the Berkeley campus between 2006 and 2010 elected to enroll elsewhere (Allen-Taylor, 2013). In the UC system, broadly, the decline has been the greatest at UCLA, where the yield rate for Black students in the top third of the admit pool dropped by two-thirds (24% to 8%) in the "post-Proposition 209 era" (1998-2011) compared to the pre-Proposition 209 era (1994-1997, Kidder, 2012). What is more, from 1998 to 2011, there have been thirteen instances across the UC system where there was a zero percent yield rate for Black students in the top third of the admit pool[5] (Kidder, 2012)—an occurrence "simply unheard of at any campus" during the state's strong affirmative action era (p. 24). At the University of Michigan, officials switched to the Common Application in 2011, in hopes that, among other things, it would help them to attract more diverse students (Thomas, 2009). Indeed, it has generated record numbers of applicants since 2011. However, this increase in volume has not translated to a significant boost in Black enrollment (Woodhouse, 2014). In an email to the UM community in 2014, Martha Pollack, Provost at the time, discussed the challenge of yield:

> We also recognize that, despite our increased efforts, the percentage of underrepresented minority students on campus has fallen noticeably in the last few years...We know, for instance, that some prospective underrepresented minority students who are accepted by the university choose to enroll elsewhere, and we recognize that we need to take action, within the law, to encourage those students to enroll here (M. Pollack, personal communication, January 16, 2014).

---

[5] From 1998-2011: Berkeley (3), Davis (2), San Diego (5), Santa Barbara (2), and Santa Cruz (1) (Kidder, 2012).

Exploring the factors and conditions contributing to Black students' yield, and consequently, their underrepresentation in selective institutions affected by affirmative action bans, is the primary aim of this dissertation study.

Diversity and racial climate. What factors affect Black students' matriculation decisions in selective, post-affirmative action contexts? Institutional data on yield and a number of recent highly publicized racial incidents targeting Black students on predominantly white college campuses (including campuses affected by affirmative action legal measures) suggests the possibility that an unwelcoming campus climate, especially in predominantly white settings where affirmative action is banned, may be an important consideration for Black students admitted to these institutions (Allen-Taylor, 2013; Byng, 2013; Contreras, Chapman & Comeaux, 2016; Vega, 2014). Given that institutional commitment to diversity is associated with increased recruitment of students of color (Alger, 1988), challenges with yielding Black students at selective public universities may have as much or even more to do with these students' perceptions of a hostile campus racial climate or an ambiguous institutional commitment to diversity than does rising admissions standards. In other words, organizational factors related to racial diversity—from the campus racial climate to messaging around institutional priorities for diversity may be consequential for prospective Black students.

The current study proposes that admitted Black students may be *opting out* of institutions like the University of Michigan, UCLA, and UC-Berkeley in favor of those they perceive to be less threatening or safer options for Blacks—places that are more inclusive, racially diverse and that have strong diversity policies (Allen-Taylor, 2013; Kidder, 2012; Oteri & Malaney, 1990; Teranishi & Briscoe, 2008; Tobolowsky, Outcalt,

& McDonough, 2005; Wilbur, 2010). The opting out hypothesis would explain why, in 2015, Black enrollment at some Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) surged after years of decline (Strauss, 2016). Taken together, Black students' recruitment experiences and perceptions of the college environments they are considering may determine their college choice and consequently, shape racial diversity in selective post-affirmative action contexts and beyond (Long & Tienda, 2010).

And yet, little empirical research exists on the relationship between affirmative action and college choice although affirmative action bans necessarily shift enrollment management practices, including undergraduate yield-recruitment. These practices are critical strategies for improving diversity (Espinosa et al., 2015) and in the cycle of admissions and enrollment cycle, typically precede students' final college choice. Insights from diversity recruitment of Black employees in corporate contexts suggests that the information conveyed to students through these practices (Avery et al., 2013; Avery & McKay, 2006; Braddy, Meade, & Kroustalis, 2006), as it relates to campus diversity will help determine where highly qualified Black students choose to attend college. However, yield recruitment activities used to encourage admitted students' matriculation decision or choice, including any messages about diversity communicated in such activities, is understudied in higher education, particularly in post-affirmative action contexts.

The phenomenon of college choice has contributed to hundreds of studies investigating the antecedents, processes, and outcomes associated with these decisions (Kinzie et al., 2004), but only a small number of studies have explored college choice or the "college destinations" of admitted students considering institutions affected

10

affirmative action bans (Contreras et al., 2016; Geiser & Caspary, 2005; Kidder, 2012; Santos et al., 2010; Teranishi & Briscoe, 2008; Tobolowsky et al., 2005; Wilbur, 2010). Interestingly, each of these studies is situated in California and no study of college choice, to my knowledge, empirically examines institutional yield on admissions offers as a function of students' interactions with and perceptions of institutions that admit them.

Recognizing the dearth of research on affirmative action and college choice, Natour, Locks, & Bowman (2012) argued more research must "clarify how the anti-affirmative action debate and sociopolitical climate may affect students' college choice through their personal appraisals of institutional characteristics such as campus racial climate, commitment to institutional diversity, and numerical diversity…" (p. 130). These aspects of the college campus have been a source of contention in affirmative action litigation and increasing peril for matriculating Black students at predominantly White institutions (Barnes, 2015; Hartocollis & Bidgood, 2015). Cho, Lee, Hudley, Barry, and Kelly (2008) also pointed out that "the specific influence of psychosocial factors (e.g., perceived social relations on campus) remains the least understood area of the college choice process" (p. 97). College choice research has done well to characterize trends and factors associated with choice across racial groups; however, within-group differences are woefully understudied. For instance, we do not have a sense for how and why racial identity versus racial categories (and other individual differences) shape Black students' decision-making considerations although this highly individual process has critical implications for the ways in which Black students may differentially experience and respond to structural and individual level racial barriers. These barriers are particularly

salient in predominantly white contexts (particularly selective institutions affected by affirmative action bans) where Black students are severely underrepresented.

With these critical gaps in student decision-making in mind—both from the student and institutional perspective—this dissertation study examines the nature of Black students' college choice in a post-affirmative action context, the University of Michigan, and its consequences for their representation at elite public universities that are prohibited from using race-conscious affirmative action. Using case study methodology, I will answer the following questions:

(1) Since the passage of Proposal 2, how has the University of Michigan conveyed institutional commitment to diversity in its efforts to yield Black admitted undergraduate students?

(2) How do Black admitted students perceive the University's institutional commitment to diversity and the broader campus racial climate in their college choice process?

(3) What explains divergence in students' perceptions of institutional commitment to diversity and broader campus climate?

(4) How do Black admitted students' perceptions of threat or safety shape their college choice?

Question (1) emphasizes the institutional perspective and questions (2) through (4) focus on the student perspective, both of which are needed to capture my primary interest: how students read and respond to the university behavior, including portrayals of its commitment to diversity and the campus climate it creates, given the conditions imposed by the statewide affirmative action ban.

Contributions of the Research

This dissertation makes important contributions to research, policy, and enrollment management practice. Empirically, this study distinguishes changes in admissions policies, mainly an access issue necessitating conventional policy analyses (Posselt et al., 2012), and students' college choice decisions (Brown & Hirschmann, 2006; Natour et al., 2012) as distinct phenomenon contributing to inequities in selective Black enrollment. This dissertation study is also among a few to examine college choice in a post-affirmative action context and the only one, to my knowledge, that investigates the role of yield recruitment practices and students' perceptions of the institutional environment (i.e., campus climate and diversity commitments) as factors shaping their enrollment choice. Additionally, as outlined in Chapter Four, this study will employ a case-based, multi-method approach to allow for an in-depth understanding of the college environment and the ways in which it might shape *how* and *why* Black students choose to enroll at the University of Michigan or, alternatively, opt to go elsewhere. This is a marked contribution to existing college choice studies which tend to focus more on students' background characteristics, including family and high school factors, and less on how students individually respond to and interpret various aspects of the institutional context.

Conceptually, the study integrates psychological theoretical concepts to help explain student choice. To date, predominant college choice models have been grounded in sociological and economic constructs (i.e., Hossler & Gallagher, 1987, Perna, 2006), although decision-making is inherently a psychological process (Beresford & Sloper, 2008). Psychological constructs rooted in social identity theory offer promising insights

for studying college choice since they have been applied to understand related phenomena: unique experiences implicit in group identities; experiences of college-aged populations; how individuals perceive new settings and domains; and how these perceptions influence behavioral responses (London, Ahlqvist, Gonzalez, & Glanton, 2014; Major & O'Brien, 2005). Further, as I alluded to earlier in this chapter, the focus on racial identity and individual differences advances college choice research beyond the mere inclusion of race as a categorical variable, an approach that facilitates comparative analyses across groups but "does little to inform about characteristics of individuals within those groups and their interactions with the college environment that may help explain their educational experiences and outcomes" (Chavous, 2000, p. 80). The inclusion of racial identity adds complexity to the analysis and claims that are made.

The practical and policy-relevant contributions of this study are also important to note. Amid legal mandates imposed by affirmative action bans and growing concerns about the future of race-conscious affirmative action in higher education, "the means by which institutions can legally build diversity are changing and require, now more than ever, cohesive institutional strategies, including research and investment in new approaches" (Espinosa et al., 2015, p. 50). Recent data from the American Council on Education's 2015 survey of 338 institutions, including 19 that do not consider race in admissions practices, reveal that yield initiatives are widely used by institutions and were considered more effective than other enrollment management strategies intended to support racial diversity yet very little research exists on these practices. Therefore, the dissertation study will contribute to a sparse empirical literature on college recruitment that may offer critical insights to enrollment managers and diversity leaders on how to

recruit and retain a racially diverse class.

Plan for the Dissertation

This manuscript begins with an orienting context for the study. In Chapter 2, I discuss seminal affirmative action cases and their implications for higher education to illuminate three key characteristic of the post-affirmative action context in which the current study is situated. Also in this chapter, I highlight the role of the University of Michigan in affirmative action and diversity policy developments and introduce the relationship between campus diversity, climate, and college choice in selective institutions affected by legal measures that ban affirmative action. In Chapter Three, I provide a critical review of college choice empirical research and present the interdisciplinary conceptual framework guiding the study. In Chapter Four, I explain my methodological approach and describe sampling, data sources, and analytical techniques. I present findings from the institutional perspective examined in this study in Chapter Five, and those that characterize the student perspective in Chapter Six. Finally, in Chapter Seven, I discuss key themes from both of these perspectives. I also outline implications for practice and avenues for future research.

Chapter 2: Characterizing the Prop 2 Post-Affirmative Action Era

The complicated story of America's past with respect to broadening access to higher education for African Americans, especially in the most selective colleges and universities, cannot be adequately explained without understanding the development of historic diversity efforts in higher education and the fight to preserve affirmative action. And in such efforts, the University of Michigan has played a defining role. *Writ large,* few policies have been more instrumental in the diversification of higher education than has race-conscious affirmative action. Yet, over its lifetime, affirmative action has been fraught with legal challenges and public debates about the importance of race and diversity in higher education, as well as the policy's constitutionality (Garces, 2014; Kennedy, 2013; Skrentny, 1996).

While a full exposition of diversity policy and legal developments over the past few decades are outside the scope of this chapter, a discussion of seminal affirmative action cases and their implications for higher education helps illuminate aspects of the current post-affirmative action era that institutions and students must increasingly navigate—an era that encapsulates the context in which this dissertation study is situated. Drawing upon historical studies, empirical literature, and journalistic evidence, I review affirmative action's "past" and "present" and describe the organizational conditions at selective campuses that recent court cases have helped to create. I contend that much like the early years of affirmative action, when universities struggled to adapt and expand race-conscious efforts, the retrenchment of related policies and practices on college

campuses has consequences for the enrollment of prospective Black students who are increasingly attuned to the diversity commitments and racial climate of the institutions they are considering (Kidder, 2012; Teranishi & Briscoe, 2008; Strauss, 2016; Tobolowsky et al., 2005).

Early Affirmative Action Policies and Practices: 1960s - 1980s

Early affirmative action efforts were grounded in the need to address racial inequities that were created by racial segregation policies and other exclusionary laws (Skrentny, 1996). Despite substantive educational policy efforts in the 1950s and 1960s to create educational access and equity (e.g., *Brown v. Board*), academically qualified Black students were often denied admission to predominantly white colleges and universities and their position with respect to selective institutions was "even more marginal than in higher education as a whole" (Bowen & Bok, 1988, p. 4). In a June 1965 commencement speech at Howard University, President Lyndon B. Johnson delivered his famous justification for moving beyond nondiscrimination to more *affirmative* efforts for Black Americans and other groups that were underrepresented in employment and education sectors:

> You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line in a race and then say, 'you are free to compete with all the others', and still justly believe that you have been completely fair (LBJ Presidential Library, 2013)

President Johnson's unprecedented support for race conscious affirmative action policy catalyzed legal measures that sought to improve employment opportunities and ensure access to higher education for racial minorities and women—areas in which they were

17

underrepresented.

Buttressed by subsequent executive orders and court rulings (Garces, 2014), these laws expanded postsecondary choices for African American students who, up until this point, only had access to historically black colleges and universities (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009; Tierney, 1997). College enrollment among African American students tripled between 1966 and 1977 (Hossler, 1986), and by 1978, more than 50 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded to African Americans were conferred by PWIs (Anderson, 1984; Allen, 1988). In the absence of *de jure* (government sanctioned) segregation, many of the nation's leading institutions embraced begrudgingly an "ideological commitment" (Bowen & Bok, 1998, p. 10) that led them to recruit underrepresented students and implement race-conscious admissions (Grodsky & Kalogrides, 2008).

Despite the initial threat to affirmative action brought on by *Bakke*[6]*,* the Supreme Court upheld support for campus diversity through race-conscious practices. Of the four rationales for supporting race-conscious practices brought forward, only the diversity rationale—the ways in which racial and ethnic diversity contribute to the mission and quality of education (Liu, 1998)—was ruled to be constitutional (Garces, 2014). No longer allowed to expressly consider the effects of societal discrimination or racial inequities as part of the justification for race-conscious policies (be they quotas or other means), colleges that sought to expand access for underrepresented populations had to focus on a broader notion of diversity of which race could only be one of several factors they considered (Bell, 2001; Bowen & Bok, 1998; Garces, 2014; Moses & Chang, 2006;

---

[6] *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978) (the first legal challenge to affirmative action) involved a challenge to the University of California at Davis School of Medicine's consideration of race in its admissions decisions wherein the medical school's admissions policy reserved 16 of 100 places for minority students. The present effects of past injustice were ruled in *Bakke* a non-constitutional basis for affirmative action.

Synott, 2005). However, for a couple of reasons, increasing the representation of students of color, particularly African American students, proved to be a difficult challenge (Allen, 1988; Love, 1993).

First, the political atmosphere for affirmative action shifted in the 1980s, becoming progressively hostile. Political leaders and candidates, in appealing to middle-class white voters, increasingly referred to affirmative action as "quotas" or "reverse discrimination" although *Bakke* had already prohibited colleges from using such measures in 1978 (Edley, 2010). This recast of the policy was not inconsequential. Second, institutions were struggling with the practical implications of affirmative action. In administrators' narrow focus on recruitment and race-conscious admissions practices, they failed to consider the impact that institutional support structures and campus racial climate might have on attracting and retaining a racially diverse student body (Farrell & Jones, 1988). It was presumed that once students were admitted they would "fit in naturally as earlier groups of newcomers had done" (i.e., Jewish students, Bowen & Bok, p. 6), but quite the opposite proved to be true.

Struggles at the University of Michigan. At the University of Michigan, as elsewhere across the nation, racial tensions flared in the 1970s and 1980s, drawing unwanted local and national attention to the campus (Anderson, 2003). In fact, hundreds of racially charged incidents (e.g., cross burnings, noose hangings, destruction of property, etc.) and reports of discriminatory institutional practices on majority white campuses in the 1980s suggested these institutions were seemingly unprepared to deal with campus climate issues. These issues, in part, resulted from forced integration of racial minority students into historically White spaces (e.g., in classes and residence

19

halls) and inadequate structures in place to support these groups (Allen, 1988; Anderson, 2007; Bowen & Bok, 1998; Farrell & Jones, 1988; Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; (Randolph, 1988). In Ann Arbor, students of color protested race-related incidents and brought public awareness to the gaps in institutional support and the hostile climate they experienced (Anderson, 2007). The University's languishing minority enrollments were jolted occasionally by student activism—the Black Action Movement in the 1970s and the United Coalition Against Racism in the 1980s--but the effects were not sustained (Anderson, 2003).

In 1978, UM's Black enrollment on the Ann Arbor campus had declined to 6.6 percent (matching 1972 enrollment levels) even though administrators presiding over minority recruitment and scholarship programs had promised student activists in 1973 that the University "could be reasonably expected to reach 10 percent" of Black student enrollment by fall 1975 (Anderson, 2003, p. 30). At the monthly Regents' meeting, Vice President for Academic Affairs Harold Shapiro, presented a report stating plausible reasons for this unexpected decline: competition for Black students from other top-ranked colleges and universities and a decrease in graduate fellowships that were reserved for students of color (Anderson, 2003). However, Black students did not share the University's perceptions that the decline in their enrollment was due to social or educational reasons that were outside of the University's control. From their vantage point, the drop in Black enrollment was "inextricably related to a decrease in University support for recruitment, retention and also to what they perceived as a particularly anti-Black campus climate" (Anderson, 2003, p. 32).

Also in 1978, a visit by the U.S. Office of Civil Rights (OCR) exposed the

University's failure to comply with federal affirmative action regulations. Later, a number of commissions and task forces created to "evaluate the plight of underrepresented minority students, including the declining enrollment of Black students," (Anderson, 2003) consistently revealed minority students' perception of the University environment as "hostile" and "not hospitable to minority interests" (p. 49). In particular, a study on the pool of qualified applicants in 1984, known as the "pool study," gave fodder to the idea that the University's "image" and the negative campus racial climate was having an impact on its ability to enroll Black students. Nearly 75 percent of the Black students who met the University's academic qualifications for admission (i.e., grades and test scores) failed to submit applications (Anderson, 2003). And for the University of Michigan and other institutions that managed to enroll Black students, struggles with expanding affirmative action and creating an inclusive environment made them difficult to retain (Blackwell, 1987; Love, 1993). Prospective students—aware of highly public racial campus incidents—often chose *not* to apply or even enroll (Anderson, 2007; Oteri & Malaney, 1993).

Noting what they believed to be the limitations of focusing only on increasing access through affirmative action and conceding "inadequate progress" supporting an increasingly diverse student population, university leaders launched the Michigan Mandate in 1988 --"one of the most comprehensive diversity initiatives ever undertaken by a predominantly White research university" (Roach, 2006). The initiative made diversity and excellence "complementary" pillars of a university-wide strategic effort committed to the recruitment, support, and success of historically underrepresented groups among students, faculty, staff, and leadership. The plan's architect, UM President

James Duderstadt, wanted to create a campus environment that "sought, nourished, and sustained diversity" (Duderstadt, 2007, p.156). To many constituents, the plan was quite controversial. However, Black students, faculty, and staff, who were tired of the low representation of students and faculty of color and the hostile racial environment they encountered, welcomed the plan (Anderson, 2003). This seminal institutional initiative catalyzed diversity efforts in predominantly white institutions across the country, demonstrating the utility of race- and diversity-conscious approaches to creating a more racially diverse and inclusive campus environment. But it was also met with backlash, given the unprecedented nature of such a comprehensive diversity plan at a PWI at the time.

Affirmative Action in the 1990s: The Beginning of the End

Whereas the early stages of affirmative action were marked by considerable challenges for institutions and focused almost exclusively on increasing access to highly selective colleges and universities through race-conscious policies, the late 1980s and 1990s can be described as a time in which affirmative action practices were generally institutionalized (Grodsky & Kalogrides, 2008). In operating within the legal diversity rationale offered by *Bakke*, universities considered race as one of many factors to enhance diversity on college campuses in admissions policy as well as three additional university functions: (1) formalized outreach and recruitment programs; (2) university financial aid in the form of grants, scholarships, fellowships, and student employment opportunities; and (3) retention and campus support programs and initiatives (Orfield, Marin, Flores, Garces, 2007).

At the University of Michigan, the Michigan Mandate helped facilitate significant

progress with respect to achieving and supporting a racially diverse campus community.

The representation of Black students, faculty, and staff more than doubled over the

decade of the effort (Anderson, 2003). Graduation rates for students of color were among

the highest of all public universities, promotion and tenure success of minority faculty

members also improved, and more people of color rose to the university's administrative

ranks (Duderstadt, 2007). Remarkably, a campus that had once endured very public

struggles with issues of race and equity was now a draw for students and faculty of color

from across the country. By all accounts, efforts to extend affirmative action beyond

admissions to more comprehensive efforts, yielded tremendous benefits for *all* students,

particularly African Americans who for so long had experienced isolation, racial

discrimination, and bias on campus (Chang, Astin, and Kim, 2004; Gurin, Biren, &

Lopez, 2004; Hurtado, Dey, Gurin, & Gurin, 2003; Milem & Hakuta, 2000).

      Yet the gains attributed to these institutional efforts were short-lived. By the mid-

1990s, affirmative action policies became increasingly controversial (Grodsky &

Kurlaendar, 2010). Proponents disapproved of how the 1978 *Bakke* decision forced

institutions to turn away from considerations of social justice grounded in a broader

understanding of structural discrimination (Allen & Solórzano 2000, 2001). Critical race

scholar, Derrick Bell (2003) argued, for example, that the shift to a focus on achieving

diversity enabled key actors to avoid directly addressing the racial and class barriers that

hindered applicants and "give undeserved legitimacy to the heavy reliance on

standardized test scores that privilege well-to-do, mainly white applicants" (p. 1630).

The compensatory aspect of affirmative action, and the deep structural change that many

hoped it would bring about, seemed elusive.

Selective public institutions became the primary target for challenges to affirmative action (Green, 2004) as statewide anti-affirmative action campaigns represented another source of contention (Edley, 2010). California became ground zero for the state-level debate and struggle over affirmative action. In November 1996, California voters approved Proposition 209, which amended the California Constitution to prohibit discrimination *and* preferential treatment on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in public employment, public education, and public contracting. Despite its civil rights rhetoric, the initiative would undo the gains underrepresented students of color had made in public education in California. For instance, in 1997, only a single African American student enrolled in UC Berkeley's law school (Edley, 2010). By 2000, measures to ban race-conscious affirmative action in public higher education was law in four states[7] (Moses et al., 2012).

The ultimate battleground for affirmative action. The *Bakke* decision years earlier had effects that continued to reverberate as a succession of legal challenges to affirmative action ensued (Garces, 2014). By extending the Court's strictest review to policies that were implemented to include racial minorities, as opposed to policies that were intended only to exclude racial minorities, the Court equated efforts to advance equality for Blacks and other minoritized populations with efforts that could be discriminatory against whites (Garces, 2014). According to affirmative action legal scholar, Liliana Garces (2014), this shift provided a constitutional justification for individuals to challenge race-conscious policies as discriminatory, particularly against whites—a framing that has been a mainstay in public debates. Indeed in the 1990s,

---

[7] Texas (1996 Hopwood – 5th Circuit Court), California (1996 Prop 209 –voter ban), Washington (1998 - Initiative 200 – voter ban); Florida One Initiative (2000 - Executive Order Approved by legislature).

conservative affirmative action opponents brought lawsuits against four public

institutions (University of Texas Law School; the University of Washington Law School;

the University of Georgia; the University of Michigan College of Literature, Science, and

the Arts; and the University of Michigan Law School), challenging their affirmative

action admissions practices. And while these cases advanced through the legal system,

the University of Michigan cases, in part due to administrators' decision to fight, were the

only two that made their way to the Supreme Court.

Thus, in 1997, the year after James Duderstadt ended his presidency and in the

middle of rising Black enrollment, the University of Michigan in the center of two highly

contentious legal cases, "became the ultimate defendant for race-conscious policies"

(Green, 2004). In *Grutter v. Bollinger,* which involved a challenge to the holistic

admissions policy at the University of Michigan Law School, the Court reaffirmed that

universities may consider race, among other factors, when selecting students. In *Gratz v.*

Bollinger, the Court upheld the value of student body diversity, but decided that the use

of race in the University of Michigan's undergraduate admissions process was not

narrowly tailored to achieve the university's asserted interest in diversity. The law

school's holistic approach was deemed apropos for building a diverse campus, but the

University's undergraduate admissions system of assigning points for certain factors such

as geography, legacy/alumni relationships, and race was ruled unconstitutional (NCSL,

2016).

While some have suggested the 2003 rulings represented a "reprieve" for

affirmative action in higher education (Edley, 2010), the cases actually had immediate

implications for institutional practices, campus climate, and the educational experiences

of Black students. Most explicitly, the decisions solidified *Bakke's* endorsement of the limited use of race in admissions policies. But there were also less obvious, more enduring implications of the rulings.

First, both cases reaffirmed and expanded the "diversity rationale" and the educational benefits of diversity for *all* students (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin, 2002; Moses & Chang, 2006). Unlike *Bakke*, social science research on the importance of diversity played a critical role the legal arguments presented before the Court and in diffusing "diversity" into public consciousness (Garces, 2013; Gurin et al., 2004). In defense of its admissions practices, the University of Michigan commissioned several studies from researchers in various fields (i.e., psychology, sociology, history, and education) to provide empirical support on the educational benefits of diversity and other related outcomes (Gurin et al., 2004). At once, diversity became both a linchpin and a distraction in the fight to preserve affirmative action (Bell, 2001). In writing about the "ascendency of the diversity rationale" after *Grutz* and *Gratter*, Moses and Chang (2006) caution of its widespread use: "At its best it is a strategic and reasonable legal and political comprise; at its worse it allows people to ignore rationale for race-conscious policies based on equality and social justice" (p. 10). Many would argue that over the last decade, with additional cases brought, the latter has been true.

A second related consequence of the 2003 cases is that it prompted University of Michigan administrators to scale back programs and practices that were initially established to create a racially diverse and inclusive campus and were deemed successful. President James Duderstadt (2007) recounts,

26

Even as the university launched the expensive legal battle to defend the use of

race in college admissions following my presidency, it throttled back many of the

effective policies and programs created by the Michigan Mandate, in part out of

concern these might complicate the litigation battle (p. 158).

As a result, the enrollment of underrepresented minorities began almost immediately to

drop, eventually declining from 1996 to 2002 by almost 25% overall and by as much as

50% in some of the professional schools (Duderstadt, 2007). Although some rationalized

these declines by suggesting the publicity given the ligation over admissions policies was

discouraging Black applicants, Duderstadt expresses little doubt that "dismantling" the

University's successful diversity practices set the institution back.

The litigation similarly engendered conservatism around the use of affirmative

action elsewhere (Miksch, 2008), as organizations respond not only to the letter of the

law but to the environment the law creates (Edelman, 1992; Edelman & Suchman, 1997).

Wary of the earnest efforts of a small but powerful group of affirmative action detractors,

university lawyers strongly advised their institutions to comply with a very narrow

interpretation of the Supreme Court rulings as "the safest course" (Duderstadt, 2007, p.

158; Miksch, 2008). Enrollment of Black students declined as institutions broadened

recruitment, financial aid, and academic enrichment programs to include non-minority

students and/or eliminated race-specific programs all together (Duderstadt, 2007). At

selective public institutions, the threat of litigation altered institutional practices and the

suite of programs universities offered to serve underrepresented students of color (Green,

2011; Miksch, 2007; Synnott, 2005) while diversity began to supplant race-consciousness

(Berrey, 2015).

Meanwhile, the University of Michigan found itself at the center of yet another affirmative action legal battle. Determined opponents who had successfully coordinated Proposition 209 (Prop-209), California's ban, were now leading a similar ballot initiative, Proposal 2 (Prop 2), in the state of Michigan. The contentious, highly publicized campaign ended in November 2006, when voters passed Prop 2, making the use of race-conscious affirmative action in public institutions illegal. Duderstadt (2007) warned of its consequences:

> After the years of effort in building successful programs such as the Michigan Mandate and defending the importance of diversity in higher education all the way to the Supreme Court, it would be tragic indeed if the decisions in the Michigan case caused more harm than good by unleashing the lawyers on our campus to block successful efforts to broaden educational opportunity and advance the cause of social justice (p. 158).

With the passage of Proposal 2, the University of Michigan, still bruised from the 2003 court cases (like the University of California before it), was unequivocally entering a new era—a post-affirmative action era. The University's policies and programs in support of access and equity for students of color would face renewed scrutiny.

Perils of the Post-Affirmative Action Era

Today, amid reports of declining public support (Jaschik, 2016), the political climate for affirmative action remains highly contentious despite empirical evidence on the positive outcomes associated with such policies (Bound, Hershbein & Long, 2009; Bowen & Bok, 1998; Epple, Romano & Sieg, 2008). The legality of the consideration of race in college admissions policies has been debated vigorously at the local and federal

level in recent years and a range of legal measures (i.e., voter referenda, executive orders, and constitutional rulings) currently ban their use in eight states (Garces, 2012; Moses, 2001; Moses & Saenz, 2012).

A parade of cases before the Supreme Court magnify claims about racial discrimination and represent the most recent legal challenge to affirmative action. In 2014, the Court upheld the state of Michigan's ban (Proposal 2) on affirmative action passed into law in 2006, striking down a previous decision from the Sixth Circuit Court that had rendered the ban unconstitutional on the basis that it violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the US.

YEAR	STATE	METHOD
2012	**Oklahoma**	Legislatively referred constitutional amendment
2011	**New Hampshire**	Statute
2010	**Arizona**	Initiative constitutional amendment
2008	**Colorado**	*Failed initiative constitutional amendment*
2008	**Nebraska**	Initiative constitutional amendment
2006	**Michigan**	Initiative constitutional amendment
1999	**Florida**	Executive order by governor
1998	**Washington**	Initiative statute
1996	**California**	Initiative constitutional amendment

Figure 2.1 *Affirmative Action Bans in the United States*
Data Source: Pew Research Center (2014)

Constitution. In a 2016 ruling in the *Fisher II* case, the result of an appeal of the 2014 *Fisher I* decision, the Supreme Court determined UT's race-conscious admissions policies were in fact constitutional, "leaving the door open for educators to continue employing carefully crafted affirmative admissions plans" (Goode, 2016). With this decision, the Court once again reaffirmed the educational benefits of diversity and offered a needed victory to higher education leaders after several successful challenges to affirmative action over the years. Chang (2016) cautions that while the decision in *Fisher*

29

II has brought some stability to the future of race-conscious admissions policies in the short-term, the hard-fought victory is "limited" and "bittersweet, at best." It is still possible to challenge racial preferences at other schools (Chang, 2016). In his dissent, Justice Alito said the majority opinion "hurt Asian Americans" and indeed, they represent the face of the latest effort to dismantle affirmative action[8] (Schmidt, 2016; Park, 2016). The ruling also does not preempt challenges to affirmative action in state legislatures or efforts taken against individual institutions by the federal government (Savage, 2017).

There is no question, that in the current racial and political environment, institutions that wish to engage in affirmative action do so at their own risk. In addition to the possibility of litigation, the *Fisher II* decision highlights the great lengths that universities must continue to go to in order to build a class that exhausts all plausible race-neutral alternatives. In defending its process, the University of Texas's Black enrollment "had plateaued at a mere 4 percent of the class; more than half of classes had no black Americans enrolled; and only 1 in 5 had two or more enrolled" (Chang, 2016). Across the broader swath of campuses affected by affirmative action, there are at least three characteristics that indicate the aim of ensuring and improving racial diversity in selective, post-affirmative action contexts may be in great peril: declining Black enrollment; race-neutral policies; and the steady expansion of diversity initiatives.

Declining Black enrollment. For institutions that are legally prohibited from engaging in affirmative action or who do so voluntarily, they, too, face risks. While the policies, practices, and discourse surrounding affirmative action have evolved over the past two decades (Kennedy, 2013), empirical studies and institutional data have

---

[8] Lower court cases filed against Harvard and UNC and complaints field against Brown, Dartmouth and Yale argue that affirmative action policies disadvantage Asian American applicants (Schmidt, 2014).

consistently documented steep declines in racial and ethnic diversity at public universities

in states that have banned race-conscious policies and practices in undergraduate

programs (see e.g., Backes, 2012; Hinrichs, 2012; Long, Saenz & Tienda, 2010; Saenz,

Oseguera, & Hurtado, 2007), in professional fields such as law and medicine (Karabel,

1998), and across undergraduate and graduate programs in science, technology,

engineering and math (STEM) (Garces, 2012, 2013; Palmer & Wood, 2013).

The negative impact of statewide bans is particularly acute in California and

Michigan, where enrollment rates of underrepresented students of color at the most

competitive flagship institutions have fallen to historic levels (Backes, 2012; Kidder,

2012, 2013) and where scholars have, over the years, used these states and the public

universities within them as case studies of phenomena related to race, diversity, equity

and inclusion (Allen & Solórzano, 2001; Berrey, 2015; Gándara, 2012; Garces &

Cogburn, 2015; Ledesma, 2015; Natour, Locks, & Bowman, 2012; Park, 2013). A study

conducted by economists Blume and Long (2014) suggest that while declines in the

representation of students of color are most pronounced in states where affirmative action

is legally banned, adjacent states, particularly those that do not have their own highly

selective universities, are affected by anti-affirmative action policies as well.

Race-neutral policies. Researchers and policymakers have noted substantial

changes in other key institutional functions that are attributable to affirmative action bans

(Ancheta, 2007). As I discussed previously, universities have increasingly shifted

towards race-neutral practices and programs in recruitment, financial aid, and support

programs and replaced *race* with *socioeconomic status* as a selection criterion (Orfield et

al., 2007). This change "removes attention from ongoing problems of minority

31

underrepresentation and the lack of racial diversity..." (Ancheta, 2007, p. 31).

Socioeconomic status is also considered an insufficient proxy for improving racial

diversity (Orfield et al., 2007).

Higher education and public policy literatures are replete with studies analyzing

the effect of race-neutral admissions policies on application and enrollment behaviors

among racially underrepresented groups, especially in California and Texas. However,

moving beyond admissions, race-neutral institutional policies may also have direct

consequences for the extent to which Black students and other students of color are

recruited aggressively once they have been admitted and whether matriculating students

receive the quality and quantity of targeted campus support (e.g., counseling services,

cultural centers, etc.) that can help them navigate a predominantly white campus

environment. There is a need for research that analyzes contextual factors in the current

post-affirmative action era as well as the policy-making role of organizational

professionals such as university officials and administrators (Garces & Cogburn, 2015)

who devise, enact, defend, and retheorize affirmative action" (Lipson, 2011, p. 133).

The expansion of diversity initiatives. Amid a constrained environment for race-

conscious admissions, university leaders are increasingly turning to diversity initiatives at

the undergraduate and graduate level, often aimed at recruiting more diverse students and

faculty (D'Onofrio, 2015; Espinosa et al., 2015) and/or hiring chief diversity officers and

consultants (Frum, 2016). The *New York Times* reported that during an 18-month window

in 2015-2016, 90 colleges hired chief diversity officers (Saul, 2016). Private elite

colleges like Yale and Brown have made substantial investments in multi-year diversity

initiatives (D' Onofrio, 2015). The University of Michigan has pledged to invest $85

million in diversity programs, including those aimed at enhancing efforts to recruit and enroll undergraduate students from underrepresented backgrounds.

Even as institutions espouse a commitment to diversity and dedicate more resources aimed at enhancing diversity, they often lack specificity with regard to racial inequities (Berrey, 2015; Garces, 2014). The shift away from race-consciousness means that African American students remain vulnerable to racism, discrimination and other, less overt, stigmatizing experiences (Frum, 2016). Thus, a final implication of the current post-affirmative action era is the extent to which declines in enrollment, movement toward race-neutral policies and practices, and an aversion to explicit discussions about race have converged to impact campus racial climate. In an annual national survey of campus climate conducted at four-year institutions, including post-affirmative action campuses in Texas and California, 45 percent of underrepresented minority students reported experiencing exclusion on their campus while 60 percent said they had been targets of verbal discrimination (Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012). These descriptive findings concur with a growing trend of highly publicized racial incidents on PWIs that, in the wake of the 2016 presidential election (Dreid & Najmabadi, 2016), reveal an unhealthy campus climate at many U.S. colleges and universities (Gasman, 2014; Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012; Ledesma, 2016).

A shift in campus climate. Recent racial incidents targeting Black students on college campuses across the nation illuminate the hostile campus environments Black students often feel and increasingly must navigate, particularly at predominantly White institutions. College student activism sparked by concerns over deeply entrenched racial tensions and the burden endured by isolation, microaggressions and bias, also point to the

extent to which the racial dynamics of some elite predominantly white campuses, amplified by affirmative action bans, growing sociopolitical tensions and a growing post-racial ideology, may have implications for the ability of universities to yield Black students and improve racial diversity of student enrollment (Allen-Taylor, 2013; Byng, 2013; Park, 2013; Strauss, 2016; Vega, 2014).

In 2013 and 2014, African American students at the University of Michigan, UC-Berkeley and UCLA shared their experiences of racial isolation (i.e., #BBUM "Being Black at Michigan," "I, Too, Am Berkeley" and "The Black Bruins") through social media outlets, which garnered local and national attention across an array of audiences, including high school students[9], their parents and teachers (Allen- Taylor, 2013; Gasman, 2014; Jesse, 2013; Park, 2013). #BBUM was particularly notable given that it reached news outlets such as CNN, the *New York Times*, and other national and international media. The Twitter campaign, set in motion after a racist fraternity party, sought to draw attention to (a) the negative racial campus climate Black students have experienced since Proposal 2 and (b) historically low Black enrollment that mirrored the University of Michigan's enrollment levels in the 1970s, before strategic diversity initiatives and affirmative action were implemented (Anderson, 2003; Byng, 2013; Preston, 2014; Vega, 2014).

The growing social activism suggest changes in the racial dynamics of college campuses[10], increasingly salient in the post-affirmative action era, is having an affect on

---

[9] In 2016, Texas A & M made national news when Black and Latino high school students on a recruitment visit were racially harassed by White students. See Hassan, Almasy and Valencia (2016).

[10] In 2015, Black student activism at the University of Missouri highlighted entrenched racism on the campus, garnering international attention and leading to the resignation of the university president (Woodhouse, 2015) By April 2016, students on 60 college campuses had submitted demands to their respective leaders related to diversity issues can campus racial climate (Wong & Green, 2016).

the educational experiences, outcomes, and wellbeing of currently enrolled Black

students and students of color (Park, 2013). And while there is an unfortunate, long

tradition of campus racial incidents on predominantly white campuses, social media has

made these incidents much more accessible to the public. Thus, I contend that the

conditions created or at least supported by affirmative action bans have implications for

prospective students as well. The increased attention to racial tensions on college

campuses can shape the opinions and perceptions of prospective students.

Conclusion: Campus Diversity, Climate, and College Choice

In the preceding section, I argue that racial diversity and campus climate can

matter a great deal for prospective Black students and the extent to which they feel safe,

supported and welcomed by predominantly white institutions (Allen-Taylor, 2013;

Colburn et al., 2008; Harris & Tienda, 2010; Kidder, 2012). Indeed, the historical

evidence presented on challenges with diversifying student enrollments at the University

of Michigan in the 1970s and 1980s amid Black students' perceptions and experiences of

a hostile campus racial climate and tenuous commitment to diversity suggests

institutional context has always mattered. In *Notes of Native Son*, James Baldwin

insightfully writes, "I think that the past is all that makes the present coherent." Relative

to this study, UM's past suggests that Black students will likely choose to avoid

institutions they perceive to hold unclear diversity commitments and/or an unhealthy

campus climate—real or imagined.

Indeed, analysis of application data and admission yield rates in California

demonstrate some high-achieving Black students, perceptive of campus diversity and

climate issues, elect to attend institutions they perceive to be more inclusive (Kidder,

35

2012; Wilbur, 2010). Figure 2.2 illustrates stylistically the nature of college choice for

high-achieving African American students' in California, post affirmative action.

Institutional Attribute	Stanford University	UC Berkeley
Representation of Black Students	Critical Mass (10.7% of 2015 freshman class)	Racial isolation? (2.8% of 2015 freshman class)
Reputation & Opportunity	World class reputation and educational opportunities	World class reputation and educational opportunities
Ranking	#5 US News Ranking	#21 US News Ranking
Race Conscious Admissions?	Yes	No
Affordability	High tuition but race conscious financial aid	Moderate
Access for low-income students?	Low	Moderate

Figure 2.2 *Stylized Choice Set for a High-Achieving African American Student Adapted from Kidder (2012)*

In speaking of top University of California campuses (i.e. UC – Berkeley and

UCLA), Gary Orfield (2012) aptly sums up the implications of the post-affirmative

action era for college choice in California:

> The African American students applying to us are fully qualified to meet the standards of an intensive competitive university, which only admits the top eight percent of California residents. Of course, we want the very best and there are a number who are exceptionally talented. These exceptional students know, however, how isolated they would be on our campus and that becomes a clear negative. Few top African American students accept our offers of admissions, preferring to enroll in more supportive and more diverse top-ranked universities. (p. 3)

This growing problem is not limited to California, however, an early enactor of legal

measures banning affirmative action ban. Racial incidents on campuses and institutional

data indicate the extent to which characteristics of the post-affirmative action era

(declines in campus diversity, race-neutral policies, strong orientation towards

"diversity", and a less inviting campus racial climate), particularly at the University of

Michigan, may influence enrollment decisions for Black students whom are admitted. To develop a foundational understanding of the factors influencing students' college choice decisions, I turn next to a critical review of the higher education literature and presentation of the conceptual framework guiding data collection and analysis for this study.

Chapter 3: Literature Review & Conceptual Framework

In this chapter, I discuss the research literature and conceptual framework that ground this study. The primary aims of this chapter are to: account for the factors that previous studies suggest influence college choice decisions; outline an interdisciplinary framework that might improve our understanding of Black students' decision-making in post-affirmative action contexts; and situate data collection and analysis (covered in Chapter Four) in the appropriate bodies of literature. I conclude the chapter by presenting the conceptual framework that informs data collection and analysis for this study. To begin, I discuss the conceptual foundations of college choice research, emphasizing Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-phase model and Perna's (2006) conceptual model for access and choice.

Conceptualizing College Choice

For decades, higher education scholars have studied the factors, processes, and outcomes related to students' decision-making about whether and where to enroll in college (Kinzie et al., 2004). For the most part, this work is situated in the disciplinary traditions of economics and sociology (Perna, 2006). Economic explorations of college choice are primarily grounded in a model of rational investment of human capital, which conceptualizes college enrollment and choice as a function of costs and benefits (Becker, 1962; Schultz, 1961). The provision of financial resources to pay college prices increases the likelihood that the expected benefits accrued outweigh the expected costs, making college enrollment a worthwhile investment (Avery & Hoxby, 2004; Becker, 1993;

38

Catsipias, 1987; Manski & Wise, 1983). Sociological constructs such as cultural capital, social capital, and habitus describe the collection of resources, behaviors, and knowledge derived from one's social status and networks and are useful for illuminating differences in college choice behaviors across socio-demographic characteristics (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986; Deil-Amen & Tevis, 2010; Griffin et al., 2012; McDonough, 1997).

However, for students of color, these forms of capital alone do not explain observed group differences. And while the integration of sociological theory, in part, addresses this limitation (Perna, 2000; Perna & Titus, 2005; St. John & Paulsen, 2001), it generally focuses on group- rather than individual-level differences. Such an approach masks complex, within-group differences, limiting our understanding of the myriad ways individuals may engage in the college choice process. Additionally, while sociological approaches to studying college choice describe differences, they do not explicate a mechanism by which students actually *choose* colleges (Hossler et al., 1999; Perna, 2006). Attending to the limitations of both sociological and economic theories, researchers suggest college choice decisions are not explained by one perspective alone, but are best understood by integrated approaches which incorporate aspects of human capital models with sociological constructs (Freeman, 1997; Paulsen, 2001; Paulsen and St. John, 2002; Perna, 2000, 2006; St. John and Asker, 2001).

Integrating strengths and key constructs from the economic and sociological approaches, Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) prominent multi-stage model conceives of college choice as unfolding in a three-phase process: *predisposition, search,* and *choice.* The model has contributed substantially to the study of student choice in higher education and represents the foundation of the conceptual framework guiding the current study. To

39

strengthen the model's utility for understanding Black students' college choice in the University of Michigan's post-affirmative action context, I integrate key elements of Perna's (2006) multi-layered model for college access and choice as well as literature and theory from organizational recruitment and social identity theory and research. Next, I identify the conceptual foundations of the two predominant models and review college choice empirical literature on the choice phase—the particular point in which students make their college choice decisions.

Three-phase model of college choice. Hossler and Gallagher's model of college choice represents an extension of earlier multi-stage models developed by Jackson (1982), Litten (1982), and Chapman (1984) which involved economic and social factors in each stage, but ultimately ended with a cost/benefit analysis of schooling and non-schooling options. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) consolidated the models, which ranged from three to five stages, into a three-phase model of college choice. Their efforts to simplify the college choice process were driven by the growing prominence of financial aid policies and the professionalization of enrollment management in higher education (Manski & Wise, 1983; Paulsen, 1990; St. John, 1990; St. John & Noell, 1989). Since then, the modeling of college choice as three succinct stages has been useful conceptually and empirically, although some have criticized the overly simple, linear manner in which the model depicts students' decision-making (Freeman, 1997, 2005; Walton-Radford, 2013). *Table 3.1* provides a summary of the various theoretical approaches to college choice and their affordances and limitations for Black students.

Predisposition. Drawing from sociological constructs, the predisposition phase represents the period, generally between 7th and 10th grade in which students develop

aspirations to attend college. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) posit students' disposition toward college is shaped by socioeconomic status, academic achievement, and educational activities and initiates a trajectory that leads to students' engagement in subsequent stages of the model, including a decision to continue formal education beyond high school (Bateman & Hossler, 1996).

Search. Whereas predisposition was the *opening* of students' possibilities (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987), the search phase *narrows* those possibilities through a filter that reflects a student's economic circumstances, academic achievement and performance, and institutional preferences (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; McDonough, 1997). The search phase describes the period, generally between 10th and 12th grade, when students "engage in information processing and gathering" activities to learn more detailed information about colleges. Research examines the sources of information students utilize (schools, teachers, peers, parents, siblings, extended family members, etc.) and the breadth of their search as they develop a choice set—the subset of colleges to which they will eventually apply (Hossler et al., 1999, p. 153).

The authors emphasize the role of financial aid in students' search activities. In fact, misinformation about financial aid is discussed as "the most pervasive problem" of this phase, intimating its influence as students develop their choice set (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987, p. 215). Yet, college communications often emphasize institutional attributes other than financial aid such as academic opportunities and student life (Hite & Yearwood, 2001; Hartley & Morphew, 2008; Osei-Kofi & Torres, 2013). "College viewbooks constitute the basis on which institutions choose to begin forming a relationship with their students...words and symbols play a substantial role in shaping

how students think about college during 'attentive search'..." (Hartley & Morphew, 2008, p. 673).

Table 3.1 *Summary of Factors Conceptualized in Predominant College Choice Models*

Model	Factors Included in Model	Affordances and Limitations for Black Students & Students of color
Economic	Economic Expectations; Perceptions of costs and benefits; Socioeconomic status; Academic achievement	Very little information about the role of "difference" in decision-making. Emphasis is placed on socioeconomic status rather than race. Likewise, the model prioritizes financial aid and costs with little discussion about non-financial factors.
Sociological	Gender; Habitus; Organizational habitus; Cultural and social capital; Socioeconomic status; Academic achievement	Status attainment models emphasized social class rather than race; however, scholars have found that the inclusion of social and cultural resources in college choice models can help account for racial and socioeconomic differences. The complexity of racial identity is not well understood; emphasis is placed on socioeconomic status and/or race as a categorical variable.
Three-Phase Model	Socioeconomic status; Gender; Race; Parental education; Financial aid /tuition costs; Student preferences; College attributes; Recruitment activities	Three phases are easy to model and has ben used with studies that include Black student samples. Model conceptualizes student preferences, recruitment, and institutional attributes as important in decision-making but generally emphasizes financial aid. Other institutional attributes important to students of color (e.g., diversity commitment and climate) are grossly understudied.
Multi-Layered Framework	Socioeconomic status; Race Gender; Habitus; Social and cultural capital; Schools and community; Higher education context; Social, economic and policy context	Contextual nature of model more accurately reflects various forces that inform student choice, but model explicitly conceives of choice as a function of costs/benefits. Race is included as a "group" difference factor and not as a subjective, complex identity. Contextual campus factors relevant to race and diversity are not explored.

Note: Freeman (1997, 2005); Hossler & Gallagher (1987); Kinzie et al. (2004); Perna, (2006)

Similarly, social media can facilitate the diffusion of compelling, unfiltered information in real-time that prospective students may find equally if not more useful than "traditional" communication resources and interactions (Hossler et al., 1999). However, "search" as it is conceptualized does not explain how students might interpret and appraise these non-economic attributes (e.g., campus climate) as they develop their choice sets.

Choice. The final stage of the three-phase model will be the focus of the study. Choice describes a period in the 12th grade that begins with a choice set and ends with enrollment. In this phase students not only choose the colleges to which they will apply (from choice set), but also they choose a single college in which they will enroll (Hossler et al., 1989). Although the model (and literature) places more emphasis on enrollment choice given its "logistical and financial costs," articulating the conceptual distinction between application and enrollment is necessary since scholars have often used "choice" to refer to both (Alvarado & Turley, 2012, p. 1452). The distinction is also important because both application *and* enrollment decisions have contributed to the decline in the representation of Black students at campuses where affirmative action is banned (Backes, 2012; Brown & Hirschmann, 2006; Hinrichs, 2012).

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) depict choice as unfolding in an interactive process in which "the preferences of the applicant, the attributes of the college or university, and the courtship procedures appear to determine the outcome" (p. 216) as illustrated in Figure 3.1. Students' preferences are a function of their background and individual characteristics (race, gender, and class, academic achievement, etc.), whereas attributes of the college may include tuition costs, selectivity, institution type, and campus

43

environment (DesJardins et al., 2006). The authors conceive of courtship activities –merit

aid awards and yield-recruitment—as being highly consequential in the enrollment

decision and suggest non-aid courtship activities (e.g., recruitment events) "may be as

important as actual financial aid awards" (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987, p. 217).

Choice Set →→→→→→→→→→→→→→ Choice

College and University Courtship Activities
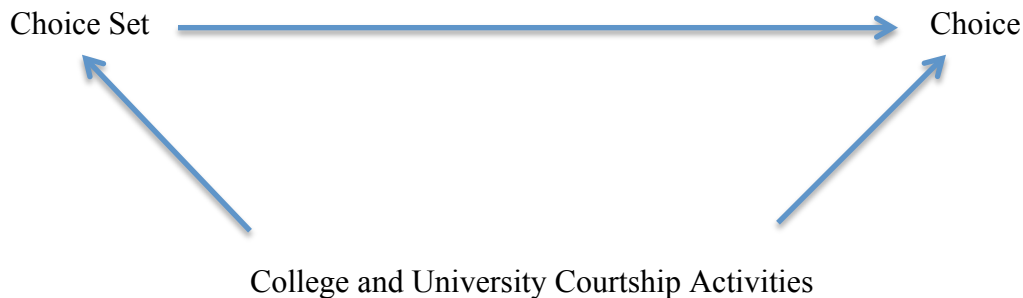
Figure 3.1 *Hossler and Gallagher's Three Phase Model of Choice*

Yet researchers have focused disproportionately on a few factors like financial

aid, institution type or institutional prestige (Bowman & Bastedo, 2009; Griffith & Rask,

2007; McDonough et al., 1998) and have not generally considered a broader range of

preferences and institutional attributes that are known to drive college choice (Cho et al.,

2008; HERI, 2007; Natour et al., 2012). More research is needed to understand college

characteristics such as institutional commitment to diversity and racial climate, given

these organizational features may be contributing to students' decisions to opt of

institutions with tenuous diversity commitments or hostile climates. The nature and

influence of Black students' perceptions and appraisals of these institutional

characteristics is also important, as they foreground the issue of individual differences in

Black students' experience and potential responses (i.e., college choice). However, a

known limitation of Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model and subsequent revisions is

that it does not sufficiently interrogate differences across or within racial groups or in response to institutions (Hossler & Stage, 1992; Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989)—the type of analysis that would lend itself to furthering our understanding of how Black students respond to highly racialized contexts.

Conceptual model of student choice. Similar to the three phase model, Perna (2006) conceptualizes enrollment choice as explained by human capital theory and nested within four contextual layers: (1) habitus; (2) school and community context; (3) higher education context; and (4) social, economic, and policy context. Perna's (2006) hierarchical conceptual framework adds to our understanding of access and college choice for students of color by drawing upon sociological constructs of social and cultural capital (Nuñez & Kim, 2012; Perna & Steele, 2011; Rodriguez, 2013). In her quantitative analysis of secondary data, she found that measures for social and cultural capital-improved the explanatory power of the human capital model for Black and Latino/a students in her sample beyond the mere inclusion of a race variable. Still, Perna's model mostly foregrounds the role of race, vis-à-vis forms of capital, in the formation of interest in college (habitus), academic preparation (earlier stages of college choice) and in students' access to financial aid—not necessarily in decision-making for admitted students. Social and cultural capital in group-level analyses does not capture the complex nature of racial identity, which varies across individuals within the same racial group and may be particularly relevant in understanding how students differentially perceive commitment to diversity and the racial climate of colleges where they have been admitted and are considering matriculating. Nevertheless, Perna's (2006) conceptualization of the higher education and social, economic, and political contexts

45

provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding dynamic, contextual features that are not explicitly addressed in Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-phase model of college choice.

 Institutional context. Perna's conceptualization of the higher education context represents an important element of her model. Building on Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) framework, which conceptualized yield (i.e., "courtship activities") and institutional attributes as important factors in students' decision-making, Perna (2006) highlights the role of (1) marketing and recruitment; (2) the location of the institution; and (3) institutional characteristics as critical elements in the higher education context of the proposed conceptual model. In describing this layer of her model, she notes, "Students prefer to attend colleges and universities with particular characteristics, especially characteristics that are consistent with their personal and social identities and needs for personal acceptance and institutional support" (Perna, 2006, p. 118). Thus, information communicated through marketing and recruitment as well as attributes of colleges can influence Black students' choice especially as they help students understand how an institution they are considering aligns with their preferences and social identities. More research is needed on institutional recruitment practices, which I address in a section below. We also need to understand the role of individual social identities (instead of race as a category) and institutional attributes beyond financial aid, college costs, geographic location, and academic prestige—college-level variables used often in college choice studies (Kinzie et al., 2004; Nuñez & Kim, 2012; Perna & Steele, 2011). Moreover, relevant to the current study, researchers must understand how students perceive, appraise, and respond to the information they receive about colleges, whether

its tuition costs and availability of academic majors or the percentage of Black

undergraduate students enrolled on campus.

   Social, economic, and policy context. The outermost layer of Perna's (2006)

model, the social, economic, and policy context, describes the ways in which external

forces may influence student choice. "Explicitly incorporating the social, economic, and

policy context…recognizes the connections between policy and college choice

outcomes" (Perna, 2006, p. 119). Perna has largely focused on *economic* policy context,

in particular, as a way to understand how appropriations for higher education and state

merit aid programs may shape student choice (Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, Li, &

Thomas, 2008; Perna & Steele, 2011). In their multi-level analysis of Latino student

enrollment, using Perna's conceptual model, Nuñez and Kim (2012) highlight the

importance of analyses that include state-level characteristics such as affirmative action

policies, which they contend, have implications for Latino student enrollment. In much

the same way, the social, economic, and policy layer in the current study is useful for

depicting the policy environment for affirmative action in Michigan and higher

education, more broadly, as well as other social dynamics, including racial tensions, that

may affect how Black students perceive and appraise campus environments in their

college choice process (Natour et al., 2011).

   Nonetheless, at the core of both conceptual models described is a belief that

college choice is an economic decision shaped by academic achievement, social

background, and cost preferences. But other institutional attributes may also be critically

important for Black students (Avery & Mckay, 2006; Cho et al., 2008). Beyond emphasis

on variation in cultural and social resources across racial groups, predominant models of

47

college choice while helpful for conceptualizing studies (Hurtado, Inkelas, Briggs, &
Rhee, 1997; Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, & McDonough, 2004) have been limited in
their analysis of college choice within racial/ethnic groups. For example, *why* and *how*
race shapes students' college decision-making considerations and how Black students, in
particular, may perceive and interpret non-financial aid or economic related information
about college. Thus, with regard to considering post-affirmative action campuses,
traditional college choice models raise key questions: How might preferences for and
perceptions of race-related aspects of a campus manifest in Black students' college
choice? What role does racial identity play in this process? Are these elements captured
in the empirical literature?

College Choice Empirical Literature

In this section, I review and critique the empirical literature relevant to financial
aid, campus diversity, and racial climate of predominantly White institutions and
campuses where affirmative action is banned. Financial aid, in particular, is an important
factor in student choice and considered a yield recruitment (or courtship) strategy). Given
that the college choice literature for Black students is rather limited and there are some
substantiated similarities among various minoritized communities of color, this section
will include both studies specific to Black students as well as those that explore college
choice among students of color (i.e., Black, Latino, Native American, and Asian Pacific
Islander), more broadly. Additionally, since there are just a few studies that investigate
college choice in post-affirmative action contexts, I also survey those empirical works
that attend to campus diversity, racial climate, or another relevant organizational level
proxy but are not explicitly conditioned by an affirmative action ban. Finally, each study

48

included in this section examines the *choice* stage as opposed to predisposition and search. Although some studies use choice to refer both to application and enrollment choice, it is the final stage—characterized by students' *enrollment decision*—that is the focus of the current study.

       Enrollment choice. Despite the fact that Hossler and Gallagher (1987) conceptualized *choice* as a function of students' individual preferences, institutional characteristics, and recruitment activities, researchers have most often drawn upon economic theoretical perspectives (e.g., human capital theory) alone, or as subsumed in the three-phase model, to examine the role of finances—tuition costs and financial aid— in students' enrollment decisions. There is no question that finances play an important factor in college enrollment (e.g., Avery & Hoxby, 2004; Ellwood & Kane, 2000; Heller, 1997). However, in their edited volume on financial aid in higher education, economists of education, Sandra Baum and Michael McPherson (2008), describe much of the existing research on financial aid and college enrollment as "inconclusive" (p. 7). Their co-author, David Mundel, adds that with a few exceptions, analytical and statistical difficulties in assessing the impact of different aid programs are common in existing research. There is also evidence that the effect of financial aid on college choice may not be as consequential for high-achieving students of color as scholars have previously suggested (Kim, 2004; Perna, 2000; Perna & Titus, 2005). These students' preferences for racially diverse and inclusive campus environments may be as, if not more, consequential in their enrollment decisions than the college choice literature has recognized (Cho et al., 2008, Engberg & Wolniak, 2009; Freeman, 1997; Natour et al., 2011).

Yet quantitative studies (e.g., multi-level modeling techniques, regression or quasi-experimental design), which constitute the vast majority of the empirical literature on student enrollment choice, have not generally considered a broad range of students' preferences in their analytic models (e.g., Kim et al., 2012; Kim, 2004; Perna, 2000, 2004). In addition to academic reputation (McDonough, Antonio, & Trent, 1997), preferences such as proximity to home (Butler, 2010; Perez, 2010; Turley, 2006) and campus diversity (Natour et al., 2011; Teranishi & Briscoe, 2008; Cho et al., 2008) have been shown to inform the enrollment decisions of students of color. For instance, Kim's (2012) event history analysis of college choice examines longitudinally the role of need-based and non-need based financial aid policies on the type of college students attended, but found limited effects on the role of state-based aid on enrollment propensities for Black and Latina/o students in a nationally representative sample. She hypothesized that these limited findings might be attributable to "endogenous variation" across states' financial aid policies and benchmarks for enrollment.

Kim's (2004) logistic regression analysis of three types of financial aid (loans, grants, and a combination of the two) on the probability that Black and Latino/a students enroll in their first choice institution also produced no effects of financial aid on enrollment in first-choice institutions. Yet, the students' preferences were positively associated with enrollment. There are many plausible explanations for these results, including the possibility that Black and Latina/o students in the study had limited information about their financial aid options. However, Kim (2004) speculated that perhaps "college preferences are more significant factors for African American and Hispanic students' choice of colleges than financial aid" (p. 62). Preferences were

50

defined as "reasons to attend college—such as others' advice, financial concerns, future prospects of the college…friends' suggestions—and the number of applications students submitted" (p. 49). Measures of structural diversity, racial climate, or other similar organizational attributes were not included in the analysis.

Applying a similar analytic strategy, Kim, DesJardins, and McCall (2009) used logistic regression to analyze enrollment probabilities among students who were admitted to the University of Iowa in the 1997-1998 cycle. They found that among Black students, the receipt of more aid from the institution than what was expected had no effect on students' likelihood of enrolling. The authors admit that this statistically insignificant effect—particularly since Black students submitted applications at rates comparable to White students in the sample—was an "unexpected finding" (p. 762). As an explanation, they posit that African American students may have decided not to enroll once discovering their financial aid package was less than what was sufficient to meet their need. This is certainly plausible. It could also be that these students, after learning more about the University of Iowa's racial climate and/or diversity commitment through yield activities such as campus visits, opted not to enroll. This possibility seems plausible given that students of color generally engage in campus visits and other recruitment activities later in the college choice process, *after* they have been admitted (Bergerson, 2009).

Importantly, there are a few studies of financial aid that do include college-level measures of diversity. And, as one might expect, these studies tend to provide a more complete assessment of choice for students of color. Using MANCOVA and univariate analysis, Cho et al. (2008) conducted a study of college choice among 1,539 low-income

first-year students at four-institutions. They found that African American and Latina/o students were both substantially more likely to report "acceptance of racial diversity" as the most important factor in their college enrollment decision. These findings do include some degree of selection bias, however, given that admitted students who did not enroll in any of the four institutions were not included in the survey.

Engberg and Wolniak's (2009) analysis of differences in enrollment decisions across racial groups addresses limitations of the previous studies in key ways. Using admissions and financial aid data from eight private higher education institutions, the authors examined main effects on enrollment decisions, taking into account both student-level variables such as socio-demographic attributes, high school characteristics, college search activities, and college-level indicators including academic quality of the institution, and racial make-up of student body. The authors first used logistic regression analysis in a general model and then ran separate models for each group to determine whether there are race-conditional effects. Completion of the FAFSA (operationalized as the financial aid variable) produced the largest effects on the likelihood of enrollment in the general model, but the campus diversity variable also produced significant, positive effects that held in subsequent race-conditional models. Although these findings are specific to the eight private institutions in the study and may not be generalizable to public universities, they illuminate the importance of college-level variables that measure campus diversity and/or climate in models of college choice for students of color. The authors also remind us: "… one model does not fit all and that the factors that influence matriculation are quite different across students of differing racial group memberships" (Engberg & Wolniak, 2009, p. 2267). Collectively, these studies suggest students of color

have a preference for diversity that is more influential in their college choice decisions than that of their White and Asian peers and that is not accounted for in existing college choice models.

Matriculation in post-affirmative action contexts. Additional insights from a very limited body of existing studies of college choice that are contextualized by affirmative action bans suggest that in addition to a preference for attending a university that values diversity, some students may be attuned to the racial climate of a college campus through the receipt of information through social networks--family, friends and high school personnel (Freeman, 2005). Demonstrating the nature of information and advice shared in familial networks, a Black student at the University of Texas shared, "[My family and friends] warned me because, quite frankly, the environment of UT is known for racism...A lot of older people told me not to come here..." (Shah, 2002).

In addition to family and friends, students might also become more aware of the racial contexts of campuses affected by affirmative action bans through high school agents and the increase in discourse around such contexts. In their qualitative study of 36 Black high school students' college choice plans in the wake of California's affirmative action ban, Teranishi and Briscoe (2008) found that students' perception of a chilly racial climate seemed to deter some competitive otherwise eligible students to attend top UC schools. The findings suggest: (a) students were very aware of the affirmative action debate unfolding in their state; (b) some students reported counselors encouraged them to avoid the UCs, commenting, the "UC system is not welcoming for Black students because they got rid of affirmative action" (p. 20); and (c) participants and their parents expressed interest in "safe and welcoming alternatives" such as HBCUs (p. 22).

Aspects of the college environment can also reassure students of color that they will be supported in predominantly white contexts (Strayhorn, Terrell, Redmond, & Walton, 2010). In their qualitative study of college choice among Latina students in California, Perez and McDonough (2008) noted that the presence of cultural centers on campus were a "safe haven" for those students who ventured away from family to go to college. These centers essentially would "signal an institution-wide commitment to making the campus more diversity-friendly" (p. 262) which the authors noted was meaningful to their participants, given the race-neutral context.

Yielding Black students. To be certain, yielding students of color, particularly Black students, has been incredibly challenging in post-affirmative action contexts. Empirical studies on yield and students' college destinations in California, including Grodsky's and Kuralendar's (2010) analysis of IPEDs data and Santos et al. (2010) disparate impact approach to analyzing 1995, 1998, and 2002 data, confirm that admitted students of color have opted to enroll in colleges outside the University of California at higher rates than their White and Asian peers, and Black students were more likely than any other group to shift to private institutions after Proposition 209 (Geiser & Caspary, 2005; Kidder, 2012). Wilbur's (2010) analysis of the 2005 admissions cycle indicate that over half of Black applicants in the top third of admit pool chose a private selective college—places like Harvard, Stanford, Yale, and Princeton—compared to 19.4 percent of White students and 15 percent of Asian students. Indeed, private selective institutions have been the "main beneficiary" of UC's loss of top underrepresented minority admits after Prop 209 (Geiser & Caspary, 2005, p. 401).

Speculating on the reasons for this pattern in California public universities,

Kidder (2012) suggests a confluence of factors may be affecting the ability for colleges to yield Black students: "the attractiveness of prestige and signals of welcoming qualities" (p. 32) that students have found at elite private institutions that employ race-conscious affirmative action. These "signals" stand in stark contrast to chilly racial climates at the most selective UC campuses—Berkeley and Los Angeles—where the bans seem to have had the most impact on institutional diversity and racial climate. Wilbur's (2010) earlier study also enumerates a few possible hypotheses, including the role of "individual perception of campus climate" (p. 78). She suggests that the low representation of African American students on campus leads prospective students and their families to ask critical questions of themselves or others about the campus of interest:

> What is it like to be a student at a campus where there are few other students (and, perhaps, faculty and staff) who look like me? Will I feel welcomed? Do I belong here? Will I feel safe? Is this institution committed to my success? Are there services available to support my unique educational and personal needs? (p. 78).

The propositions offered by Kidder (2012) and Wilbur (2010), while both compelling and consistent with sentiments shared by Black students who have been engaged in campus activism, have not been tested empirically. The questions and considerations that Wilbur (2005) poses not only offer insights into the phenomenon of Black underenrollment in highly selective institutions, but also highlight critical gaps in the empirical literature on college choice.

Limitations of college choice research. The ways in which affirmative action bans condition the campus environment—altering campus racial climate, structural diversity, and institutional policies and practices—is a contextual nuance that has

importance for understanding Black students' decision-making. However, there are just a few studies that attend to the implications of affirmative action bans in student choice (e.g., Kidder, 2012; Teranishi & Briscoe, 2008; Tobolowsky et al., 2005). These works lack a strong theoretical grounding and do not explain the *mechanism* by which students make choices in this particular context. Studies that focus explicitly on African American students draw attention to familial networks and influences (Freeman, 2005; Griffin et al., 2012; Smith, 2008) that are critically important, yet inadequate for explaining current patterns in selective Black enrollment. Other studies that explore racial differences using quantitative techniques, while able to make generalizations to a larger population, tend to essentialize within-group differences like racial identity that may actually explain why some Black students are drawn to particular colleges (e.g., historically black colleges and universities) over others (Tobolowsky et al., 2005; Van Camp, 2010).

Finally, the literature depicts the college choice as linear and one-dimensional rather than a dynamic, interactive process between students, their families, high school personnel, and colleges and universities. No study, to my knowledge, examines "courtship activities" or yield-recruitment, which Hossler and Gallagher (1987) intimated were so instrumental in determining students' enrollment choice (p. 216). If we are to more fully understand the college choice decisions of Black students in post-affirmative action contexts, more research must attend to yield and recruitment practices used to encourage admitted students to enroll. Further, studies must account for students' perceptions and appraisals of institutional diversity commitments and campus racial climate through these recruitment experiences and interactions. I turn next to a brief review of the literature on recruitment in college contexts.

56

Recruiting College Students

Recruitment of students involves multiple university stakeholders and complex decisions (Hossler, 1999). During the stage after students are admitted and before they matriculate, universities invest considerable resources and time encouraging admitted applicants to enroll in the institution (DesJardins, 2002). Given the consequential and increasingly complex nature of enrollment, high-level administrators are charged with managing the institution's "enrollment enterprise" and improving their understanding of the way "students discover, evaluate, and choose (or fail to choose) their institutions" (DesJardins, 2002, p. 534). Developing an understanding of choice for academically competitive Black students in the current context of evolving affirmative action policy has never been more critical. Statewide bans and the contentious environment for affirmative action policy constrain institutional strategies to improve racial diversity in some states, even as the benefits of diversity in higher education are well-documented (Rowley, Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2002). Enrolling students of color to selective campuses remains an important aim, but more attention is needed on the mechanisms for doing so.

Attracting students of color. Institutions seeking to increase racial diversity are considering various strategies to attract more students of color to their campuses (Elam & Brown, 2005). At predominantly White institutions (PWIs), "presenting an image of diversity" (p. 14) can aid efforts to recruit both students of color and greater numbers of White students (Alger, 1998; Green, 2011; Perkins et al., 2000; Pippert, Essenburg, & Matchett, 2013) as applicants sometimes use disparate pieces of information to make inferences about the "values and attributes" of the organization (Avery & McKay, 2006). The photographic portrayal of racial diversity through images in viewbooks as well as

57

messages communicated through yield-recruitment efforts may be effective with

attracting Black students who, on average, tend to place greater importance on

organizational diversity than do their White peers and other communities of color (Avery

& McKay, 2006; Kim & Gelfan, 2003; Mor Barak, Cherin, & Berkin, 1998; Thaley-

Carter, 2001; Thomas & Wise, 1999). The primacy of "diversity" language and images of

racially and ethnically diverse students in recruitment publications, then, serves multiple

important functions. Even if these materials do not accurately reflect compositional

diversity, institutional commitment to diversity, or campus intergroup relations, they

communicate to prospective students "who will and will not feel comfortable" at the

university (Klassen, 2000, p. 20) — and what the institution aspires to be (Hartley &

Morphew, 2008; Pippert et al., 2013).

Personal interactions with university representatives can provide further

opportunities for students and their families to learn more about the institution's

commitment to diversity and address possible concerns about campus racial climate. The

opportunity for prolonged interactions, it appears, may be highly consequential in

students' decision-making. Campus visits offer "longer and more intense" experiences

(Taylor & Bergman, 1987, p. 273) that may communicate impressions about commitment

to diversity, as well as "confirm (disconfirm) initial perceptions…based on exposure to

earlier recruitment activities and materials" (McKay & Avery, 2006, p. 396). However,

students could miss out on these highly informative experiences due to financial, time

and geographic constraints that limit them from engaging in campus visits (Bergerson,

2009). Although little empirical scholarship exists on campus visits in higher education,

recruitment studies in the organizational psychology literature reveal job seekers'

perceptions of site visits are significant influences in eventual job choice (McKay & Avery, 2006; Summer, 2012).

Institutional recruitment practices may function as "highly salient" features in college choice decision models, "regardless of whether or not they represent valid bases" for making such decisions (Rynes, 1989, p.10). They send signals to applicants, which may then be generalized to other aspects of the university (Kim & Gelfand, 2003). There is evidence that the efficacy of these recruitment efforts—their actual influence on job choice-- depends on the applicant's identities (Avery et al., 2013; McKay & Avery, 2006). Still, given the dearth of research on recruitment in higher education, critical questions remain about the relationship between students' recruitment experiences, perceptions, and college choice decisions. Building on the insights offered by the brief overview of organizational recruitment and employment studies, I use the social identity theoretical perspective to illustrate how admitted Black students' social identities, perceptions, and appraisals of institutional contexts shape their college choice decisions. After providing a brief introduction to the origins of social identity theory, I describe the importance of social identity threat and racial identity—concepts related to the social identity theoretical perspective—as key elements of the interdisciplinary framework guiding this dissertation study.

Social Identity Theoretical Perspective

Social identity theory is a particularly appropriate perspective for deepening our understanding of college choice. It derives from various social science traditions including sociology, personality psychology and social psychology which help illuminate individual perceptions and behaviors in social contexts (Baron, Byrne, & Suls, 1989;

Major & O'Brien, 2005). Given the behavioral aspect of college choice and the contextual nature of college campuses, social identity theory provides a conceptual basis for understanding how students' experiences and perceptions of college environments can inform their college choice decisions. Also helpful for understanding college choice, social identity theory "can give rise to a variety of predictions specifying people's responses under different circumstances" (Turner, 1999, p. 5)—circumstances such as students' yield-recruitment experiences and interactions and interactions with race and diversity related features of the campus.

Two social identity theoretical perspectives introduced in this section—Social Identity Threat and the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI)—have unique merits for furthering our understanding of college choice for Black students in post-affirmative action contexts. Social identity threat is a theory that describes processes through which individuals experience and respond to challenges to the meaning of their identity. It has been used to examine the extent to which contextual factors shape individuals' decisions to engage, enter, or avoid situations and domains in which they perceive they may have negative experiences and interactions because of a marginalized social identity (Cheryan et al., 2009; Davies et al., 2002; Davies et al., 2005; Murphy et al., 2007; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Steele et al., 2002).

The MMRI draws upon social identity theory (social and personality psychology) as well as cultural studies and Black psychology. The MMRI is a model that describes aspects of one's racial identity that has implications for how individuals appraise and respond to organizational contexts and identity-based experiences. Psychologists have used the MMRI to analyze the complexity of racial identity as it relates to perceptions of

60

fit and discrimination in different college contexts (Chavous, 2000, 2005; Van Camp, 2010). The MMRI is particularly helpful as a lens to view how Black students' complex identities might shape their perceptions and experiences, especially in settings where race (or race neutrality) is salient. Next, I discuss each theoretical perspective in more detail.

Social identity threat. *Social identity* represents the part of the self that reflects one's social groups or memberships such as race, gender, class, profession, religion, political affiliation among others (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Social identity theory emerged in the 1970s, when social psychologists, Henri Tajfel and his student, John Turner, worked to create a theory that could explain intergroup phenomena they increasingly observed (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). A self-categorization of people into distinct groups could trigger, under some circumstances, feelings of threat, which then sparked intergroup behaviors like discrimination and competition, as groups strove to achieve a positive social identity and status (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). These behaviors formed a central hypothesis of social identity theory: as shared social identity becomes salient, individuals see themselves less as unique persons and more as interchangeable representatives of their groups (Turner, 1999). In other words, social identity accentuates group similarities and associated connotations (Branscombe et al., 1999). When we perceive ourselves as "we" and "us" as opposed to "I" and "me", the self is defined in terms of others who exist outside of the individual person. An individual is thought to have a stigmatized identity if they have a "consensually devalued social identity" (Major & O' Brien, 2005, p. 398). Building on existing literature stimulated by the development of the social identity perspective (Abrams & Hogg, 1999; Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Ellemers et al., 1999, Tajfel & Turner, 1986), the current study is grounded in a

conceptualization of social identity threat that is adapted from Ethier and Deaux's (1990, 1994) model of perceived threat but also draws from Steele and colleagues (2002).

Social identity threat largely posits that *any* person in a given context is vulnerable to threat if one or more social identities is marginalized or regarded unfavorably (Steele et al., 2002, p. 416). While people have multiple social identities, previous research suggests individuals often see themselves in terms of the identity that is most stigmatized in a particular setting (Branscombe & Ellembers, 1998; Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears & Doojse, 1999; Maalouf, 2001; Steele et al., 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The concept of social identity threat also suggests that individuals make choices about the environments and domains they wish to enter based on their sense of belonging and perceptions of safety or threat in the given context (Murphy, et al., 2007). Importantly, the concept of threat can manifest in different ways.

Threat to self-concept. In their empirical studies, Ethier & Deaux (1990, 1994) conceptualized "perceived threat" as the extent to which individuals feel that their ethnic culture was incompatible with their college environment (Ethier & Deaux, 1990, 1994). The authors were particularly interested in understanding the relationship between the change in institutional context, the strength of group ethnic identity and evaluations of one's ethnic group membership for Latino first-year students at an Ivy League college. They argued that upon entering "mainstream" or predominantly White college settings, Latino students often face unique challenges to their ethnic identity that may be perceived as threatening to their self-concept.

To test this hypothesis, the authors conducted interviews with 45 Latino students at two Ivy League institutions wherein they assessed participants' evaluations of ethnic

group and perceived threats to their ethnic identity within the first few months of their

freshman year. During the interviews, the authors administered the Perceived Threat

Scale which they developed from exploratory interviews with a small sample of Latino

students. The six-item scale measures the extent to which students felt threatened or had

reacted to perceived threats to their ethnic identity. I adapted these items to the context of

college choice and used them in the interview protocols with student participants in the

current study. It reflects the type of exposure that prospective students—versus

matriculating students—are likely to have (see Appendix C).

   Cues and bias as a threat. In addition to Ethier and Deaux's (1990, 1994)

conceptualization of perceived threat studied among Latino first-year students

transitioning into elite, predominantly white contexts, the exploration of identity threat in

the current study is strengthened further by incorporating *situational cues,* the mechanism

that helps illuminate additional dimensions on which threat may be experienced: bias,

safety concerns, and lack of organizational identification or perceived identity-context

congruence. Any aspect of a setting can be a cue if it "activates" a social identity,

(Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Ditlmann, & Crosby, 2008; Steele, 2010; Steele et al.,

2002). In their synthesis of the identity threat literature Major and O'Brien (2005) write

that responses to "stigma relevant situations and circumstances are a function of cues…"

(p. 411). The authors highlight the relevance of Steele et al.'s (2002) conceptualization of

cues in motivating behavioral responses. Upon entering a context or evaluating if one

should enter, individuals use cues to determine the status of their identity—whether an

environment is identity safe or identity-threatening (Steele et al., 2002).

   According to Steele's model, once threat is aroused, those who are "targets" may

express a lowered sense of trust and belonging (Cheryan et al., 2009; Murphy et al., 2007), avoid identity-threatening domains and environments (Cheryan et al., 2009; Davies et al., 2002; Davies et al., 2005; Murphy et al., 2007; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008), or alter career and educational choices/plans (Davies et al., 2002; Davies et al., 2005; Gupta and Bhawe, 2007; Steele, et al., 2002; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). The cues can be overt or "relatively small, seemingly innocuous" (Steele et al., 2002, p. 422).

Examples of overt cues are demonstrated in studies where cues take the form of stereotypical information provided to targeted participants. Davies, Spencer, and Steele (2005) investigated whether perceived social identity threat would shape decision-making among female participants who highly identified with their gender. The researchers randomly assigned psychology undergraduates into two groups; the control group viewed gender-neutral commercials and the treatment group was exposed to commercials that conveyed women as submissive and docile. They found that a significantly smaller proportion of women in the treatment group expressed interest in choosing a leadership position compared to those in the control group. The results concur with other findings that reveal perception of threat in an education or career domain is powerful enough to induce avoidance (Davies et al., 2002; Davies et al., 2005; Gupta and Bhawe, 2007; Steele et al., 2002).

However, compared to direct expressions of bias, it is the unassuming nature of some cues that makes them so powerful (Steele et al., 2002; Major & O' Brien, 2005; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). In fact, Steele and colleagues (2002) posit that subtle cues – in various forms as seen in Table 3.2 – are as effective in facilitating threat and shaping subsequent decisions as are more overt expressions of bias (Davies et al., 2002, 2005).

Being in a setting with a small number of individuals (relative to a more predominant group) with a shared identity is a common and very powerful facilitator of social identity threat (Major & O'Brien, 2005; Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2002). Steele (2010) describes,

> Virtually everyone has counted. Why? Because it tells us whether there are enough identity mates around that we won't be marginalized on the basis of that identity. A low count signals bad possibilities: that we might have trouble being accepted, that we might lack associates who share our sensibilities, that we might lack status and influence in the setting. It doesn't confirm these contingencies. It raises the possibility…(p. 140-141).

Murphy and colleagues' (2007) randomized experiment is illustrative of this cue. At Stanford, the researchers examined the underrepresentation of women within a group of students in math, science, and engineering domains who highly identified with math, science and engineering (MSE) domains. Men and women participants were asked to provide their opinions about an advertising video for a MSE leadership program that the institution is considering hosting in the future. They found that the gender imbalance in favor of men produced avoidance behaviors consistent with previous studies (Cheryan et al., 2009; Davies et al., 2002; Davies et al., 2005); the majority of women participants expressed both a lack of belonging and reluctance to participate in the conference, while men were unaffected.

In addition to numerical cues, Purdie-Vaughn et al. (2008) conducted an analysis of how numerical representation and ideology cues activate identity threat among African Americans and White participants considering entering a "mainstream" company environment. They tested whether fewer African Americans in a company brochure (i.e., numerical representation cue) and a company's color-blind "diversity philosophy" or ideology (i.e., ideology cue) were sufficient enough to induce threat due to a fear of bias

and influence participants' decisions to avoid employment. The researchers hypothesized that the interaction of these cues would exacerbate social identity threat among African American. They found that for participants who were exposed to a numerical representation cue, subsequent exposure to the color-blind cue increased their reporting of social identity threat and facilitated diminished trust in the setting and disinterest in pursuing employment with the company. Interestingly, subsequent efforts to reaffirm the value of targeted participants' in a setting can be successful in restoring some level of trust and safety (Davies et al., 2005; Cheryan et al., 2009).

Table 3.2. *Select Examples of Sources of Threat*

Situational Cue	Description	Example
Number and Percentage of People in a Setting Who Share a Given Social Identity	Conveys the degree to which a social identity has minority status.	A Black prospective student has a campus visit and recalls seeing a handful of Black students throughout the day.
Cues Suggesting That Social Identity Plays an Organizational Role in the Setting	Similar to ethnic/gender specialization. Organizational structure, in terms of the social identities associated with particular roles or functions may convey that someone will have limited or abundant opportunities.	A Korean-American student is interested in joining the executive board of a multicultural organization, but all of the members are Black.
Cues About Norms of Intergroup Sensitivity	Signals the presence or absence of norms around intergroup conduct and sensitivity toward different social identities.	A Christian student sees a listing for a thriving Intergroup Faith organization in her campus viewbook.

Sources: Murphy et al., (2007); Purdie-Vaughns et al., (2008); Steele et al., (2002); Steele (2010)

Lack of organizational identification. The numerical and ideology cues

represented in the aforementioned studies are also related to an additional dimension on which threat can be experienced: the lack of organizational identification. Beyond signaling bias, issues related to safety, or other contingencies, cues provide information about the organization that helps individuals determine the congruence between aspects of themselves (i.e., identity, values, etc.) and the values and norms of the organization— When there is congruence, the organization provides "easy opportunities for self expression" or the ability for individuals to demonstrate "more of themselves" (Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994, p. 244).

The lack of organizational identification, on the other hand, might pose a threat to one's identity. Not necessarily because of fear of bias but possibly because of difference or incongruence. For example, a student from a predominantly Black urban city and/or a student from a small, rural town both may have values and norms that differ from those ascribed to an elite, predominantly white institution, potentially leading to identity threat. Indeed, Byrd and Chavous (2012) note that incongruence between one's racial identity and their perceptions of the environment has implications for the connections (or lack thereof) that are formed and the variation in individual experiences of race.

Therefore, what is significant about the collection of studies on cues is that they: (1) can signal different aspects of the environment which may lead individuals to perceive and experience different dimensions of threat and (2) have the power to determine –independent of direct and confirmatory experiences—whether or not one feels trusting of or threatened by a setting they are considering entering.

As an example, the majority of the women participants in Davies et al.'s (2002) study expressed a desire to avoid occupational experiences associated with the stereotype

without actually having a direct experience in the domain/setting that confirmed the negative experience they wanted to avoid. These findings suggest that social identity threat is facilitated both by one's personal experiences or general knowledge of how people with particular social identities are regarded in a setting as well as by situational cues—whether they are subtle or more overt and independent of their accurate reflection of the environment or setting (Steele et al., 2002; Steele, 2010). However, as the name connotes, situational cues have been used largely in past studies to invoke and/or assess the presence of threat in *situations.* In the present study, I use the logic of situational cues and apply that logic to interactions or experiences related to the university *setting*.

Cues: A mechanism for threat in the college campus. I conceive of cues as the mechanism by which some Black students perceive threat in their recruitment and yield experiences. Persons of color are more likely to "choose activities and seek out environments that affirm their [racial and ethnic] identity, especially in response to identity threats such as racial discrimination" (McKay and Avery, 2006, p. 398). Therefore, admitted Black students may decide against enrolling in highly selective universities where cues either signal an ambiguous diversity commitment and/or challenges with creating and sustaining a supportive and inclusive racial climate for students of color. The perception of either or both may be compelling enough to influence students' enrollment choice.

Yet it is important to note that not all students will perceive or respond to threats in similar ways. Social identity theory has generally given little attention to individual variation in identity, "preferring to stress the common response to conditions of salience" (Ethier & Deaux, 1994, p. 249). Ethier and Deaux's (1990, 1994) research suggests group

identity salience is related to the congruence between individuals' ethnic background and their college environment. The authors found that Latino students' ethnic identity was related to responses to perceived threat wherein "strong group identification" seemed to play a protective role for students as they entered their institutions. What is more, their findings on the variation in the meaning and strength of identity as it relates to their participants' perceptions of threat underscore the importance of investigating racial centrality (i.e., strength of identification) for Black students in the current study as a way to more fully understand their college choice decisions. Such an approach is consistent with empirical studies where the Perceived Threat Scale has been adapted in analyses of Black students' ethnic fit, academic adjustment, and social experiences in predominantly White universities (Chavous, 2000; Chavous, Rivas, Green, & Helaire, 2002) and it will be useful in a highly selective institutional context.

This institutional context, conditioned by an affirmative action ban, is likely to be saturated with setting cues that target racial identity or make race more; however the centrality of one's race is what shapes individual perceptions of threat (via cues) and may further explain how and if individuals choose to respond to perceived threats. Chavous (2000) posits, "racial centrality may play a complex role in the social behavior of African American college students" (p. 95). Thus, racial centrality as conceptualized in the Multi-Dimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) represents a necessary addition, conceptually and empirically, to social identity threat used to examine Black students' experiences. Given that it emphasizes the unique, social and historical experiences of African Americans, the model complicates the social identity theoretical perspective and,

as a result, may offer promising insights for explaining how Black students choose colleges in post-affirmative action contexts where racial cues are increasingly salient.

Multidimensional model of racial identity The Multi-Dimensional Model of Racial Identity is a conceptual model that represents a consolidation of existing theories on group identity, but intentionally attends to "historical and cultural experiences that make racial identity a unique form of group identity for African Americans" (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, and Chavous, 1998, p. 19). Put simply, it is a refutation of ideas and assumptions in the psychology literature that African Americans are a homogenous group that will respond to particular contexts and situations in similar ways. Embedded in the MMRI is a desire to understand the qualitative meaning that individuals attribute to their racial group. The creators of the model suggest there are two key questions that it attempts to address: "How important is race in the individual's perception of self?" and "What does it mean to be a member of this racial group?"

The MMRI has been used with Latino/a, Black and Asian adolescents and college students to explore relationships between racial identity and a range of outcomes including academic attainment and performance (Chavous et al., 2003; Sellers, Chavous, & Cooke, 1998; Yip, Seaton, and Sellers, 2006), psychological adjustment (e.g., Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2008), and health (e.g., Banks, & Kohn-Wood, 2007). With regard to college choice, scholars have studied the role of racial identity in students' perceptions of discrimination (Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006; Sellers and Shelton, 2003), campus racial climate (Chavous, 2005), race-related reasons for choosing an HBCU (Van Camp, 2010; Van Camp, Barden, Sloan, & Clark, 2009), and perceived ethnic fit among students

of color attending predominantly White colleges and universities (Chavous et al., 2002; Chavous, 2002; Chavous, 2000; Chavous et al., 2004). In this dissertation study, the model has utility for understanding the complexity in beliefs Black students have about themselves and the individual judgments they make about the racial environments and diversity commitments of colleges they are considering entering.

Assumptions of MMRI. Four assumptions undergird the MMRI. First, the model assumes that identities are comprised of dynamic and stable properties. The dynamic part of the self-concept is likely to vary with contextual cues while the stable part remains fairly consistent over time. A second assumption is that individuals have multiple social identities and these identities are hierarchical. A Black male is likely to incorporate gender into his definition of what it means to be Black. Thus, the MMRI allows researchers to study multiple social identities, though the model contends one identity is more prominent than others. Third, racial identity is studied with a phenomenological approach. Although societal forces shape the self, an individual's self-perception of their own racial identity is by far the most valid indicator of identity. Finally, the MMRI is concerned with racial identity at any point in time rather than identity development *over* time—a key distinction between other racial identity models (e.g., Cross, 1991; Phinney, 1992).

Dimensions of MMRI. The MMRI asserts four dimensions to racial identity**.** *Racial regard* describes the way a person feels about her race and how she feels about being a member of the race. Individuals can feel positively or negatively about their racial group. *Racial ideology* refers to a person's belief about how members of the racial group should behave and interact with society. *Racial salience* emphasizes the part of

one's self-concept at a particular moment or in a particular situation. *Racial centrality,*

which is particularly relevant to the study, describes the extent to which a person

normatively defines him or herself with regard to race and is relatively stable across

situations. Each dimension is operationalized through the Multidimensional Inventory of

Black Identity (MIBI), an amalgamation of previous identity scales (Sellers et al., 1998).

   Racial centrality. Of the four dimensions, racial centrality and salience represent

the core of the MMRI. Racial salience varies across individuals and contexts, and race is

not necessarily central for all members of the same group. To illustrate the connections

yet subtle differences between the dimensions, suppose for example, two Black students

out of several hundred are participating in a campus event at a predominantly white

university. Recognizing that she is just one of two Black students among hundreds, race

in this particular campus setting may become more salient for her. On the other hand, the

second Black student may be oblivious to her racial minority status in the environment.

According to the MMRI, this is because racial centrality determines whether individuals

are directed toward or away from context cues that might make race salient (Sellers et al.,

1998). As Black students engage in college choice activities (i.e., recruitment), their

racial identity and perception of various cues embedded in this process has consequences

for their appraisal of the university context.

   One of the benefits of the centrality dimension is that it allows researchers to

examine how racial identification varies both across and within groups, addressing a key

limitation of social identity threat (Steele et al., 2002). Building upon the work of Ethier

and Deaux (1990, 1994) who studied perception of discrimination among Latino/a

students entering Ivy League institutions, Chavous (2000) conducted a study of 215

African American undergraduate students, using cluster and hierarchical regression analyses. She found that background characteristics and precollege interracial contacts (high school and neighborhood racial composition) were important factors in African American students' perception of fit in predominantly White contexts. Students from less affluent backgrounds and low interracial contacts in the precollegiate experiences perceived less fit with the college environment.

Other studies using the MMRI suggest that centrality may be important for understanding Black students' experiences of racial discrimination. Shelton and Sellers (2000) found that individuals with higher levels of race centrality were more likely to interpret ambiguous events as being the result of racism while other studies have found an association between racial centrality and increased reports of racial discrimination (Neblett et al., 2004; Sellers et al., 2003; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Sellers and Shelton's (2003) quantitative longitudinal study of 267 African Americans at three predominantly White institutions indicates racial centrality may leave students more vulnerable to perceptions of discrimination, which implies racial identification may exacerbate feelings of incompatibility. The researchers discovered that racial centrality was positively associated with perceived racial discrimination. That is, the more important being Black was to a participant, the more racial discrimination they had reported experiencing in the past year.

Two additional studies use racial centrality to examine Black students' reasons for enrolling at an HBCU (Van Camp et al., 2009; Van Camp, 2010). Findings suggest those students who reported a higher level of racial centrality and those who had less intragroup racial contact in adolescence were more likely to cite race-related reasons for choosing

73

HBCUs (e.g., desire to be with Black peers) versus non-race related reasons (e.g., offer of high quality education). While these works highlight the preference of some students to pursue opportunities for racial development in college as a factor in their college choice, the study explored the reasons for these decisions a year *after* students had matriculated at the HBCUs. It is likely, then, that respondents had been socialized in their college environment and might have responded differently about their enrollment choice had they been surveyed before enrolling.

Collectively, the selection of studies surveyed here confirms an important assumption of the MMRI: the extent to which one's racial identity is important to the individual (i.e., race centrality) has implications for integration into predominantly White educational contexts and perceptions of discrimination and fit. While more research is needed to clarify the role of racial centrality before students enter dominant settings and the relationship between racial centrality and individual behavior (versus attitudes, psychological outcomes, etc.), the collective strengths and complementarity of social identity threat and racial centrality represent a significant contribution to existing approaches to college choice. Next, I discuss the integration of these theoretical concepts and their implications for re-conceptualizing college choice in post-affirmative action contexts.

Re-conceptualizing Choice: An Integration of Social Identity Models

The predominant conceptual and empirical literature on college choice has characterized the college choice process, and college choice itself, as most informed by students' perceptions and expectations related to financial aid and college costs. Despite efforts by researchers to improve college choice predictions for Black and Latina/o

students' enrollment decision by integrating sociological constructs and institutional

factors (Perna, 2000,2006), these analyses are still very much grounded in an economic

theoretical perspective. This slant to prevailing theory is not inherently problematic, and

finances are undoubtedly influential in student choice (Avery & Hoxby, 2004;

DesJardins, Ahlburg, & McCall, 2006; Kim, 2004; Kim et al., 2009; Perna, 2006, 2008).

However, the empirical research demonstrates that it is clearly insufficient to explain

college choice for African American students, for whom institutional diversity

commitments and racial contexts of college campuses are also critically important (Alger,

1998; Avery & McKay, 2006; Cho et al., 2008; Engberg & Wolniak, 2009; Kidder, 2012;

Kim & Gelfan, 2003; Teranishi & Briscoe, 2008; Thomas & Wise, 1999). Evidence from

the review of literature suggests some students have a specific preference for campus

racial diversity that is highly consequential in their college choice decisions (e.g., Cho et

al., 2008; Engberg & Wolniak, 2009). Others may not have a specific preference, but

may become enlightened to compositional diversity or racial climate through yield and

recruitment activities and information received from current students, family, friends,

social media and other sources (Teranishi & Briscoe, 2008). Still, these works do not

explain how prospective Black students perceive and appraise diversity commitments and

racial climate of the college campus. To my knowledge, no mechanism currently exists.

Given these insights, this study incorporates elements from four conceptual

frameworks: Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) college choice model, Perna's (2006)

proposed conceptual model for studying student college access and choice, social identity

threat (e.g., Byrd & Chavous, 2012; Dutton et al., 1994; Ethier & Deaux, 1990, 1994;

Steele et al., 2002) and racial centrality (Sellers et al., 1998). As the primary college

choice model used to understand student decisions, Hossler and Gallagher's model has informed the organization of the literature review and served as a foundation for the data collection and data analysis. Perna's (2006) proposed conceptual framework assumes four contextual layers shape individuals' college choice decisions. Two of these layers—social, economic and policy context and higher education context—are particularly relevant for situating the post-affirmative action context and institutional policies, practices and discourse ways that might affect Black admitted students.

Table 3.3. *Elements of Conceptual Framework*

Theory/Model	Authors	Key Element(s)
Three-Phase Model of College Choice	Hossler & Gallagher (1987)	• Foundation • Isolates admitted to yield phase (choice)
Model of College Access & Choice	Perna (2006)	• Social, economic and policy context • Higher education context
Social Identity Threat	Ethier & Deaux (1990, 1994) Steele et al. (2002)	• Perceived threat • Situational cues
Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity	Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, and Chavous (1998)	• Racial Salience • Racial Centrality

The integration of social identity threat and the racial centrality dimension of the MMRI with higher education research will strengthen the analysis of college choice in the current study. Social identity threat conceives of individual choices as most informed by the appraisal of contexts as either threatening or safe on the basis of perceived cues,

76

which represent the various messages that students receive about campus diversity and campus climate. Moreover, based on the logic of social identity theory (and threat), members of stigmatized identities would perceive and experience more threat and those who strongly identify with these identities (high identity centrality) would be even more vulnerable to identity threats. In the context of college choice, we might expect these individuals to opt out of institutions that pose such threats (i.e., higher likelihood of experiencing token status, bias, etc.) in favor of those that are identity safe—more diverse, inclusive, or affirming.

Racial identity (MMRI) also has important contributions for re-conceptualizing college choice. The model emphasizes the complex nature of individual racial identity that has been unexplored in mostly group-level analyses of college choice. Also, given the demonstrably salient racial dynamics of highly selective campuses in states where affirmative action is banned, racial centrality might play a more critical role in understanding students' decisions to matriculate at institutions that have challenges with campus climate and/or struggle to enroll Black students.

What is more, where social identity theory might posit individuals with stigmatized identities are more vulnerable to threat in these contexts, the MMRI conceptualizes racial identity as protective set of beliefs that African Americans have developed to buffer against the impact of racial discrimination and stigmatized status and to engage in settings and domains despite the presence of individual and racial barriers (Smalls, White, Chavous & Sellers, 2007). Therefore, a stigmatized identity in a institutional context may not necessarily result in perceived threat or in institutional withdrawal. Attending to identity centrality (dimension of the model) will illuminate how

77

and whether students perceive and experience threats differentially and the possible consequences for their college decisions as a result.

To summarize, the primary assumptions of the conceptual framework for this study are as follows. First, all students have multiple social identities (although I draw on most heavily racial identity). Second, students' social identities and previous academic and lived experiences shape their preferences, perceptions, and appraisals as they navigate the college choice process. Third, these perceptions and preferences are heightened in a post-affirmative action context. Finally, I assume students are ultimately attracted to institutions that signal, through cues, that they will be valued and affirmed and not marginalized in the setting on the basis of their racial identity. Importantly, the qualitative and contextual nature of these assumptions informs the subsequent research design.

Conclusion

In conclusion, approaches to studying college choice, which derive from economic and sociology theories, do not explain how students interpret and appraise non-economic attributes such as racial contexts of college campuses (i.e., diversity commitments and racial climate), nor have they fully depicted "courtship" or recruitment efforts, or attended to the complexity and role of racial identity in students' decision-making. In the proposed interdisciplinary framework, grounded in organizational, cultural and social psychological theories and research, Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) college choice model serves as the foundation to explore college choice/decision-making behavior. Incorporating Perna's (2006) focus on the higher education, social, economic, and policy contexts foregrounds the role of institutional recruitment practices, dynamic

sociopolitical debates about affirmative action, the rise of diversity initiatives in higher

education, and highly public racial tensions on college campuses and beyond. In addition,

social identity theories (social identity threat and the MMRI) illuminate the ways in

which Black students may perceive, appraise, and respond to this contextual information

in their decision-making in diverse ways. Together, elements of these conceptual models

have informed both data collection and analysis, and have facilitated a deeper exploration

of Black student college choice and enrollment.

Chapter 4: Methodology

As the review of literature notes, few empirical studies have explored Black students' college choice in post-affirmative action contexts, despite evidence that bans and the campus environments they help create may complicate efforts to attract and yield Black students in selective institutions. To understand inequities in selective Black enrollment at the University of Michigan, a campus where Black students comprise 4.66%[11] of the undergraduate population, I sought to investigate how the implementation of Proposal 2 has shaped undergraduate recruitment and yield practices, the ways in which the university frames its commitment to diversity, and how these and other factors influence Black students' perceptions of the campus environment, and consequently their college choice decisions. To reiterate, the following questions guided my analysis:

1. Since the passage of Proposal 2, how has the University of Michigan conveyed institutional commitment to diversity in its efforts to yield Black admitted undergraduate students?

2. How do Black admitted students perceive the University's institutional commitment to diversity and the broader campus racial climate in their college choice process?

3. What explains divergence in students' perceptions of institutional commitment to diversity and broader campus climate?

---

[11] In Fall 2016, Black students comprised 4.66% (1, 255) of the undergraduate population 26,922 students (2016, Office of the Registrar).

4. How do Black admits' perceptions of threat or safety shape their college choice?

Unlike much of the empirical literature on college choice, I prioritized the institutional and broader socio-historical and political contexts of diversity, race relations, and affirmative action, recognizing their importance to the study's aims and in turn, its design.

The study design derives from the limitations of extant data sources, which do not afford researchers the ability to adequately examine the problem of selective Black enrollment outlined in previous chapters. Large, nationally representative questionnaires often used in studies of college choice do not contain the requisite individual level variables necessary to understand the social processes and constructs inherent in students' perceptions, appraisals and decision-making, nor do they typically reflect the organizational-level factors and conditions illuminated in reports of Black student activism at UM, UCLA, UC Berkeley and other predominantly white institutions. And while institutional datasets focused on student choice and enrollment may be more context-specific than national sources, they do not generally include measures of campus climate and diversity or data on undergraduate yield recruitment, including how representatives of the institution interact with prospective students in their efforts to encourage students' matriculation. These limitations in existing data sources as well as the aims of the current study, raised the importance of participant voices and observations, narrowing the scope of methods to qualitative inquiry and case study methodology, in particular. Ultimately, I conducted a case study of Black students' college choice in the University of Michigan's post-affirmative action era, focusing on undergraduate yield

practices as well as the role of admitted students' racial identity and perceptions of institutional climates for race and diversity.

Case Study Approach

As an empirical strategy, qualitative case studies are useful for investigating contemporary issues (i.e., a case of persistently low Black enrollment at an institution where affirmative action is prohibited) as they naturally occur in contexts of time and place (i.e., a university admissions cycle) and are highly valued for their ability to capture "action, perceptions and interpretations" (Merriam, 2009, p. 44) – social processes that represented a focal point of analysis in this study. By drawing upon multiple data sources the case approach aims to facilitate a complex, in-depth understanding of a bounded system—the case—uncovering the convergence of factors characteristic of the phenomenon it represents (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005). Given the aim to explore "the deeper causes behind a given problem" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 229) rather than merely analyzing the factors associated with a particular outcome, the "case" --or the bounded system-- is often selected because it is representative or typical of the phenomenon of interest (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003). The methods the researcher chooses to study the case are highly consequential (Yin, 2003).

The Case. The study draws as its case the University of Michigan—a flagship campus that, as I described in Chapter Two and as reflected in the institution's diversity timeline in Appendix I, has been a "battleground" for affirmative action (Berrey, 2015; Garces & Cogburn, 2015). President, Mark Schlissel described the university as a "test-case" from which other higher education institutions can and should learn, highlighting in a recent *New York Times* article the university's struggle with enrolling African American

students since enacting Proposal 2 (Barnes, 2015). As summarized in Table 4.1, the

University's composition also resembles highly-selective public universities such as

UCLA and UC Berkeley which, compared to other public universities, have experienced

tremendous difficulty making gains in Black undergraduate enrollment in years since

legal measures banning affirmative action have been in place (Grodsky & Kurlaendar,

2010; Kidder, 2012; Orfield, 2007; Potter, 2014). The University of Michigan also

fulfilled my analytic aim of understanding how affirmative action bans shapes yield-

recruitment in such environments and how prospective Black students read and respond

to university behavior, including portrayals of its commitment to diversity, the campus

climate it creates, and its responses to Proposal 2.

Table 4.1
University of Michigan 2015 First-Year Student Profile vs. Highly Selective Institutions

Race/Ethnicity	University of Michigan	Public Highly Selective	Private Very Highly Selective
White/Caucasian	75.5%	68.6%*	69.2%*
African American/Black	**4.6%**	**5.8%***	**7.5%***
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.0%	1.6%*	1.3%
East Asian	9.8%	14.0%*	14.0%*
Southeast Asian	1.9%	4.8%*	2.8%*
South Asian	7.2%	5.2%*	6.3%
Other Asian	0.6%	0.7%	0.8%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.3	0.5%	0.5%
Mexican American/Chicano	2.5%	7.4%*	2.8%
Puerto Rican	0.6	0.8	1.3%*
Other Latino	2.1%	4.5%*	6.6%*
Other	1.8%	2.4%*	2.7%*

Source: Cooperative Institutional Research Program. UM data gathered by Student Life Research. National data compiled by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. Statistically significant differences (p<0.1) are marked with an asterisk.

Further, by focusing on this case, I was able to gather information relevant to my

interest in understanding the implications for institutional efforts intended to improve and

support racial diversity at public higher education institutions (Garces & Cogburn, 2015).

The boundaries of the case are *organizational*--a highly selective public university affected by an affirmative action ban--and *temporal*--the undergraduate admissions cycle from recruitment to yield. In the remainder of this chapter, I describe the implications of case study design for the sampling, data collection, and data analysis strategies employed.

Sampling

In the case-based approach, sampling often occurs at multiple levels (Merriam, 2009). After selecting the case to be studied, the researcher must determine the units of analysis *embedded* within the case-- which participants to interview, events or activities to observe, and other forms of data to analyze (Merriam, 2009, Yin, 2003). Given my argument that college reflects an interactive process that involves both the institution (e.g., yield recruitment) and prospective/admitted students and thus should be explored contextually and not as a singular, isolated outcome, I used meaningful criteria—i.e., purposive sampling—to select sources that would best extract the information necessary to generate in-depth understanding about Black students' college choice and to illuminate similar cases (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). This study includes two subsamples: enrollment management professionals and admitted students, which I describe in turn.

University participants. My university representative sampling design as summarized in Table 4.2, drew primarily from the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. As prospective students progress through the college-choice process, they typically interact with admissions counselors who share information about the university and the application process through high school visits, college fairs, and programming. Then, once students are admitted, admissions professionals coordinate receptions, campus tours and other special events aimed at encouraging students to matriculate. I also included

staff from the Office of Financial Aid since it works in tandem with admissions. In addition, the awarding of aid—particularly scholarships and grants—is among the most critical mechanisms for yielding students (Avery & Hoxby, 2004; DesJardins et al., 2006; Kim et al., 2009).

Table 4.2. *Sample of University Enrollment Management Professionals*

Unit/Office	Brief Description	Participants
Office of Undergraduate Admissions	The university's central unit for undergraduate admissions and recruitment, including yield-recruitment initiatives on and off campus.	9
Office of Financial Aid	Conducts recruitment and yield to increase awareness around financial aid options for prospective and admitted students.	5
Comprehensive Studies Program	Provides academic support to underrepresented students, such as Summer Bridge, and works closely with admissions, financial aid, and student affairs.	1
College of Engineering	Second largest admitting unit for undergraduates. Engaged in yield-recruitment specific to engineering and works collaboratively with admissions.	1
	Total Enrollment Management Professionals	16

I expanded my sample to include key informants from two additional units, the Comprehensive Studies Program (CSP) and the College of Engineering, once I learned the role these units played in yield-recruitment during the early stages of data collection. It is only within the past few years that CSP has actively participated in coordinated efforts to yield underrepresented students admitted to the University of Michigan through its summer bridge program although the office has long played an important role in

supporting African American undergraduate students at the university.[12] The College of Engineering is the second largest admitting unit after the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, and has staff dedicated to undergraduate yield and recruitment. Both CSP and Engineering partnered with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, participating in yield events targeted at underrepresented students, which included a more racially diverse population.

Given that the Office of Enrollment Management (OEM) is the umbrella for admissions and financial aid and works closely with CSP and Engineering, they served as an important collaborator in this research project, helping me to gain access to professionals engaged in yield efforts as well as to key yield activities and events, including those attended by underrepresented/Black students and their families. After receiving IRB approval and general consent to include these units in the study, I identified a list of individuals whom I wanted to interview: leaders who could provide an overview of the office and offer an historical perspective on yield practices pre-and post-Proposal 2 and staff who were more student-facing, having spent the majority of their time enacting yield strategies and participating in yield-recruitment programming. I was particularly interested in speaking with admissions staff assigned to geographic territories with relatively larger populations of Black students or other underrepresented students of color, and in the case of financial aid, staff members who specialized in outreach to schools and community organizations and who participated in yield activities coordinated by admissions.

Sensitive to my own social identities, positionality as a researcher, and to what

_____

[12] CSP was founded in 1983 with the expressed purpose of supporting the recruitment and retention of African American students at the University of Michigan

Posselt (2013) describes as the "reputational implications" of research of this sort for university employees that chose to participate, I tried to make prospective participants feel at ease. As an initial contact with each of the of the offices, the OEM distributed a short description of my study to a list of designated prospective participants in which I framed my work as a matter of understanding college recruitment in U-M's post-Proposal 2 era, including the implications for diversifying undergraduate student enrollment. I then followed up directly to determine individual interest in participating and to share a copy of the IRB-approved informed consent document (See Appendix H for document, including list of confidentiality procedures implemented). The institutional sample consists of a racially/ethnically diverse group of enrollment management professionals with varying professional and educational backgrounds. Participants' length of employment at the university ranged from six months to over 20 years; the vast majority had earned their baccalaureate degree from the University of Michigan.

It bears noting that the successful recruitment of participants would not be possible without the support of the OEM, whose leadership I consulted in constructing aspects of this study. First, cultivating a partnership with OEM supported my aim to develop a project that would not only make important scholarly contributions but also help inform institutional policy and practice around attracting Black students in institutional contexts constrained affirmative action bans. Second, there is little extant theoretically grounded empirical research on enrollment management; therefore, it was advantageous to have conversations about the appropriate units from which to build my sample. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, OEM provided access to the institutional data necessary to identify and recruit student participants, the second sample in this study.

Student participants. Pulling from students' application files, the OEM generated a dataset that included the entire population of Black students (and Black as one of two racial/ethnic identities) admitted to the University of Michigan in the 2015-2016 admissions cycle. The data was processed after May 1, 2016, the university's enrollment deadline, to capture admitted students who paid their enrollment deposit later in the admissions process. These students represented the population of Black enrollees while any admits who had not paid their enrollment by the deadline or who had withdrawn their application after being admitted, I treated as non-enrollees. Since the crux of the dissertation focuses on understanding Black students' college choice as a window into their low representation at the University of Michigan, it was important to recruit from both groups, particularly non-enrollees.

In addition to racial/ethnic identity and enrollment status, there were other key criteria I considered in developing my sampling framework. To isolate the yield-recruitment process that possible participants were likely to experience during the 2015-2016 admissions cycle, it was important that the sample was comprised of students entering their freshman year in Fall 2016, as opposed to those who might be matriculating as a transfer student. Compared to incoming college freshmen, the recruitment strategies/initiatives for prospective transfer students is qualitatively different, as are the factors that might shape their college choice. Finally, to isolate the social experience particular to the U.S. socio-historical context, international students were also excluded from the dataset, leaving 431 non-enrollees and 375 enrollees from which to recruit my participants, which I then randomized.

I used an IRB- approved email template to invite the first 100 students to consider participating in the study, knowing that only a fraction would respond. I emailed subsequent waves of students (100 each wave for both enrollees and non-enrollees) until I reached a sample that sufficiently represented diversity of geographic locations. Nearly two-thirds of the way into participant recruitment, I noticed that I had only a small number of in-state students, particularly from the Detroit area. I sought to resolve this imbalance by targeting these students with multiple invitations to participate in the study.

In the message to all admitted students, I described the research study and included a link to a short Google Form where students could review and sign the IRB approved consent and provide their availability for an interview. I described my work as a matter of understanding their college recruitment experiences and the factors shaping their enrollment decisions; I did not focus on the role of their social identities or perceptions of racial climate and institutional commitment to diversity. Given non-enrollee students' involvement was consequential to the study and yet they were likely to be less motivated to participate having decided not to matriculate at the University of Michigan, I offered them a $40 Amazon gift-card for completing a 60-75 minute interview. Enrollee students were offered a $25 gift card. These incentives were also necessary since participant recruitment and data collection transpired during late spring and summer, presumably a busy time for graduating high seniors (e.g., prom, graduation, etc.). In total, my sample includes 35 admitted students—20 non-enrollees and 15 enrollees whose demographic characteristics I summarize in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 *Sample of Admitted Students*

Name	Permanent Residence	Racial/Ethnic Identity	College Attending	Intended Major
Brittany	Georgia	Black (Nigerian)	University of Michigan	Neuroscience/Pre-med
Charlotte	Illinois	Black/African American	University of Michigan	Undecided
Cameron	New Jersey	Black/African American	University of Michigan	Industrial Operations Engineering
Dana	Michigan	Black/African American	University of Michigan	Undecided
Jonie	Michigan	Black/African American	University of Michigan	Computer Science
Jason	Illinois	Black/African American	University of Michigan	Computer Engineering
Jihan	Florida	Black/African American	University of Michigan	Mechanical Engineering
Karl	Maryland	Black/African American	University of Michigan	Communications
Laura	Michigan	Biracial/Black (2 or more)	University of Michigan	Undecided
Megan	Michigan	Black/African American	University of Michigan	Pre-med
Nina	Pennsylvania	Black/African American	University of Michigan	Bio/Pre-med
Nadia	Michigan	Black/African American	University of Michigan	Music & Dance
Nathan	Texas	Biracial/Black (2 or more)	University of Michigan	Engineering
London	Michigan	Black/African American	University of Michigan	Communications
Zara	Michigan	Black/African American	University of Michigan	Pre-law/philosophy
Alexa	Michigan	Biracial/Black (2 or more)	Michigan State University	Undecided
Alicia	Michigan	Black/African American	Yale	Undecided
Edith	Maryland	Black/African American	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Chemical or Biological Engineering
Ariana	Michigan/New Jersey	Black/African American	Princeton	Psychology or Neuroscience

Brian	Arizona	Biracial/Black (2 or more)	University of Pennsylvania	Business
Chenyere	Ohio	Black/African American	Ohio State University	Public Health Communications
Carlton	Indiana	Black/African American	Indiana University	Health Sciences/Medical School
Cassie	Michigan	Biracial/Black (2 or more)	Northwestern	Health Science or Neuroscience
Eli	Illinois	Black/African American	Boston University	Psychology
Jeremy	Ohio	Black/African American	Ohio State University	Biomedical Engineering
Jasmine	Michigan	Biracial/Black (2 or more)	St. John's University	Pharmacy
Jalin	Illinois	Black/African American	Georgetown	International Business
Steve	Ohio	Black/African American	UNC - Chapel Hill	Biology
Natalie	Georgia	Black/African American	Howard University	Strategic legal and management communications
Melissa	Michigan	Black/African American	Florida A & M University	Business
Micala	California/Michigan	Biracial/Black (2 or more)	Kettering University	Industrial Operations Engineering
Mary	Maryland	Biracial/Black (2 or more)	Stanford University	Engineering
Tracy	Texas	Black/African American	Oberlin College	Biology/Premed
Tara	Georgia	Black/African American	Stanford University	International Relations and Environmental Studies
Rick	Maryland	Biracial/Black (2 or more)	University of Chicago	Computer Science

Participants reflected geographic origins throughout the U.S., diverse educational

backgrounds (i.e., charter, public, private, and boarding schools), and a range of intended

academic majors/interests. And, as I will discuss in Chapter 6, non-enrollee

participants—those who declined the University of Michigan's offer of admission—

reported plans to attend a variety of public and private institutions, from MIT and Yale to Oberlin College and Howard University.

Data Collection

Before proceeding into the details of data collection and analysis, it is important to note data collection conventions implied by case study methodology. Case-based research does not dictate any particular methods for data collection—all methods are available to the researcher (Merriam, 2009). However, to arrive at an in-depth understanding, case study scholars recommend using each of the common qualitative data collection techniques: interviews, observations, and artifact analysis (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2004). In this study, data collection consisted of interviews, observations, and documents --sources that would best illuminate the perspectives of the university and the Black students whom it admits. Interviews and admissions materials were ideal for developing a base knowledge of how the university recruits and for capturing espoused commitment to diversity and individual reflections on the implications of Proposal 2 for yield practices (RQ 1). Observation of yield activities was critical for ascertaining the enacted commitment to and communication of diversity. The remaining research questions, which focus on student participants' perceptions of diversity and climate, social identities, and college choice decisions (RQs 2, 3 & 4), were best answered through semi-structured interviews. In the following section, I describe the study's data collection procedures, occurring in two phases over eight months.

Phase One: Institutional Yield Recruitment and Commitment to Diversity

Interviews. Interviews are useful for exploring phenomena understudied or not well understood in the empirical literature (Merriam, 2009; Weiss, 1994). They are also

ideal for analyzing organizational practices. Qualitative interviews with multiple persons associated with a single organization have the means to bring about a more complex understanding of the organization and what it does than would be possible with a single perspective. Moreover, the account of multiple informants offers insight into "how the organization works" –its goals and values—and how individuals enact and interpret them in their specific roles (Weiss, 1994, p. 10). With the aim of developing a holistic, in-depth understanding of yield-recruitment, Post-Proposal 2, I interviewed 16 enrollment management professionals across four different units, as described above.

Consistent with a semi-structured approach, these interviews varied somewhat depending on if the interviewee was in a leadership role or if they were actually engaged, first-hand, in yield-recruitment efforts. In interviews with leaders, my goal was to develop a top-down understanding of each unit's efforts to yield underrepresented students. These questions focused on the broader aims and strategies driving actual practice. We also discussed their interpretations of challenges with yielding Black students in the current sociopolitical environment and in the years since Proposal 2 was enacted. These interviews averaged approximately 45-60 minutes each and all took place in the unit offices, at the participant's designation. With participant's consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

In comparison, my interviews with participants who regularly interacted with admitted students focused more explicitly on the practice of recruiting and yielding students. I adapted the interviews to the organizational context of each unit while attending to a common set of questions and discussion points. I also focused on understandings and communication of institutional commitment to diversity and

reflections on the implications of the state imposed affirmative action ban for yield-recruitment practices. But I saved these questions and others related to diversity and any perceived challenges to yielding a more racially diverse student population towards the end of the interview, once I had begun to establish trust with the participant. I asked interviewees to elaborate on any specific challenges, issues or initiatives related to institutional commitment to diversity and racial climate, such as Proposal 2, #BBUM, and the university's strategic diversity planning efforts which were ongoing at the time. Each interview ranged from 45 to 60 minutes and most took place in the participant's workspace—a private office or conference room they scheduled. Two participants opted to be interviewed at my office located in the School of Education, an option that I offered to all participants, and one at a coffee shop on campus.

Across these interviews, my goal was to deepen my understanding of the University's practices around yield, ascertaining individual differences in how this approach was carried out, particularly with respect to underrepresented students. I asked leading questions intended to "elicit the overall experiences and understandings" (Rubin and Rubin, 2009, p. 152-153) of participants, followed up to check my understanding of responses, and probed to encourage additional detail and examples—all of which were necessary to arrive at a more complete narrative of the university's yield-recruitment. A number of the questions were developed using Robert Weiss' (1995) *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* and piloted with university staff who were previously involved in undergraduate recruitment but were not engaged in the recruitment efforts I observed and analyzed in the current study.

Observations. Observations of university actors in context offered additional insight into yield-recruitment—augmenting the information gleaned through participant interviews. While semi-structured interviews helped me to ascertain the *espoused* commitment to diversity—philosophies and interpretations of how diversity is communicated in the university's stated policies and practices — observations of yield activities were critical for understanding the ways in which diversity is *enacted*, by whom and in what context—the notion of which some participants may feel uncomfortable discussing in an interview or may otherwise be only marginally aware. Indeed, one of the benefits of observational data is that outsiders are able to notice what has become routine to participants (Merriam, 2009). The inclusion of observational data also tempered the possible influence of socially desirability bias in interviews, especially with regard to questions that dealt explicitly with issues of race, diversity, and the challenging climate for Black students at the University of Michigan. Overall, I am grateful that I was granted access to this invaluable source of knowledge about how the university engages in efforts to yield underrepresented students.

During the span of three months in Winter 2016, I observed three types of yield-recruitment events: meet-and-greet receptions throughout the state of Michigan open to a broad audience of admitted students and their parents, particularly those who would be less likely to visit campus because of the distance; celebrations in Detroit and Chicago for underrepresented students from designated urban areas/schools; and large-scale events targeted at a broad swath of underrepresented students (historically underrepresented students of color, first-generation, low-income, urban, rural location) held on the University of Michigan's campus. In total, I conducted just over 23 hours of observations.

The shortest observations were meet and greet receptions, which generally averaged around 90 minutes. At 6 hours, Campus Visit Day was the longest yield event I observed. Using techniques described in Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's (1995) *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, I took structured field notes longhand to document the following:

1. Discourses of race and diversity

2. The perceived racial identity of university representatives

3. The approximate number of prospective students that appeared to be African American/Black compared to the size of the group

4. The physical setting and non-verbal communication in the setting (from African American/ Black students and their families)

Much of this study is concerned with diversity discourse—what is communicated, how, by whom and in what context—and cues in the campus environment and throughout the yield-recruitment process that might signal contingencies of threat or exclusion to Black students whom the university admits. It was therefore important to document the discourses of race and diversity. Language or speech is the most explicit way enrollment management professionals and other university representatives might convey the institutional commitment to diversity (Marichal, 2009; Ahmed, 2012). While admittedly imperfect, I also noted the perceived racial identity of university representatives because the social identities of university agents—especially in recruitment contexts—can signal to prospective students that the university is diverse and inclusive (Avery & McKay, 2006; Thomas & Wise, 1999). It represents another way of conveying diversity commitments. In addition, I did my best to do an accounting of the number of African American students attending yield- recruitment events because the percentage or count of

identity-mates within a setting can also provide students with insights about the

university's climate and status of their identity. Finally, consistent with principles of good

ethnographic work (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995), it was important that I document

the details of the settings I was in; the environment can affect social phenomena. This

contextual information was also useful for getting a real sense for yield-recruitment

practices and for facilitating "thick description"(Geertz, 1973)—description of

phenomena that goes beyond what is observable to arrive a deeper meaning.

To further contextualize my understanding of the university's commitment to

diversity during the period of time in which students were making their enrollment

choice, I also attended various events on campus such as the university's first annual

diversity summit, its annual MLK keynote address, and activities related to the campus-

wide strategic diversity planning process.

Table 4.4 *Select Yield-Recruitment Observations*

Location	Event Type	Audience
Ann Arbor	Scholar Recognition Dinner	Targeted (Racially Diverse)
Saginaw	Meet and Greet Reception	Open (Predominantly White)
Clinton Township	Meet and Greet Reception	Open (Predominantly White)
Grand Rapids	Meet and Greet Reception	Open (Predominantly White)
Detroit	Meet and Greet Reception	Open (Predominantly White)
Chicago	Admitted Student Celebration	Targeted (Pred. Black & Latino)
Detroit	Admitted Student Celebration	Targeted (Predominantly Black)
Detroit	Admitted Student Celebration	Targeted (Predominantly Black)
Ann Arbor	Campus Welcome Day	Targeted (Racially Diverse)

Note: These yield events represent a portion of all yield-recruitment events during the
2015-2016 admissions cycle

In each of the observations of yield-recruitment events, I attempted to be as

unobtrusive as possible, envisioning my role as "participant as observer," wherein the

group knew my research aims, but I did not participate in the activities and events I

observed (Gold, 1958). I often sat in the back of the room, where I could get a sense of

the settings and demographic make-up of the audience but still be able to view and hear the speakers' presentations. Despite these precautions, there were two instances when I received unsolicited attention. At the Scholar Recognition Dinner, I was assigned to a table at the very front of the room, seated with two admitted students and their parents as well as the dean of the college of engineering and the director of admissions. And in an event in Chicago, a panelist from the CSP office referred to me as a "success story," noting how I had taken a few sections of CSP courses as an undergraduate student and was now completing a PhD. She even suggested that people speak to me after the program concluded to learn about my experience—a gesture that was completely unexpected and a bit misplaced given that I had not actually attended the CSP Summer Bridge program as an undergraduate. I did end up speaking with two African American parents who asked about my experience at the University of Michigan; I advised them to direct their questions to the admissions counselors who could connect them with current CSP students and alumni of Summer Bridge.

Together, these multiple data sources—interviews, observations, and secondary documents—provided different perspectives from which to develop institutional findings. Observations focused on *enacted* commitment to diversity while interviews shed light on *espoused* commitment to diversity and the individual meaning that university professionals attached to diversity efforts and yield recruitment in their role. Moreover, triangulation of these data allowed for crosschecking and comparison within and among my sample of enrollment management professionals. In turn, this facilitated a more nuanced set of findings and a strong foundation from which to complicate students' perceptions and experiences of diversity, climate and yield recruitment at the University.

Phase Two: Admitted Students' Perceptions and College Choice

Interviews. After completing the institutional phase of data collection, I conducted interviews with 35 student participants during the summer months—after students declared their college choice but before the start of the 2016-2017 academic year. Because many of the study's participants were located outside the state of Michigan, I opted to conduct all interviews in the same format—by phone—using call recording software applications (Google Voice and TapeACall). Interviews focused on admitted students' recruitment experiences, perceptions and appraisals of institutional commitment to diversity and racial climate, centrality of racial/ethnic identity, and any other factors shaping their college choice.

A number of the questions had been used in and/or revised from interviews conducted with 32 Black college students in Summer 2015 as part of a research project on racial identity and students' academic outcomes and experiences which I had been involved. Most relevant to the current study, participants in their 3rd, 4th, and 5th year in college were asked, among other topics, to reflect back on their college choice, the alignment (or lack thereof) between their incoming expectations of institutional commitment to diversity and actual experiences in the university setting, perceptions of campus climate, and the centrality of various social identities (i.e., race, gender, class) in their college environment.

Throughout data collection, I also adapted the student interview protocol in response to unexpected themes that emerged in some of my interviews. For example, it was apparent that current events unfolding during data collection—the shootings of unarmed Black men (Philando Castille and Alton Sterling) were raising participants'

consciousness about issues related to race and inclusiveness. In response, I added a question near the end of the protocol asking interviewees to discuss whether and how these recent events were shaping participants' thoughts about where they had decided to matriculate. These data offered a level of depth that facilitated a complex understanding of selective Black enrollment in the current sociopolitical and racial context.

Data Management

Case study research--even single cases-- generates large amounts of data. I established a case study database that tracks and organizes the various sources of data that I collected over the course of eight months to strengthen the overall quality and reliability of the case study (Yin, 2014) and to improve efficiency in latter stages of the research process. Using Microsoft Excel, a common data management tool, I created an inventory of documents, interviews and field notes which I backed up using an external hard drive and Drop Box, a secure online storage program. The organization and accessibility of the case record, through this database, helped facilitate data analysis procedures.

Data Analysis and Procedures

Unlike other approaches, case research does not stipulate a particular set of analytical strategies (Merriam, 2009). For this study, coding represented a critical aspect of the analytic process. However, it's important to note "coding is not just something you do to 'get the data ready' for analysis but…something that drives ongoing data collection. It is a form of early and continuing analysis" (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014, p. 93). Utilizing techniques from the grounded theory tradition's constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), I conducted three levels of coding: open, axial, and selective

using NVivo 10.2.1 data analysis software. My approach is necessarily interpretive, based on interviews and ethnographic observations as well as analysis of organizational documents.

Interview transcripts and fieldnotes. With the purpose of understanding recruitment and yield practices and the institution's expressed commitment to diversity, the first phase of data analysis was primarily inductive, I began with open coding wherein I identified relevant codes and created "tentative" categories through a process of line-by-line reading of interview transcripts and fieldnotes. (Merriam, 2009, p. 181). I assigned relevant chunks of text to a few categories pre-determined by the study's research questions and conceptual framework (Miles et al. 2014). For example, open coding stipulated I inductively identify recurrent themes relevant to the university's recruitment practices and communication of diversity commitments. I added to the initial list of categories and simultaneously developed codes as I read additional text (Strauss & Corbin, 1998)

The next phase of analysis, axial coding, involved reviewing the data for meaningful relationships between categories, codes, and sub-codes. While the construction of categories and the open coding process is rather inductive, during axial coding, analysis can be thought of as shifting slightly to a more deductive process. Categories were revised iteratively and assigned to existing codes (Merriam, 2009). I also developed sub-codes at this point in the analytic process.

In selective coding, the third and final phase, I read through the transcripts again, making connections between the details of the case and key themes that emerged during axial coding. This level of abstraction generated interpretations and a narrative relevant

101

to the study's research questions and foci (e.g., the university's recruitment practices and expressed commitments to diversity, students' perceptions and experiences of climate, college choice, etc.). Importantly, I also analyzed my transcripts and fieldnotes for what is *not* said in addition to what is said. This proved especially useful in considering how institutional commitment to diversity is communicated in yield-recruitment contexts (RQ 1). I also consulted researcher memos that I drafted throughout data collection and the analytic process to ensure tight conceptual linkages at each level of analysis. These memos attempted to synthesize summaries of data into "higher analytic meanings," a critical part of the analysis of writings and findings (Miles et al., 2014, p.96). Overall, the iterative nature of the constant comparative method resulted in rich descriptions and theoretically grounded analyses of university stakeholders' framing of diversity in yield initiatives as well as students' reflections about their social identities, perceptions of climate and institutional diversity, and recruitment experiences.

Limitations

There are a few limitations of this study that are important to note. Data imbalances across units (institutional data) and demographic groups (student data) represent a limitation from the institutional perspective. Of the 16 participants interviewed, 14 were from admissions or financial aid. Additionally, the admissions office facilitated each of the yield events I observed. Granted, admissions plays the most critical role in leading and facilitating undergraduate yield efforts in a university, but observing yield initiatives facilitated by the College of Engineering (Engineering) could have provided an additional perspective to my inquiry of efforts targeted at underrepresented students. As the second largest admitting unit on campus (behind the

liberal arts college), the active role that Engineering plays in undergraduate yield-recruitment did not come to my attention until after some of their signature yield events had concluded. Also, other participants from Engineering whom I invited to participate were not available.

Although I attended yield events targeted at underrepresented students, my observations represent only a portion of the activities and events university professionals are engaged in over the course of the entire year-long admissions cycle. The current study focuses on activities transpiring *after* students are admitted; however, yield-recruitment builds on previous efforts, contacts, relationships—all of which, for the purpose of isolating an important part of the college choice process, I did not study.

An additional limitation concerns the imbalance of in-state versus out-of-state students included in my sample. Of the 35 student participants, only 12 are Michigan residents. Noting this trend during recruitment, I tried to make provisions to correct this imbalance. Unfortunately, I was constrained by the window of time I had for student participant recruitment and data collection given the need to interview students before the start of their fall semesters.

Finally, while the purpose of each unit and level of analysis is to maximize information that can be learned about the case, it is worth mentioning that the case itself is *not* assumed to represent a sample that is generalizable to a broader population in the way we typically associate with social science empirical studies (i.e., statistical generalizable) (Yin, 2003). Researchers have in the past critiqued case studies for their small sample sizes (Gomm, Hammersly, & Foster, 2009). However, the goal of case study design is not statistical generalization. It is analytic generalization in which the

richness of the case allows the researcher to expand and generalize theories to other cases (Yin, 2003).

Epistemological Foundations

Before presenting the findings, it is important to describe the epistemological perspectives that guided my interpretation of the data. I brought to this study both an interpretive paradigm and a critical orientation (Kuhn, 1962; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Compared to the positivist/functionalist paradigm which assumes an objective, knowable truth (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Morgan, 1980, p. 608), interpretivism has roots in philosophy, sociology, and social psychology and emphasizes "the way in which human beings make sense of their subjective reality and attach meaning to it" (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002, p. 7) Researchers like myself, who align with this paradigm, find much utility and insight in studying the human experience.

I also draw from education and critical race scholar, Gloria Ladson-Billings' (2003) conception of epistemology as a "system of knowing" rather than the view that it is simply a "way of knowing" (p. 399). Ladson-Billings' example suggests epistemologies are much more complex than the extent of one's own experiences--a common oversimplification (Reyes, 2012). In other words, the way we see issues and the world is not merely influenced by what we knowingly experience; they are also shaped by how the dominant system in which we are situated views the world (Ladson-Billings, 2003; Milner, 2007). To this point, Ladson-Billings (2003) elaborates:

> The process of developing a worldview that differs from the dominant worldview requires active intellectual work on the part of the knower, because schools, society, and the structure and production of knowledge are designed to create individuals who internalize the dominant worldview and knowledge production … The hegemony of the dominant paradigm makes it more than just another way

to view the world— it claims to be the only legitimate way to view the world (p. 399).

In conducting this study, I was critically aware of the pervasive dominant narrative presented in conventional policy analyses about the reasons for inequities in selective Black enrollment. While these analyses contribute to our understanding of college choice in post-affirmative action contexts, they do not fully consider the ways in which institutional policies and practices and racial contexts contribute to enrollment trends in ways that are equally if not more consequential than are "race-neutral" admissions standards.

Moreover, the "active intellectual work" (Ladson-Billings, 2003, p. 399) I undertook in the analysis of the data was an effort to complicate prevailing narratives (e.g., those emphasizing access) about the reasons for inequities in selective Black enrollment at institutions like the University of Michigan, UCLA and UC-Berkeley. The methodological choices guiding my analysis and the perspective shaping my interpretation of the data necessarily derive from limitations of the existing empirical literature as well as my worldview shaped by the following: an acknowledgment of the existence of racism and racial inequities in institutions, structures, and policies even if not intentionally so (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado and Crenshaw, 1993); a belief in centering voices of those whom are often marginalized in policy discourse (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002); and finally, my position, background and salient social identities.

Role of Researcher

Origins of the work. I developed an interest in college choice in the course of working as a GEAR UP coach for high school juniors and seniors in Chicago Public

Schools and as a college mentor for the University of Chicago Charter School –

Woodlawn Campus. In my role with GEAR Up, I prepared Black and Latino high school

juniors for the ACT and the college application process. As a college mentor, I supported

Black 10th and 11th graders engaged in the process of selecting colleges to which they

would apply. In both of these positions, I coached students through different aspects of

the college choice process. At the same time, I was volunteering as an alumni recruiter

with the University of Michigan Alumni Association's Minority Students Recruitment

program and completing a master's thesis on the use of test-optional admissions criteria

in admitting students of color from Chicago Public Schools—a project that was supported

by DePaul's Division of Enrollment Management and Marketing. Through this work, I

became interested in the factors shaping underrepresented students' college choice

decisions. I found it intriguing, for example, how many of the Latino students I worked

with were set on starting their postsecondary education in one of Chicago's community

colleges (City Colleges of Chicago) and how one of my mentees, a young Black woman

interested in pre-med, was hesitant to apply to the University of Michigan after a campus

visit because it was "too white."

Reflecting on my experience as a student at the University of Michigan during the

Proposal 2 (2006) and each of three Supreme Court rulings (2003 and 2016), I also

became interested in how institutional diversity policy and campus racial climate—both

of which were evolving during these times—might also shape students' college choice.

These were things that I have been thinking about since the start of my PhD at the

University, and by way of full disclosure, areas that I have been involved at various

levels of the institution. To be sure, these experiences have some bearing on the current

106

study—my interest in the topic, the conceptualization and execution, and as I have just articulated, my worldview. To borrow from, Ladson Billings (2000), "All of my "selves" are invested in this work—the self that is a researcher, the self that is a community member, the self that is a Black woman" (p. 272).

Positionality and rapport. I recognize, however, that these "multiple selves" require reflection and interrogation so as not to undermine the integrity and rigor of the research. In many instances, my physical appearance, racial/ethnic identity and insider knowledge of the University of Michigan helped me to naturally fit in various parts of data collection. Throughout the course of observations, I was approached by students and their parents (as described above) and during one event, a current University of Michigan student (interested in being a teacher) serving as a panelist learned that I was a graduate student in education from Detroit—her hometown as well—and later emailed me asking if I would be her mentor. Also, my youthful appearance was advantageous, particularly during the Campus Visit Day when I participated in the campus tour, student lunch and student panel. Some of the students began to engage in conversation with me, believing that I, too, had been admitted to the University of Michigan.

My personal and professional experience as a former student and as a volunteer recruiter with the UM Alumni Association afforded me a level of familiarity with the University of Michigan context that I leveraged in interviewing student participants but also in my engagement with enrollment management professionals. As I was conducting interviews, I also got the sense that repeated exposure to participants during the early phases of data collection (i.e., yield events), facilitated a positive rapport with participants that resulted in our having candid conversations. While I could not confirm

unequivocally how forthcoming any research participant was being, participants offered

what seemed like direct responses around diversity and racial climate and in some

instances, were willing to critique related policies and practices at the University and

within their respective units.

Further indication of the positive rapport I developed has been demonstrated in

the months since data collection, when I have seen enrollment management participants

on campus. I have been met with unsolicited and unexpected hugs, well wishes and

genuine interest in the status of my research. I was also invited out to lunch and to a

birthday party (which I declined), and my advice about graduate school was solicited on

two separate occasions.

In short, being aware of my many selves has meant taking account of the

qualities, experiences, and predispositions that enhance my research (as I have just

described) as well as any beliefs and subjectivities that could unknowingly "skew my

interpretation of the data if I were not aware of them" (Suurtamm, 1999, p. 34).

Trustworthiness and Reliability

I engaged in a number of practices to increase the trustworthiness and reliability

of the findings produced, including data triangulation across interviews, observations,

organizational documents; recruitment of diverse samples of university staff and admitted

students; the use of researcher memos to facilitate reflexivity; and searching for

disconfirming evidence. Examples of my triangulation efforts include using multiple

sources of data, and multiple methods of data collection (Merriam, 2009). I also

attempted to engage in member checking with participants whose perspectives were a

critical part of the findings that resulted from my analysis; however, I learned that they

are no longer employed at the institution. Finally, I also engaged in peer debriefing sessions with research colleagues to help interrogate my assumptions and early interpretations of findings (Guba, 1981).

Conclusion

To understand inequities in selective Black enrollment in post-affirmative contexts, this study specifically examines how commitment to diversity is conveyed in yield recruitment practices, students' perceptions of these diversity commitments and the racial climate, and the implications of these perceptions for their college choice decisions. Over eight months, concentrating on the admitted-to-yield phase of the college choice process, primary data for analysis consisted of: semi-structured phone interviews with 35 Black students admitted to the University; semi-structured in-person interviews with 16 professionals in financial aid, recruitment, and admissions; and 23 hours of observations from a variety of yield recruitment events during the 2015-2016 academic year. I analyzed these data utilizing techniques from the grounded theory tradition's constant comparative method and with an eye towards triangulating across and within data sources in order to increase the study's validity. In the chapters that follow, I explain the themes that arose from this analysis, their importance, and implications for the study's aims.

Chapter 5: Conveying Commitment to Diversity in Yield Recruitment

Institutional commitment to diversity represents an important goal for those who lead the nation's colleges and universities. It is also a critical aim of enrollment management professionals who are charged with developing and executing strategies that enhance student diversity (Espinosa et al., 2015). Strategies often perceived as "straightforward and legally defensible" have become increasingly consequential given the current legal environment for affirmative action described in Chapter Two (Espinosa et al., 2015, p. 39). In a recent survey of enrollment managers, 53% of institutions affected by affirmative action bans increased their emphasis on yield initiatives targeting racial and ethnic minorities (Espinosa et al., 2015, p. 39), including Black students whose enrollment has declined to historic levels at selective public flagship campuses like the University of Michigan (Friess, 2014; Lucas-Meyer, 2014). And yet getting underrepresented students of color to enroll in predominantly white institutions, which are struggling to manage campus climate or improve the diversity of their student bodies, is a difficult challenge. It necessarily involves both attracting students to the campus environment as well as making them aware of the various supports that will be at their disposal once they matriculate (Espinosa et al., 2015).

In this chapter, I suggest that critical to the University's efforts to yield Black students is the institution's ability to convey to students that it values diversity. However, communicating this value can be a difficult undertaking given the University's complicated past with respect to issues of racial diversity and climate. On one hand, the

creation of the Michigan Mandate and UM's involvement in multiple Supreme Court cases has played an important role in shaping diversity scholarship (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin, 2002) and policy in U.S. higher education (ACLU, 2014; Garces, 2014; Roach, 2006). The institution has also engaged in a series of actions to improve diversity and inclusion on its campus in the past few years (Jesse, 2016). On the other hand, the BBUM Twitter campaign shed new light on racial inequities and a difficult climate that had long existed for Black students and other students of color (Friess, 2014). I argue in this chapter that, mindful of these complexities and what the current percentage of Black undergraduate students on campus might signal, enrollment management professionals engaged in organizational impression management when they try to recruit Black students. That is, they engage in efforts or tactics purposefully designed to influence prospective students' perceptions of the university's commitment to diversity (Elsbach, Sutton & Principe, 1998). Targeted yield-recruitment events are one set of tactics, and the discourse used in those events and other settings, is another.

This chapter provides context for Chapter 6, which addresses how Black admitted students' perceived institutional commitment to diversity and racial climate in their college choice process at the University of Michigan, by outlining some of the yield-recruitment events students may experience, as well as describing from an institutional perspective, how commitment to diversity is communicated to students in yield-recruitment contexts. The chapter is organized as follows. I begin by providing an overview of the interpretive framework used for the set of findings presented: impression management and diversity language. Next, I highlight three ways the University conveys institutional commitment to diversity in its efforts to yield undergraduate students: (a) the

structure of and tactics used in yield recruitment events, particularly those targeted at underrepresented students; (b) institutional language or discourse incorporating the terms "diverse" or "diversity;" and (c) the signaling of diversity verbally, through related concepts, and non-verbally, through the inclusion of people of color and the offices they represent. I also note that institutional commitment to diversity is communicated through Black student and/or parent-initiated inquiries about diversity and racial climate, which reveal talking points used to reframe the University's diversity and climate challenges. Finally, I conclude with a brief analysis of the costs and benefits of the myriad ways diversity is communicated.

Organizational Impression Management

Citing shifts in the labor market and growing awareness of the benefits of diversity, organizational psychologists such as Rynes and Barber (1990) predicted the emergence of "alternative" recruitment strategies in corporate contexts. If corporations were to be successful in the tightening competition over minority and female applicants, they would need to rebrand themselves, leveraging what were considered at the time to be "nontraditional" practices: the use of women and people of color in organizational recruitment roles and relatedly, tailoring recruitment messages to resonate more with particular applicants (Avery & McKay, 2006). More common today, these recruitment practices serve a critical role in communicating organizational values and commitment to diversity. Ideally, they lead targeted applicants to form positive impressions of an organization as diverse and inclusive.

Efforts to manage the impressions of potential employees have obvious similarities to higher education institutions who seek to present a positive image of

112

diversity to prospective students, given the commercial value of diversity (Ahmed, 2015; Iverson, 2007; Marichal, 2009), its utility in attracting White students (Berrey, 2015), and its resonance with students of color (Cho et al., 2008; Engberg & Wolniak, 2009). Diversity may have symbolic meaning for African Americans, in particular, who tend to place great importance on an organization's value for diversity in their decision-making (Avery & McKay, 2006; Kim & Gelfand, 2003; Thomas & Wise, 1999). University representatives in my study engaged in a variety of recruitment practices targeted at diverse applicants. Four of these draw parallels with broad categories of impression management strategies identified by Avery and McKay (2006) in their review of targeted recruitment by corporate firms. I will describe these strategies before using them as a framework for presenting my findings about UM's institutional commitment to diversity in the yield process.

Ingratiating female and minority job seekers refers to a broad array of tactics such as the placement and demographic composition of ads, diversity statements, the use of minority and female recruiters, and recruitment in diverse settings. Such tactics signal that an organization is diverse and inclusive, which may enhance applicants' perceptions of it. *Promoting effective diversity management* involves touting an organization's accomplishments or accolades with respect to diversity—for example, the development of a diversity plan, an increase in the number of underrepresented employees hired, or the receipt of some kind of an award. Organizations use *exemplification* strategies to portray themselves favorably by participating in socially responsible activities and endeavors. Instead of misrepresenting themselves as more diverse than they actually are, *supplication* strategies involve organizations expressing their dependence on women and

113

minority applicants to become more diverse. Finally, *defensive impression management* refers to activities by organizations to restore their images in light of controversial and damaging events. Importantly, Avery and McKay (2006) hypothesize that the success of these impression management techniques is contingent upon the strength of individual job seekers' targeted social identities (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.).

However, for universities, commitment to diversity is communicated not only through organizational policies and practices targeted at underrepresented students (Avery & McKay, 2006; Slay, Reyes & Posselt, 2017), but also through their use of language—what exactly is said about diversity, in what context, and by whom. In the next section, I outline the ways in which "diversity" can be framed in organizational contexts. Specifically, the language of diversity will provide the foundation for my presentation of findings related to how diversity is conceived of and interpreted by university stakeholders and importantly, how it is communicated across yield-recruitment contexts within the university.

The Language of Diversity

The ubiquity of the term "diversity" in higher education is a phenomenon of the last couple of decades. Organizational research on diversity policy in public universities suggests campus administrators moved away from a social justice frame which engendered critique and toward an inclusive framing of diversity (Garces, 2014; Marichal, 2009; Moses & Chang, 2006) wherein diversity has been referred to as "a resource with benefits for all" (Berrey, 2011, p. 575). What may be attractive about an inclusive framing of "diversity" is that diversity is without a referent and it can imply many different things (Ahmed, 2007). This language of diversity can enable an institution

114

to promote itself to many different constituents. However, as I will discuss, the promotional aspect of diversity can obscure organizational issues (e.g., campus racial climate, elite culture, etc.) that might actually contradict the image of inclusiveness or happiness that universities often work hard to convey (Bell & Hartmann, 2007).

In her book on diversity practitioners' work in higher education, Sara Ahmed (2012) writes about the many uses of "diversity" in organizations. Diversity can appear in official statements or as a collage of images widely recognizable as "diverse." It can be descriptive or it can normative. As the name suggests, when diversity is used descriptively, it is used as an adjective—as a way of *describing* the university or aspects of the university including but not limited to students, faculty or staff, research or scholarship and programming (e.g., "we are diverse."). Normative uses of the word "diversity" focus on expressing the values, commitments, and priorities of the organization (e.g, "diversity is important to our mission"). In the many ways diversity is used, it seems to convey additive value, the "aesthetic realm of appearance" and the "moral realm of value," writes Ahmed (2012, p. 59). In other words, the language of diversity is part of an *appearan*ce of valuing diversity.

My findings demonstrate that the use of "diversity" reflects not only strategic diversity impression management and an appeal to admitted students—Black and White alike-- but also reflects both legal compliance and an astute awareness of the anti-affirmative action, socio-political context in which many institutions find themselves. I found that while there is an official way of talking about diversity that was largely shaped by public statements from President Schlissel, how UM's diversity commitments are communicated depends on the speaker, the recruitment context, and the audience. White

Enrollment Management Professionals (EMPs) were more uncomfortable discussing diversity or issues salient to Black prospective students and spoke about diversity, mostly in broad generalities. Their language connotes a university that is working to make improvements. Notably, Black EMPs often utilized an alternate language characterized by non-verbal cues signaling diversity (without ever explicitly saying "diversity") as well as candor about the racial realities for Black students on campus. They rarely discussed the University's commitment to improving diversity with prospective Black students.

Yield events are critical spaces in which institutional commitment to diversity was communicated. Therefore, to discuss these findings, I begin by summarizing a selection of the University of Michigan's yield events, including those targeted at underrepresented students. I then discuss the various ways in which commitment to diversity is conveyed through yield-recruitment efforts and the methods EMPs used to navigate difficult questions about the campus environment.

Yield-Recruitment at the University of Michigan

Building on a foundation laid in the fall months through outreach and recruitment, yield-recruitment initiatives and events[13] provide an opportunity for admissions professionals to connect with large groups of admitted students, to provide additional information about the university, address concerns and ultimately, entice students to matriculate. As part of the ethnographic portion of my research, I attended several of these events[14]—a subset of local receptions open to a broader population of admitted

---

[13] In addition to events and activities, financial aid and call-outs conducted by admissions, financial aid, CSP and members of the UM community (students, faculty and alumni) represent additional strategies used to encourage underrepresented students to enroll.

[14] The UM engages in a variety of yield-recruitment events coordinated by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions as well as individual schools and colleges. This study is not intended to be an exhaustive analysis of each of these events or activities.

students and their families as well as events targeted at students from underrepresented backgrounds (geographic location, racial/ethnic identity, socioeconomic status, first-generation, etc.). While the aim of each of these events was to provide students with information and encourage them to matriculate at UM, I observed notable differences in the structure of the events as well as the extent to which they emphasized institutional commitment to diversity.

Meet and greet events. Described in email communication to students as a "special evening of celebration and information," meet and greet receptions appeared to focus less on celebrating students' accomplishments and more on highlighting important deadlines for matriculation and various features of the campus. Typically held in a hotel or conference center during an evening weekday, these events provided an opportunity for admitted students and their families in select areas throughout the state to interact with representatives from admissions and financial aid. Upon arrival, staff from these offices greeted students and their families and directed them to pick up a maize colored T-shirt, U-M folder stuffed with pamphlets, and for select students, a letter detailing missing financial aid information.

Senior admissions counselors assigned to the particular territory where the meet and greet reception was being held would often start the reception by applauding attendees for being chosen among over 54,000 applicants—the "most selective year in the admissions process ever" –before quickly moving to the rest of the program. Using a PowerPoint template that I soon noticed was repeated in each of the receptions, the counselor highlighted institutional rankings, resources and academic opportunities,

student life, the University's extensive alumni network, and even its diversity—albeit in subtle ways.

Perhaps aware that the large size of the campus could be an issue for some students, counselors seemed to place a great deal of emphasis on opportunities for students to interact with faculty. In one reception near the west side of the state, the admissions counselor offered reassuring remarks to admitted student attendees: "So if you're nervous about taking some of those big courses just know you can still have the small classroom experience even at the University of Michigan…many of our core courses in math, composition and foreign language are capped at 25 to 30 students to make sure you get that individual teacher." Generally, a statement of this sort was followed by impressive statistics that appeared on a series of slides:

"Over 90% of courses are taught directly by faculty members

Student to faculty ratio of 15 to 1

80% of classes have fewer than 50 students."

What is notable about these events is that they seemed minimally concerned with *explicitly* communicating the University's diversity commitments and the references that were made to diversity were fairly brief compared to the balance of information presented on various types of rankings. Therefore, reinforcing the prestige of the University seemed to be an important aim of the formal remarks as representatives in each of the receptions used words like "rigorous" and "top-ranked" to characterize the University. UM provided opportunities for students to learn from "world renowned faculty" and prominent speakers that admissions counselors were careful to mention: President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Condeleeza Rice, Supreme Court Justice

Ruth Bader Ginsberg, and Dick Castello, CEO of Twitter. A slide with the header,

"Michigan's World Class Rankings" listed the institution's rankings in a number of areas:

> #3 for US public universities in QS World rankings
> #4 US News & World top public universities
> #7 Entrepreneurship
> #1 public research institution in the U.S. $1.33 billion in funding

These highly complementary descriptions of the university also extended to Ann Arbor,

which one counselor referred to as both a "very safe city" and a "very well educated city"

while also highlighting its top-ranking as a college town and ideal place for millennials to

work and live. Access to "nationally and internationally recognized scholars" as well as

vibrant student life and "legendary" athletics was cast as a unique benefit of Michigan

that other institutions could rarely match. In a few words, "the Michigan Difference."

Events targeting diversity. While yield events open to a broader audience of

admitted students emphasized rigor and rankings, initiatives targeted at underrepresented

students were generally more elaborate and engaging, providing an opportunity for

students to interact with university staff— a recognition by admissions professionals that

attracting these students would necessarily involve a unique and more involved approach.

While explicit mentions of diversity related talking points was missing from the majority

of these targeted events as well, diversity was communicated in other ways. Also,

specific to these events, I noticed that the organization and level of detail seemed intent

on conveying to students both the University's strong desire to yield them as well as the

range of resources, opportunities, and individuals available to ensure their success.

Below, I describe three different types of targeted yield events I observed: (a) Scholar

Recognition Dinner (b) Campus Day and (c) Admitted Student Celebration Days.

Scholar Recognition Dinner. For many years, the admissions office has hosted a Scholar Recognition Dinner at the beginning of the yield season, honoring a "select" group of underrepresented students who were admitted early action. In early 2016, an email invitation described the "special event" as an evening to celebrate admitted students' academic achievements and welcome their family to the University of Michigan community. However, it was clear that making an indelible impression on this racially and socioeconomically diverse group of admitted students and their families, many of whom may have had minimal previous exposure to the University, was the underlying goal.

A pre-dinner mingling reception with strolling hor's d'oeuvres in a room decorated with maize and blue balloon bouquets and a pianist playing on an elevated stage created a festive, bustling atmosphere as current UM students, faculty, admissions staff and representatives from units across campus worked their way through the crowded room. The courtship continued over a formal dinner, with meal options, which included filet mignon, asiago crusted chicken, and roasted butternut squash, in a separate ballroom, where students and their families were seated at tables with representatives from various offices across campus. A short program included remarks from a senior leader in the admissions office, who congratulated the students on being admitted during the university's most competitive admissions cycle to date; a current undergraduate student (white female) from a rural community who reflected on her experience transitioning from a small town to the campus, finding her major, and participating in "life-changing" experiences such as "Semester in Detroit" (a community learning course); and finally, the

dean of the College of Engineering, at the time, who gave a broad overview of the academic opportunities and accomplishments from a faculty/administrative perspective.

Campus Day. For Campus Day, one of the university's signature yield events, underrepresented students[15] and their parents were invited to visit Ann Arbor just a few weeks before the matriculation deadline for a full day of activities and concurrent sessions on everything from financial aid and residential learning communities to understanding requirements for the CSP Summer Bridge Scholars Program. Select students were given an opportunity to stay in the residence halls the night before, with current undergraduate students serving as their hosts, if they participated in an additional yield event just days before. And to encourage Detroit-area students to participate, UM provided free transportation from the Detroit Center to the Ann Arbor campus.

Compared to other yield events, including other events targeted at underrepresented students, Campus Day seemed to be a significant undertaking with over 200 registrants. Students were led on a campus tour by a group of mostly white undergraduate student ambassadors, treated to lunch in one of the newly renovated campus residence halls, and given an opportunity to ask questions in a students-only session (without their parents or accompanying guests) with a panel of mostly Black current undergraduate students moderated by a member of the admissions staff (a participant in the study). With the inclusion of an information fair with over 50 organizations, it was evident that an important aim of this yield event was to not only provide students with as much information as possible about the University, but also to reassure them of the robust supports available should they enroll. Both the workshop

---

[15] This included students from the following identities or backgrounds: underrepresented counties, states, high schools or neighborhoods; low-SES; first-generation; and/or underrepresented racial minority (URM).

topics and the organizations featured in the information fair (e.g., Society of Women Engineers, Black Welcome Week, First Generation College Students, Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs) were very much catered to students' academic interests as well as their social identities and background experiences.

Admitted Student Celebration Days*.* Admitted Student Celebration Days were a series of targeted yield events. Unlike Campus Day and the Scholar Recognition Dinner which both focused on bringing a broadly—racially, socioeconomically and geographically—diverse group of students to the University of Michigan's campus, university representatives, including admissions and financial aid professionals, travelled *to* Chicago and Detroit, targeting students from select urban high schools. These events took on a celebratory tone that was similar to those of Campus Visit Day. As students entered spaces adorned with maize and blue balloons, they were greeted with cheers and applause, and the Michigan fight song could be heard playing in the background at the reception in Chicago. The program in Chicago even concluded with a mock graduation that was well received, wherein students' names were called and they were handed a Michigan T-shirt as their families applauded. There was also a Michigan Trivia game led by one of the admissions representatives and a large photo station where student attendees could take "Class of 2020 photos" in Detroit.

The size of these receptions, typically no more than 50 attendees, including parents/families, was considerably smaller than each of the other yield events I observed, promoting intimate exchanges between the mostly Black and Latino admits and university staff who provided information about the Comprehensive Studies Program (CSP), Michigan learning communities and various academic opportunities and resources

(e.g., UROP, MSTEM, business and engineering). At the same time, a short panel discussion with current UM students from the high schools students attended as well as an information fair featuring select offices on campus, suggests the admissions coordinators were well aware of the need to create an environment at these events that emphasized students' accomplishments (earning admission to UM) but also helped them make connections with members of the UM community.

But in addition to impression management strategies—the use of targeted yield-recruitment events and activities—what representatives actually say about diversity in these settings is also important for shaping Black admitted students' perceptions of the university and encouraging their matriculation. Using Ahmed's (2012) idea of official diversity language, normative diversity and descriptive diversity introduced at the beginning of the chapter, in the next section, I discuss how enrollment management professionals conceived of the University's commitment to diversity in recent years and how this commitment was conveyed in the context of yield-recruitment. To begin, I offer a brief overview of the University's diversity language as it was framed and endorsed by President Schlissel, which will help to contextualize my findings related to EMPs' individual perspectives and portrayals of diversity. In doing so, I note how this official language or discourse, inclusive of normative and descriptive statements of diversity, is interpreted and taken up by mostly white EMPs in their recruitment efforts in broad recruitment contexts and eschewed by mostly Black EMPs in targeted yield-recruitment events and conversations with admitted Black students. Highlighting these divergent approaches to portraying institutional commitment to diversity illuminates the strategies

that are at work in efforts to positively shape Black admitted students' impressions of

diversity at Michigan and consequently, to encourage their matriculation.

A Shift in Institutional Commitment to Diversity

Across each of my interviews, participants expressed a belief that the University

of Michigan was broadly committed to diversity, although there were variations in how

this commitment was demonstrated in institutional policies and practices. Some

professionals characterized this commitment in relation to the "mission" of admissions.

Charles noted, for example, that "It's important to all of us to increase diversity at

Michigan because we know how important it is to the learning environment," a comment

that Katrina echoed in her interview: "I think there is a commitment to having it

[diversity] here…they understand the beauty of having that in the classroom." –in other

words, the educational benefits of diversity.

Other representatives whom I interviewed emphasized Michigan's diversity

efforts relative to other institutions and in light of recent racial incidents on college

campuses. For Karen, a senior admissions leader, even "having conversations" about

diversity was laudable given "there are many institutions across the country that aren't

doing this." From her perspective, the University has consciously chosen *not* to "hide

behind" the affirmative action ban although "it certainly could" and according to some

EMPs in the study, it has. Jeff, also in admissions, went a bit further noting that "while

our numbers don't look great," compared to the University of Missouri[16] and

conservative-based institutions, the University of Michigan provides an "inclusive

environment" for students of color. "We have people that will stand up when they think

---

[16] Led by a graduate student activist and members of the football team, Black students brought attention to racial bias and chilly climate they experienced on campus, eventually resulting in the resignation of the university's president.

something is wrong like with BBUM." And yet Black students' perceptions and experiences of racial stigma and a lack of inclusion on campus was, in part, the impetus for BBUM (Friess, 2014) and the catalyst for student activism on other campuses.

Whatever the case, the commitment to diversity that Karen and Jeff intimated in their remarks was described by the majority of EMPs as somewhat of a recent phenomenon. In previous years, Shawn, in admissions, recalled that diversity was merely an "idea that everybody knew of." People were obviously concerned about the decline in diversity after the affirmative action cases and Proposal 2 in 2006. It was something that people would often say, 'Oh, we want to increase diversity. We want to build a more diverse class.' However, the requisite resources and support did not generally accompany these aspirations. One participant recalled, "People weren't rolling up their sleeves." The majority of participants agreed that while there was talk about diversity, there was not a noticeable, shared commitment until President Schlissel began his tenure in July 2014 and made "diversity" an important part of his agenda. It also appears that before the perceived shift, references to diversity among stakeholders often lacked specificity. In institutional discourse, it was common to hear individuals speaking about how diversity enriched students' learning experience. But with such discourse, Shawn recalled confusion over what "diversity" even referred: "It was like…'What do you mean by diversity? Is it race? Or, is it financial? Or is it where do they come from, the country? What does that look like?'" From his perspective, President Schlissel has helped give definition and clarity to what was previously an abstract institutional rhetoric about diversity. I highlight the University's emergent language for diversity, which will

contextualize additional findings on EMP's portrayal of institutional commitment to diversity in yield efforts.

An emerging diversity language. In December 2014, just a few months after the official start of his term, President Mark Schlissel sent a letter to the campus community reiterating diversity as an institutional priority:

> I said in my inaugural address that our university could not achieve true excellence without leveraging the experiences and perspectives of the broadest possible diversity of students, faculty and staff at all of our campuses. This remains a top priority for me.

Over the course of 18 months, his public statements each reinforced the importance of diversity as well as modeled the conventions for talking about it.

For example, at the 2015 MLK Symposium in January, President Schlissel, after sharing a few updates on the university's accomplishments with respect to diversity, cautiously informed a broad audience of constituents (students, staff, faculty, community members, etc.) about the work that remained to be done in order to: "recruit a broadly diverse community of students, faculty and staff, ensure that every voice is respected and all viewpoints are welcome, and to develop a supportive climate." He was adamant that "true excellence" would not be possible "without leveraging experiences and perspectives of the broadest possible diversity of students, faculty, and staff."

Indeed, President Schlissel repeated phrases like "the broadest possible diversity" several times in his remarks at different gatherings across the University. In one of those events, a diversity leadership breakfast in which he introduced plans to launch a year-long diversity planning process, he expressed the need to "create a climate where those of different races and ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities, faiths, income levels, political perspectives, viewpoints, and disabilities all must feel welcome." Notably, this is

the only time race was mentioned explicitly, as the president noted that "ensuring racial diversity" was vital to UM's mission as a public institution.

By late fall—the start of the 2015-2016 admissions cycle (the one in which the students in my sample were admitted)—President Schlissel had announced modest increases in diversity to the incoming class of students, the launch of a pilot program to improve socioeconomic diversity in undergraduate enrollment[17] and a university-wide diversity summit. Further, he not only endorsed the phrase, "diversity, equity and inclusion" as the convention for discourse around the University's diversity efforts, but also he emphasized that "diversity" was *meant* to be broad and inclusive—that it was important that UM pursue diversity "in the broadest sense of the word."

Given President Schlissel's visible endorsement of diversity as an institutional priority, it is easy to see why Shawn and other EMPs sensed that they had more clarity about how to pursue it in their work. However, Brian's (in CSP) concern about the expansive nature of diversity was also not misplaced:

> And I think across the university they have a strong commitment to diversity. I think the issue becomes [pause] -- How do you identify diversity? What does that actually mean? Because the definition right now is so expansive that you know you could take any part and say that part is not receiving an advantage in this diversity, equity and inclusion conversation.

Still, most participants agreed that there has been a strengthening of the commitment to diversity with the arrival of President Schlissel. Stacey, in the admissions office offered her perspective: "I think the university as a whole has always valued diversity but we're really making moves as like in the last year or so." Essentially, he replaced what was perceived by some as a tacit value for diversity with an explicit vision of how the

---

[17] The High-Achieving Involved Leader (HAIL) scholarship for low-income students in Michigan was piloted in 2015-2016.

university was to realize its espoused values and commitments. As one participant pointed out, "It was clear no matter where you are on campus, you are a part of this feat to enroll a diverse class. So the ownership, the onus wasn't just put on admissions. It was a university that was still behind every activity, every event, and every phone call." In other words, stakeholders sensed a greater commitment to diversity compared to years past.

As a result, the "shift" President Schlissel set in motion has had tremendous implications for the work of admissions professionals, some of whom were previously frustrated that the responsibility for improving diversity—a *university* goal—had rested primarily on *their* shoulders and even then, disproportionately on Black staff members and/or those recruiting from high schools with large populations of underrepresented students of color. Along with direction provided by President Schlissel, representatives from admissions and financial aid believed that the University's new Associate Vice Provost for Enrollment Management provided strategic leadership that reinforced this renewed commitment to diversity through the awarding of aid, implementation of a new admissions timetable, and emphasis on collaboration across enrollment management functions and crucial partners on campus. Some admissions professionals pointed to the most racially diverse class since before Proposal 2 was passed as tangible evidence of progress and commitment. And yet, for all the enthusiasm EMPs expressed about the institution's diversity efforts, "diversity" was barely mentioned in the yield-recruitment events I observed.

Challenges translating diversity. In one notable exception, the dean of the College of Engineering gave remarks during the program for the Scholar Recognition

Dinner, an event targeted at in-state underrepresented students. At the very end of his remarks, the dean referenced UM's ongoing efforts to support diversity, which I quote at length below:

> **Numerous people and programs exist on our campus for the sole responsibility of assisting students.** These are people who understand that your needs are unique and you deserve to be respected and valued whatever your circumstances, whatever your background. Here, diversity is fundamental to the University of Michigan's identity. **Diversity takes many forms and has many dimensions and we embrace them all. University president Mark Schlissel has made it clear to all audiences that the persistent pursuit of diversity, equity, and inclusion is one of the main pillars of his presidency and this university.** The University of Michigan currently is in the midst of a yearlong campus wide strategic planning process focused on these aims. **In his charge to the campus president Schissel said, "It is central to our mission as an educational institution to ensure that each member in our community has full opportunity to thrive in our environment for we believe that diversity is key to individuals flourishing, educational excellence, and the advancement of knowledge."** Diversity, equity and inclusion plans will be completed this spring at all of our different schools and colleges and implementation of recommendations will begin this fall.

In this recruitment context, Dean Munson's comments about diversity are consistent with the broad diversity language President Schlissel has articulated in his public comments. By using the positional authority afforded to him as a dean and mentioning the name of President Schlissel—twice—he reinforces the notion that diversity is indeed valued at UM.

At the same time, these vague references to diversity may not necessarily resonate with Black students for a number of reasons, including a difference in their racial identity and the identity of the person speaking about diversity. It is also possible that the lack of specificity—particularly in Dean Munson's remarks—may be unsatisfactory to students who are curious about specific groups (i.e., Black student population) and/or who are actively seeking detailed information that reassures them they will experience a climate

129

that is safe, supportive and inclusive of their racial identity. Speaking to this concern,

Katrina, one of the Black admissions counselors, articulated a need for enrollment

management professionals "to figure what are going to be our talking points" with

respect to Black students concerned about the campus environment. She expressed

concern over the content of diversity messaging:

> So I think that sometimes we have to be a little more savvy about what we're
> doing and though we were having conversations about it, the action was not being
> behind it in saying that -- I know for you all this is higher level thinking but this is
> happening now. So, these students from this year are going to make their decision
> based on now and not this diversity summit that happened in 2015 or any of that.
> They're going to talk about what is happening now and whether or not I want to
> be a part of that.

Katrina's comments illuminate a conundrum that EMPs may experience in their efforts to

yield Black students: how to balance discussion of the various exciting initiatives and

programs the University is implementing to improve diversity, equity and inclusion—

which some participants conceded would "take longer than people think"—even "a

generation" to produce change—with the reality of students' immediate needs and the

current campus climate for Black students which Brian (CSP) described as "pretty

negative." He elaborated:

> So we hear a lot from the students. We hear a lot about them and the climate is
> not positive for them. There are places where it is positive but the overall climate
> is not positive for the students that we typically talk to who are most upfront and
> have a lot of conversation with us.

Given the considerable amount of time Brian spends with current Black undergraduate

students in his role, his comments came across as representative of students themselves.

He added, "this space doesn't feel like diversity…especially if I'm a Black student, it

doesn't feel like you're focusing in on me." Brian's reflections suggest that despite the

growing prominence of diversity at the University this commitment is not necessarily

translated to Black students. It is not being felt or experienced by Black students in a way that makes a difference in their lives. The disconnect he suggests students feel has implications for both supporting the current population of Black students as well as efforts to grow this population through targeted recruitment.

One reason for the divergence between students and University staff and administrative leaders is that contrary to perspectives offered by participants from admissions, describing a collective commitment to diversity across campus, not everyone was on the "diversity" bandwagon. From Brian's perspective and experience, the fact that Black students continue to rely so much on CSP as a place of safety and "trust" suggests they are not receiving the same level of support if, for example, "they are interested in studying biology or classic civilization" or other majors that are disproportionately white:

> CSP can't be the only place to find diversity, where diversity happens, and where students feel people are invested in them as an individual. There has to be concerted efforts across campus so that when any student walks into any office, they will be able to see a representative of themselves in some way, shape or form.

It appears not all offices or units have been equally invested in or perhaps are aware of the imperative to create a diverse and inclusive climate with students of color in mind.

Relatedly, a second reason why Black students may not "feel" the commitment to diversity articulated by some EMPs in the study, is that their vision for diversity and what it means to them does not align with President Schlissel's broad conceptualization of diversity that has been repeated and endorsed in the University's diversity language. Brian elaborated on this point:

> I think the students are very frustrated. I know from what we hear from them that they don't feel like the university has a true commitment-- that it is surface, a conversation. And I think it is because nobody has defined diversity for them. Based on what the university has defined as diversity.

131

His remarks suggests that to understand how the institutional commitment to diversity is communicated to prospective students, it is important to consider what "diversity" actually means and how enrollment management professionals conceive of diversity in the context of their yield-recruitment efforts.

Explicit uses of "Diversity"

While there was general consensus over the University's commitment to diversity, there was notable variation in how diversity as a term was used in yield-recruitment events as well as how it was discussed in participant interviews. "Diversity" was always mentioned very briefly and used to both describe the applicants which the University sought to attract as well as various aspects of the institution itself. EMPs often conveyed "diversity" through indirect statements, all with the goal of signaling an inclusive campus environment and rewarding educational experience.

Geographic diversity emerged as a prominent conceptualization of "diversity" in the study in the context of the guiding mission and aims of enrollment management professionals as well as in participant's descriptions of the university, which I discuss below. In other instances, variations of "diversity" were used interchangeably with "underrepresented," as in one interview in which Stacey, a white woman from admissions, referred to her recruitment efforts in "…underrepresented territories, underrepresented high schools and underrepresented neighborhoods," although I had asked explicitly about students of color. Most often, however, I noticed a pattern of conceptualizing diversity in the broadest way possible.

"Broadly diverse students." Consistent with President Schlissel's public comments, "diversity" was frequently referred to in participant interviews in conjunction

with the terms "broad," "broadly" and "broadest." Throughout the admissions cycle,

EMPs were looking to recruit and yield "academically excellent, broadly diverse and

highly talented" students. And while students of color and Black students are included in

this description, participants largely refrained from speaking about *racial* diversity,

choosing instead to highlight prospective students' *other* characteristics (such as

geographic diversity), when they did at all. In an interview with Karen, a leader in the

admissions department, she spoke of this effort to recruit "broad diversity" and not just

"underrepresented minority students…but this could be a first-generation student, it could

be a low-income student, it could be a student who has a particular area of academic

interest." According to Brian, this move away from using the language of "increasing

racial diversity" and toward a focus on those of "first-gen and lower-SES" backgrounds

has facilitated a demographic shift in CSP: a program that historically served mostly

African American students was slowly becoming increasingly white[18].

Messaging around the University's desire to admit "broadly diverse students" was

also communicated to students themselves. Recall that in the Scholar Recognition Dinner,

Dean Munson mentioned the University's commitment to "embrace all" of the various

"dimensions of diversity"—albeit without naming them—to a broad audience of

underrepresented students and their families. This message of an inclusive, broad

diversity was also reiterated to the over 54,000 applicants in one of three undergraduate

application essay prompts:

> Everyone belongs to many different communities and/or groups defined by
> (among other things) shared geography, religion, ethnicity, income, cuisine,
> interest, race, ideology, or intellectual heritage. Choose one of the communities to

---

[18] For example, Of the 2,660 CSP students surveyed in fall 2015, 813 students (30.6%) identified as Black and 1,019 students (38.3%) identified as white (LSA, 2015).

which you belong, and describe that community and your place within it. (250 limit)

Finally, diversity was used to describe the university itself—the characteristics of the current student population, academic opportunities and the like. I highlight some of these descriptions below.

"Michigan is proudly diverse." In meet and greet receptions—those largely attended by white students and their families—diversity was used in characterizing the current student population. Similar to comments made in participant interviews, enrollment management professionals—particularly those from admissions—highlighted, even celebrated, the geographic diversity reflected among undergraduate students. Katrina shared that "as an admissions person, our canned statement is 'we have students from all 50 states, 100-plus countries,'" which was confirmed by Karen, who pointed out that a critical goal of admissions was to "identify, recruit and enroll a diverse group of students that reflect the State of Michigan, the country and the world."

While the slide of a world map flashed on the projector in one of the larger meet and greet receptions within the state, Katie described UM's "diverse student body" as a source of pride before continuing, "We do have students from all over the state of Michigan, all 50 states, and over 114 different countries so you can really learn from a largely diverse population of students from all different life experiences." Related to this, the diversity of human bodies was thought to add value to, enrich, or enhance organizational and physical spaces that students might occupy. In the words of Stacey, "students from all over the world make our campus diverse" as well as "add to the culture and diversity of the city." In yet another meet and greet reception, the presenter described Michigan as "proudly diverse," although it was not clear to what "diverse" referred.

I also noticed that "diversity" was used to describe the learning and academic experiences offered by the University of Michigan. Katie lauded the institution's dedication to bringing to campus diverse speakers—"politically, religiously, geographically" while other statements about diversity focused on academic opportunities and experiences. For example,

"…You get paid for research and it's very diverse."

"Michigan is a school for a well-rounded student. A student who has diverse interests."

But even as these comments highlight the myriad ways "diversity" was named or referred to explicitly in descriptions of UM, its students, campus features and learning opportunities, institutional commitment to diversity was also relayed in ways beyond the articulation of the words, "diverse" or "diversity." I found that commitment to diversity was also *signaled*—the ways of which depended on the context, presenter and demographics of the admitted student audience.

Signaling Commitment to Diversity

Verbal statements in broad recruitment contexts. In meet and greet receptions with a broad audience of students, institutional commitment to diversity was rarely mentioned explicitly; rather, it was suggested through comments, words and phrases—all of which students might have interpreted as "diversity." For example, in one meet and greet reception, the presenter briefly mentioned that University faculty and students were "coming together to address the Flint water crisis" while in a similar event, the presenter

135

highlighted Wolverine Pathways[19] as an example of how "Michigan likes to give back."

He added that the goal of the "Southeast Michigan" program was "to show impoverished

and underprivileged students they can go to college." For attendees, the University's

commitment to various causes impacting people of color or those from marginalized

backgrounds may be perceived as the institution's value for diversity even if not

expressly communicated.

The larger share of comments signaling diversity described academic

opportunities that focused on studying and learning about race and culture. The presenter

in one particular meet and greet reception, briefly referenced first-year seminar courses

offered at UM such as "Black Culture in America" and a course on "teaching racism,"

"an important topic" which she "took so much out of." And in his presentation, Charles

described the "multiculturalism at Michigan as unmatched," sharing with attendees how

as an undergraduate student, the University introduced him to different cultures: It was at

U of M that I saw my first Native American Pow Wow. I was exposed to Asian Food,

Asian Dress--the Asian culture. I'm from [city] so this really opened my eyes to various

possibilities." Coming from a small Midwestern, predominantly white town, the

University of Michigan exposed him to what he described as "transformative" cultural

experiences. For admitted students, these cultural opportunities might suggest diversity is

an important part of the institution and campus environment. A selection of other

academically related diversity comments from meet and greet receptions are included

below:

---

[19] Wolverine Pathways is a supplemental educational program designed to help underrepresented students in targeted Michigan school district be prepared to continue their education at U-M. The program launched in January 2016 (Allen, 2016).

I love talking about the seminars because they always have really fascinating topics that those course cover. Some they covered last year include "the science of happiness," "race in the age of Obama" and worldwide witchcraft"…

We have over 100 minors "for example, we have a minor in community action and social change.

I had a chance to do a project with one of my political science professors on how immigration is covered in the media.

I went to Barcelona, Spain…it was a great way to supplement my education.

With the Blue-Lab, they travel to countries like Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Guatemala.

With over 1400 student organizations, Michigan has a place for everyone.

…You get paid for research and its very diverse, it's not just limited to those students studying the natural sciences. So maybe you're someone interested in education. Right now we have a student at Michigan researching science education reform in urban middle schools. Or maybe you're someone who's interested in communication and cultures. Right now we have a student at Michigan who is researching cultural and language learning between Spanish and American in an online chat so there really is a lot of things for students to study with all types of academic interests…

In most cases, these statements were made by non-Black professionals in meet and greet receptions attended by predominantly white admitted students and their families. For this group, mentions of cultural experiences, unique courses and community service may have been appealing. They represent markers of prestige and opportunities for enriching experiences. At the same time, strategic nods to "race," "Black," "Obama," and the university's connections to Spanish-speaking countries may have resonated with students of color.

Signaling diversity in targeted recruitment contexts. In targeted yield events in urban contexts, I observed that diversity was signaled not by explicit mentions of the

137

term "diversity" or references to culture or language as in the meet and greet receptions. In fact, the official diversity language endorsed by President Schlissel and repeated in other recruitment contexts was noticeably absent from yield-recruitment events in urban settings attended by predominantly Black students. Instead, I found that institutional commitment to diversity was more or less *performed*. It was signaled to Black admitted students in the emphasis placed on the "village" of support available to them as well as the racial identity of University representatives (presenters and partners from key offices) participating in these activities.

     "It takes a village." Admitted Student Celebration Days*, events targeting students attending high schools in urban communities, were structured in such a way that admitted students were able to reconnect with graduates of their high school who were now attending the University of Michigan as well as meet staff from various offices on campus including the Office of Financial Aid, Comprehensive Studies Program, and the College of Engineering, and others. Panels featuring current UM students were a signature part of these events, characterized by one of the admissions counselors as "our bread and butter" given the positive reception from admitted students. They were often inspired by words of encouragement from their older peers and enlightened with candid perspectives on everything from what it's like to be Black at UM and live in Ann Arbor to tips for picking a roommate freshman year.

     Students' exposure to UM staff from different offices was also significant, as admissions professionals hoped that they would be enticed by the wealth of resources and opportunities available to them at Michigan and importantly, begin to develop a community that would enrich their experience on campus. According to Shawn, who

coordinated university partners' involvement, the recent decision to make them a more

central part of these events has made a "world of difference. " He likened yielding

underrepresented students of color to an old African proverb. "It takes a village," he said,

in a reference to the group effort that he believed was required to help yield these

students:

> And maybe you know something a partner says may be the deciding factor or may trigger and a student may say, "Oh, you know what Michigan might be a good place for me" because this person said these x, y and z. **And also building those relationships early is very important because that way the students can feel supported way before they move into the residence hall. And I think that is huge. You know especially for recruiting underrepresented students to go to Michigan especially in the last few years. Will I be supported? Is there a place for me on campus? And bringing these partners…helped these students say, "Okay, I like research so I'm going to contact [partner] to do research.** I'm going to contact somebody in financial aid." So just having those people there sometimes makes a world of difference every single time…Students can have those resources that we've talked about right there at their disposal for an hour or two.

And from what I observed, both students and parents appreciated access to the various

partners and the information they presented about their various programs and offices.

After the Admitted Student Celebration Day in Chicago, a group of students were

clustered around Roy from the College of Engineering for nearly 20 minutes after the

formal program had concluded, fully engaged in conversation. Parents and students

would often leverage the opportunity to ask questions about CSP Summer Bridge,

including how students were selected and if it was mandatory that they attended. And

inevitably, financial aid partners were busy fielding questions before, during and after the

event.

The "village" approach was demonstrated in other aspects of recruitment as well.

Representatives in my sample from the admissions office had cultivated strong, familial

type bonds with many of the admitted students and their parents. In an unsolicited encounter, one mother came up to me after the event in Chicago and shared that she was "sold on Michigan" from the interactions she had with counselor, Katrina, whom she described as "real" and "down to earth." She shared more about Katrina:

> She gave me her cell phone number and told me to contact her if I needed anything. She was so nice and helpful. She made us feel like family. Like I could trust her with my son. People will give you their cards or email addresses, but she gave me her cell phone. I felt like she cares about my baby.

I also noted this level of care at Campus Visit Day, when throughout the information fair, parents and students would approach Ella, who works in Detroit area to say, "Hi." And it seemed that each time, without them reminding her, she would know their name and high school. Shawn also recalled during our interview the angst he felt waiting to find out if one of his students, a twin, would be admitted from the waitlist after his twin brother had earned admission earlier in the cycle. And during an event in Detroit, Ella shared with me informally that one of her students who was admitted in the previous year had lost family members in a house fire and that she would check on her from time to time. These instances represent just a few examples I observed of the level of care expressed toward admitted Black students on part of Black admissions counselors.

It is plausible that the connections between Black admitted students, and in some cases, their parents, and admissions professionals was the result of a relationship cultivated over the course of the admissions cycle, or an even longer period of time given the volume of programming available to support students in applying to the University of Michigan, particularly out of admissions office in Detroit. I would suggest; however, that shared racial identity also played a role. In fact, it was notable that in each of the Campus Visit Days, the admissions counselors running the program were Black, the vast majority

140

of student panelists appeared phenotypically to be Black, as did nearly all of the

university partners. Through this signal, students may have ascribed to the University the

racial diversity and deep investment from university representatives that they saw and

experienced in their interactions and participation targeted yield recruitment. The nature

of the "village" approach could also resonate given the cultural dispositions and values

for family, particularly extended family, important to communities of color.

Addressing the "Diversity Question"

To this point, my findings have focused on the ways in which EMPs portray the

university commitments to admitted students. However, I also found that diversity was

also communicated at the request of Black students and their families in less formal

settings and interactions (e.g., phone conversations, one-on-meetings, etc.). This section

provides insight into these more intimate exchanges that students (and sometimes parents)

initiated. The discussion illuminates the concerns Black students often expressed with

respect to diversity at UM and how EMPs attempted to answer their questions and

assuage their fears and concerns.

"Difficult" dialogues. Despite strategic efforts to communicate the University's

values and commitments around diversity, many of the enrollment management

professionals in my sample expressed great difficulty in addressing concerns about racial

diversity and climate in their interactions with prospective and admitted students and

their families. They had come to expect that Black students, more than any other

racial/ethnic group, would inquire about the size of the Black student population or share

their concerns about the campus environment. For example, some of their students would

often ask, "Why is Michigan not diverse?" or "Is there diversity at Michigan?" Yet the

141

frequency with which these issues surfaced during the recruitment process among Black

students compared to other racial/ethnic groups, did not make enrollment management

professionals any more comfortable navigating these conversations. This was particularly

the case for white EMPs who were noticeably uncomfortable and at times, unprepared

with how to respond to Black students' "difficult" questions.

I observed this discomfort in my interviews but also during Campus Visit Day,

the university's signature yield event targeted at underrepresented students. One notable

example stands out. A Latino student posed a pointed question to a panel comprised of

three Black and one White U-M currently enrolled students: "Do you feel like UM is a

diverse place in terms of ethnicity and background and have you ever felt any sort of

racism or intolerance on campus?" Up until this point, the moderator, who is white, had

repeated each of the questions from the audience for everyone to hear, sometimes

interjecting an institutional perspective after the panelists provided their remarks. But in

response to this pointed question, there was a long, awkward silence as the panelists and

the moderators exchanged puzzled looks:

> *Moderator:* Did everyone hear the question?
> *Black Audience Member:* Mmmmhmmmm (finger snapping as to signal this was
> an important question)
> *Moderator:* Who wants to take that?
> *Panelist 1:* Do you want to take it?
> *Panelists 2:* You can take it.
> *Panelist 1:* No go ahead.

The fact that the moderator immediately continued her practice of repeating questions

posed by the audience before directing the panelists to respond made this awkward

moment that much more noticeable.

A few minutes later, another student in the audience asked a related question: "Going off the topic of like feeling comfortable on campus, do any of you think there is a constructive dialogue between students at the university? Do you feel comfortable expressing your voice to other students and receiving constructive feedback?" Once again, the moderator did not repeat the question for the audience to hear. However, she did so with the next question (on campus partying) and all those that followed.

In other instances, discomfort in these discussions can be attributed to attempts by some EMPs to describe the affirmative action ban and its implications as a way to explain the small size of the Black student population. Charles, who is Latino, noted that in response to students' questions he'll usually say, "We can't admit based off of affirmative action because it is illegal for us to do so." However, bringing up Proposal 2 or affirmative action as a response to questions about the status of Black students on campus may help little. Proposal 2 was enacted 10 years ago, when students were still in elementary school. More importantly, Ella and Brian, Black EMPs who interacted with Black students in their roles in the Detroit Office and CSP program, respectively, pointed out that prospective students care less about the policy proscriptions and more about why there are so few Black students on campus—why at the University of Michigan, there is such "concentrated whiteness." Jeff's recollection of a conversation at a yield event highlights both the challenge and uneasiness evoked by this particular approach:

> There is sometimes a negative perception when we do show the students -- In one instance when I was out-of-state in DC, I had an African American family come up and ask me about the diversity question. What does your African American population look like? And when we show them that their eyes kinda get big, "why is that?" And that tends to be the hardest talking point for me at least in trying to explain Prop-2 and the circuit court case. That's a difficult conversation to have.

One could also imagine that for students and parents who live outside of Michigan, from where a sizeable percentage of the University's applications originate, trying to familiarize them with the legal developments that have been salient in discussions at the institution and within the state might also prove to be a bit challenging.

In addition to engaging in conversations about affirmative action, white EMPs were especially likely to respond to students' questions by utilizing data and emphasizing normative (e.g., we are committed to diversity or we value diversity) as well as descriptive (e.g., we have a diverse campus) statements. When I asked Katie how she responded to Black students' inquiries about campus diversity, she explained:

> **I mean it is definitely a tough question.** I am pretty honest with them about how Michigan -- We are really committed to making a more diverse campus through a variety of ways. **I'll tell them about the statistics—that it is 21% students. Right now, I believe it is 21% students who are minority students on campus. And I try to kind of explain to them that Michigan does have a population of students from all over the country, all over the world so we do have diverse experiences coming to campus.** It is not just one type of student that you are going to meet at Michigan. **It is a hard question but I think there is not really an easy answer for it especially when we are still kind of in the transition of trying to make this a more diverse campus.**

Broad and inclusive phrases such as "more diverse," and "variety of ways" are consistent with the diversity language used by President Schlissel and repeated in other broad yield-recruitment contexts. However, describing the minority population as 21% may give the impression to prospective Black students that the campus is more diverse than the 4.6% Black student population would otherwise suggest. Katie's response is similar to Stacey's below, the admissions professional that moderated the student panel. Despite her conveying the University's commitments in terms consistent with the institutional language for diversity, it's clear that doing so elicits a bit of unease:

I'll give them the data and I usually say we're working to improve diversity on

campus and I'll put that out there just because it's not an impressive number. I do my best to, of course, be honest and transparent but also give them a sense of there is movement on this. We're trying to improve diversity as a whole on campus but to be honest, it's not something that I generally highlight unless students ask about it, which reflecting on that, I feel like maybe that's something I should change or maybe I should incorporate into my presentations.

These examples raise questions about the tensions inherent in casting "diversity" in discussions with prospective Black students.

How should admissions professionals characterize the 4.6% Black student population? How are admissions professionals to handle being "honest" and "transparent" about information that may show the University in an unfavorable light? As I've detailed above, for EMPs who do not identify as Black or African American, I found that it was attempting to balance out unfavorable information such as Black students' percentage of the undergraduate population, with normative statements or expressions about what the university is planning to do, how it is "committed" to becoming a "more diverse" campus. Take Katie's comments for example. She shared that she communicates the "data" to students, but perhaps aware of the negative response or concern from the student her answer might create, she reassures students with comments about the University's future plans relative to diversity—that it is working to improve diversity and make the campus more diverse. Statements like "making a more diverse campus" while suggests very little about what the university has actually done or will do, may still give the impression that UM recognizes the value of diversity and is committed to supporting it through the students it enrolls, its programs, policies and practices. At the same time, stressing the institution's *future* plans for improving diversity may also help to mitigate the angst some EMPs otherwise feel in their efforts to try to explain the underrepresentation of Black students on campus.

145

Keeping it "real." Talking points that incorporated affirmative action stood in stark contrast to what I heard from Black EMPs in the sample—across each of the units—who did not try to explain the circumstances (e.g., affirmative action ban) contributing to Black students' underrepresentation at the University. They did not generally share normative statements about plans to improve diversity. Nor did they attempt to obscure the racial realities of being Black on campus. Whereas some EMPs described discomfort engaging in conversations about diversity, Black participants in the sample seemed at ease navigating these issues. In reflecting on her conversations about racial diversity issues with Black students and families in the Detroit area, Ella said, "I don't try to sort of hide it and I don't try to say with smoke in the mirrors that this is what you're seeing but this is what the reality is." Roy from engineering agreed with this approach, noting that given Black students' sensitivities to these issues, particularly campus climate, "the conversation has to get a little more real."

I found that a significant part of these "real" conversations between Black students and Black EMPs is a common understanding rooted in a shared racial identity. Black professionals, especially those working in admissions, expressed a deep sense of empathy towards the students they encountered in their roles and acknowledged the "validity of the concerns" they often raised. This is not at all to suggest that other EMPs did not also empathize with Black admitted students' concerns. White EMPs were aware that diversity was important to Black students. Latino participants also said they understood why Black students would "want to go to a place that has a lot of people like them," recalling how they felt similarly as undergraduate students at U-M themselves. The difference, then, is that beyond a general understanding of why prospective Black

146

students would be interested in the racial make-up of the student body, Black EMPs connected with students' around their concerns related to being Black in a predominantly white institution like the University of Michigan. They could speak to their issues with a sense of understanding and credibility that was more difficult for other EMPs to do. As an example, Roy made a distinction between the things he talks about when he pulls a Black student aside to say "This is how it really is" versus what he might communicate to a larger, predominantly white group of engineers about diversity issues. "Being Black myself and being an alum, I know how to help folks navigate some of those spaces and I know some of the things they might encounter and so I just lean on my own personal experience." Leveraging one's personal experience or identity was key in connecting to students.

How and what Black EMPs chose to communicate to prospective students about their college experiences varied considerably. Roy was honest about the challenges Black students might face in the College of Engineering but he was also mindful about *how* to convey this to prospective students:

> And so I'll be a little bit more candid about the fact that -- Michigan in general is trying to provide a little bit of resistance. Michigan engineering is absolutely trying to make students conquer things. And then just due to the nature of the Black experience in the country, we have to overcome those challenges as well as a couple others.

By contextualizing Michigan engineering within the larger scope of societal issues and obstacles, his statement comes across as honest about the environment for Black students but not disapproving of the University's commitment to diversity. Comments from a financial aid representative about the nature of some of his conversations with Black

147

students would likely fall near the opposite end of the spectrum, however, given the

information he shared:

> *Kelly*: Even though you're working primarily with financial aid, you're getting
> questions about diversity, about climate? How do you respond to that?
> **Robert:** I give them my experience that I had at Michigan. I was an undergrad at
> Michigan as well. I always give them my experience. I'm honest with them,
> honest with everybody. I don't like sugar coating or giving false information.
> **Kelly:** Do you say "it was good?" or "it was bad?" or do you—
> **Robert**: I said there were some times when racial slurs were said, nothing overtly
> racist, just racial slurs, nothing over the top. I feel like nowadays, it's more of de
> jure versus de facto.

Both approaches to talking about diversity and racial climate could shape how

prospective Black students perceive the University of Michigan and imagine the

contingencies of threat associated with their racial/ethnic identity should they enroll, with

the latter comments potentially deterring some from matriculating.

Katrina and Shawn could not relate to students in the way that Robert and Roy

could, given that they attended other universities for their baccalaureate degrees, but they

still seemed very much in tune with the challenges that some Black students experienced

in navigating the campus racial climate. For Katrina, while recognizing from a

professional standpoint that BBUM and the climate issues it exposed made her work

yielding Black students more difficult, she was also empathetic. Reflecting back on that

time, she noted, "But I'm not going to sit here and say I can't relate, because I can." This

was a sentiment other Black EMPs also shared.

In this regard, addressing prospective Black students' questions and concerns

about diversity presents Black EMPs with a dilemma in the Post-Proposal 2 era that is

altogether different from that of their colleagues described above. Black EMPs are

juggling what may appear to be two competing obligations. On one hand, their intimate

148

knowledge of the reality of Being Black at UM and the inescapable pressure to share this

information with students and parents who ask and expect their "straight talk." On the

other hand, their professional identity and role as enrollment management professionals

employed by the University of Michigan and charged with helping to enroll a diverse

class of students. I gathered from my interviews that this tension was especially salient a

few years ago as BBUM unfolded on campus and found its way into yield events and

conversations with admitted students and their families. Shawn's comment is illustrative

of this tension:

> As an African American male in the admissions office at the University of
> Michigan, I have a different -- You know I cannot *not* be Black. When the whole
> BBUM and BAM thing was going on and different conversations were being had
> across the office and across the country, you know, I wasn't going home saying,
> "Oh, they need to get over it. How dare they think we're not doing enough?" I'm
> like, "Are we?" You know I couldn't go home and be, you know remove myself
> because I get these kids. You know I could have very well had the same
> experience had I come here.

The fact that Black EMPs felt a sense of obligation to Black students and their cause but

also to their professional roles, suggests there may be great consideration given to how to

thoughtfully communicate to students.

This sense of obligation to speak candidly about diversity issues was likely

shaped by Black parents and students who, by virtue of the EMP's racial identity, sought

them out, expecting an honest take on what the campus environment might be like for

their Black son or daughter. In the targeted events I attended, Black parents or family

members were often vocal in asking questions. And as I alluded to in the instance of the

mother in Chicago, they felt a sense of trust and connection with some of the enrollment

management professionals with whom they interacted. Two professionals from

engineering and admissions, respectively, reflected on these occurrences:

149

Our tours are somewhat homogenous in their attendance. But so what will happen is outside of the office all of the recruiters who are not busy doing something else will stand outside and be there to kind of answer any additional questions. So kind of in the format that you saw at the Chicago event where there is kind of a circle that exists outside in this hallway… And it is me and Mike and Brian and everybody else. It is always an interesting process because whenever there is a Black family that is on the tour, I'm kinda looking at them to try to see do we need to have a real conversation right quick. **And every once in a while, you'll get a comment from a mother or an allusion to, "Hey, there are Black people and I'm going to talk to you because you are going to give me the straight talk."** (Roy, Engineering)

And most times you'll get families and sad but true -- You'll get African American families who will peruse the website and they will email me because I'm Black and say, "Hey, we're from x, y and z state and I called you -- like, mm-hmm -- and they won't say why they called but I know why they called me. I'm not the territory counselor; I do not cover your state. **And you get that because they are just as concerned. They want to know -- what is the experience going to be like for this student…?** (Shawn, Admissions)

These comments shed light on the ways in which some students and their families were deeply interested in learning more about the campus environment and actively sought Black admissions counselors or other staff with whom they felt comfortable speaking and expected to provide honest information. It also provides insight into the tension--both the empathy and obligation—that some Black EMPs felt with respect to discussing diversity and climate with prospective Black students.

Reframing Diversity and Climate Challenges

While many of the Black EMPs I interviewed did not shy away from these candid conversations with students and/or their families, as I have already mentioned, they also did not lose sight of the responsibility entailed in their respective roles to encourage students to choose the University of Michigan. In much the same way that white EMPs tempered potentially negative implications of sharing less favorable information on the Black student population with value statements—those alluding to the University's

"commitment to making the campus more diverse" — a different set of talking points emerged among EMPs of color (mostly Black), which I describe below. These talking points did not focus on the underrepresentation of Black students. They were not declarations of the University's diversity values and commitments. Rather, on the basis of their conversations with me, I found that Black participants expressed a tendency to reframe inherently negative aspects of the University relative to diversity and climate, shifting the focus away from its shortcomings and towards strategies and resources students could leverage to navigate potentially challenging dynamics. Talking points emphasized reframing the size of the Black student population as well as highlighting how the racial context of the university can be an enhancing opportunity or experience.

The Black community: "Small…but they are strong." As a talking point, highlighting a robust Black community essentially served as a mechanism for creating a more positive narrative about the social climate for diversity at the UM, complicating the data on diversity that was communicated to students verbally and included in recruitment materials. If there was anything that enrollment management professionals wanted to get across to admitted Black students during the yield process it was that, despite the small size of the Black student population, they would indeed find a robust community of Black students at the University of Michigan should they enroll. The aim was not to dispute a clearly obvious fact. As one representative from admissions said about Black students' perception of the population, "Without a doubt, it is small and they know that." Instead, EMPs highlighted the positive aspects of the small population referring to it as "close" and "tight knit"—descriptions that might be reassuring to some applicants. While

I found no evidence of white EMPs using this particular talking point, among all other

participants (Black and Latino), I heard it multiple times:

> What I try to do is I tell students, "Well even for our African American population
> may be small but they are strong. They have a strong body and they are strong on
> campus with the Black Student Union and they have a voice." (Jeff)

> Yes, we do have a bit of a smaller Black or African American population but that
> doesn't mean that it is not strong. It doesn't mean that it is not a good community.
> And it doesn't mean we are not trying to build it. (Charles)

> You know it may be this low percentage of African American students here but
> they're in the community for you here. (Shawn)

Reframing the size of the Black population represented an earnest effort to help shape

Black admitted students' impressions of the quality and availability of a supportive

community of like peers, complicating what a financial aid administrator believed to be

Michigan's biggest challenge: "perception."

Cindy, who had a long tenure at UM, elaborated on this problem: "there's a two-

fold perception that Michigan is not friendly to students of color and that Michigan is not

affordable. Combatting that perception to even get you to open your mind enough to

think about coming here becomes a bit of a challenge." Fully aware of this challenge,

some EMPs, like Jeff, were emphatic about when in the recruitment process prospective

students received this talking point. Presuming some students had little information

about the campus environment at UM, admissions professionals had a chance to

proactively shape their impressions rather than try to supplant existing thoughts or ideas.

From his perspective, it was important for prospective Black students to learn about the

"strong" and supportive community "beforehand," otherwise, they will "see the

percentage" which was "mind-boggling for some." Shawn agreed that it was important to

reiterate the presence of a "Black and Brown community" available to students, despite

152

what they might have heard or presumed on the basis of the numbers. However, he was also mindful of managing students' expectations about these supports: "I won't say like an HBCU feel, but there is a community for you on this campus and you can find that at Michigan."

And there are seemingly several communities of which Black students could be a part. The Black Student Union, the group that spearheaded the BBUM campaign was mentioned the most in participant interviews and by current UM students at yield events. A number of other groups were also shared, including the NAACP, historically Black fraternities and sororities, and institutional supports like the Comprehensive Studies Program, multicultural councils, among others. As Chris, a financial aid officer, put it, "there is something for everyone." With these various groups at the University, EMPs were convinced that Black students could find the support and community they sought and perhaps did not believe existed.

Projecting agency. A second aim of the talking point about the strength of the "Black community," focused on the role of Black students' agency in catalyzing the university's diversity efforts. While acknowledging Black students on campus were subject to microaggressions and other forms of racial stigma, current UM students participating in events as well as enrollment management professionals highlighted the courage of Black students who, through their efforts in support of BBUM, were able to bring attention to students' daily experiences of a negative climate, get a "seat at the table" and as a result, catalyze diversity efforts that were materializing in real ways. Black students were "vocal on the issues" and "very strategic." Because of the success and exposure of BBUM, Jeff believed that "the President of the University of Michigan

153

would be open to having his door open and speaking with the African American community."

Thus, BBUM, which nearly every administrative participant cited as a difficult moment for the University and for the work of recruiting and yielding students, was also cast as an example of student activism and the influence of Black students at the university with respect to diversity and inclusion. When an admitted student of color asked about the climate at Campus Visit Day, one of the Black student panelists responded,

> I think a good thing in the past there was like BBUM and this year there was a Speak-Out so if you feel like being—if feel like you're isolated or your being marginalized there are places where you can to have your voices heard and history has shown the university has listened and they're taking steps. It may not happen as fast as people want it to it's till a big step that they're actually listening and trying to do something about it.

Whether or not it was the explicit intention, this particular discussion about the agency of Black students on campus reiterated the strength of the small but very vocal Black community, which could be attractive to those students interested in activism and social justice. However, in other ways, the fact that change has occurred because of students' efforts may also suggest something about the institution's willingness to engage and respond to students' requests as the student panelist suggested

Leveraging community to survive. A third aim of the Black community talking point was to offer students a strategy for dealing with being underrepresented racially. Encouraging prospective students to get involved in Black student organizations, to be in community with others who "look like them" or made them "feel more comfortable" was an appeal to those Black admitted students who may have recognized the seemingly

limitless academic opportunities available at the University of Michigan, but were still

concerned about the climate for diversity.

In engineering, which as a field is known for a culture and climate that can be

isolating and exclusive of underrepresented students of color, Black students might have

an even greater need for a racially diverse community. Although not everyone will share

this need (Roy noted that the profile of U-M Black engineering students has changed over

the past decade), it is still more likely for an engineering student to "be one of the few

African Americans in the classroom." It is also likely that Black students admitted to

engineering are aware of this fact given the various yield events and initiatives that aim to

bring underrepresented prospective students to campus. Therefore, it was imperative that

for those for whom these issues were important, they received information about whom

to look to for support and more broadly, how to navigate such spaces. Roy took me

through a typical one-on-one conversation he would have with a prospective Black

engineering student:

> I'll be honest about the need for spaces to recharge. And there is a student
> organization that served as my big Black hug when I was in undergrad here and I
> might say that if I'm in a one-on-one setting…I'm legit going to ask them, "What
> is your concern? Do I need to point you to a specific student organization?
> These are the people you need to talk to. You have to go to NSBE because they
> are just the best-run student organization. But I know a host of other
> organizations and/or things that you can do -- places where you can recharge.

Roy recognized the unique promise that some Black student organizations on campus

hold for Black students in the current institutional environment. They are a place to

"recharge" and a safe space where students can be honest about their experiences. It was

notable that the emphasis was not on institutional or campus resources, or on

transforming structures, practices or academic settings (classrooms) to better support

155

Black students. Rather, he emphasized the actions that *students* must take in order to feel more comfortable in the campus environment.

UM students serving in recruitment capacities themselves communicated a similar message, reinforcing the notion of Black student groups as counter-spaces: academic and social "sites where deficit notions of people of color can be challenged and where a positive college racial climate can be established and maintained" (Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000, p.70). They elaborated on their involvement in the Black community (inclusive of Black student-run organizations) as a strategy for navigating the small Black student population and the related campus racial climate. This is illustrated in how a Black student panelist at Campus Visit Day responded to a question from the audience about experiencing racism or intolerance on campus:

> I think my experience here coming from my whole life going to predominantly Black schools and just like switching over to be the minority in my classes and just dealing with different microaggressions—you know they don't mean harm but its like ughhh—so just being a part of different organizations here –so I'm active with the Black Student Union and I'm also apart of Organization Impact that's geared towards—targeted toward African American students I think that helps in that factor. But the University of Michigan is working—(Student Panelist 2 interrupts, they're trying) they're trying…I don't know.

And at a yield event in Detroit, another student panelist shared a similar response when asked by an admitted student to describe "your biggest culture shock going to Michigan?" Acknowledging the "culture shock" and solo status she experienced transitioning from a predominantly Black high school to the University of Michigan, where she was often the only Black student in her classes, she noted that her solution has been to "join clubs and organizations that involve my culture and involve me being around people from the same background as me and the same racial identity as me." With these responses, current UM Black students offered to prospective Black students very

156

personal accounts of the transition that takes place when changing from a predominantly

Black context to one in which they are the racial minority. They also presented Black

students with a plausible strategy: get involved in Black student organizations. While

imperfect, this strategy seemed to have worked for them. It was a way for students to tie

themselves to the strong Black community.

"But That's the Real World." A second talking point emphasized the ways in

which the University's challenges with respect to diversity and campus climate could

actually benefit students who enrolled, by preparing them to handle microaggressions or

challenging environments they might face in life beyond college. They explained that

Black students would encounter moments on campus when they "may sometimes be the

only one" or have experiences where they "would have to educate" other students about

their race, but these would prove to be important learning opportunities and in the words

of one student panelist, "part of the college experience."

In responding to a question from the audience about racism on campus, a current

Black student described these incidents as exposure to racial issues often reflected in the

"real world:"

> Being a 100% honest, I love Michigan and I'm not going to say it's a terrible
> place but like diversity is just a hot topic right now. I think there's a quality and
> quantity thing. **I think the quality of the diversity here—there are a lot of
> different people represented it's just not just enough of them. And so some
> people can feel isolated because if you go to your classroom and you don't see
> anyone who looks like you there's going to be some type of problem**. I think
> the university can do better than that and I know they're making efforts to do
> better. Have I ever been a personal victim of racism? **No. Have I seen people like
> anonymously say ignorant things? Yes. But that's the real world. If you don't
> see it here you'll see it when you leave.** Um, so to some extent I'd rather not be
> sheltered and know what's going on and know what people think—good and bad-
> - instead of thinking the world is all happy go lucky and people hold hands and
> chant Kumbaya when they don't.

Drawing from her own undergraduate career at Michigan, Karen one of the long-time

admissions professionals expounded upon this logic:

> **[Black] Students typically ask, "What is the percentage? Well, your numbers
> are so low."** But I go back to: I want you to talk to the students about what is
> available on the campus in their experience. **Does it prepare them for the work
> place? And again, I speak to my own experience when I was a student here, it
> wasn't always the most comfortable experience but it certainly prepared me
> well for what I've encountered in the work place. I appreciate that far more
> than having come here and felt everything was Kumbaya and then gone to
> the work place and been completely blindsided by the complexities of
> interactions I would have.** And not be able to unpack it and say, "Wait a minute,
> I need to understand what I'm facing here.' Where Michigan was a really good
> example of: Yeah, there are some very closed-minded people and there are some
> very open and engaged people. And there was discourse and conversation.

Chris, one of the financial aid officers in my sample, also reiterated this notion of

Michigan's racial climate and diversity as exposure to the real world, but in a different

way. He tried to convey in his conversations with students and their families, that

Michigan would present them with a unique "opportunity to grow" beyond their comfort

zones as they learned from "different cultures, different ethnicities, people from different

areas of Michigan." The "growth" that he emphasized and that I heard from others, was

in direct reference to being significantly underrepresented in a predominantly White

institution. Students need not be deterred by the racial make-up of the student body

because, as he relayed it to me, "You're going to encounter people. You're going to work

with people. You're going to be in teams with people that don't look like you,

necessarily." Therefore, being a Black student at Michigan would "challenge" them but it

would also facilitate their growth and preparation—something that he had appreciated as

an undergraduate student himself at UM. In short, by casting the institution's climate for

diversity as a microcosm of the "real world," EMPs could reframe the perception of an

unwelcoming climate for students of color, and offer an alternative perspective on what

Michigan had to offer Black students that was arguably more positive.

Disconfirming Evidence

For all the emphasis that participants placed on the strength of the Black student community at Michigan, one admissions counselor characterized it as divided, citing tensions between students admitted through CSP, those who were "legacy" students (children of alumni), students from Detroit and those who hailed from other cities and states:

> **So I would like to see the students here be more of a community here.** And once that happens I think you'll see the results of that. The stronger the community is here then you'll see the reflection of that. I think there right now is a lot of [pause] -- **Unfortunately students want into -- I guess competition type of situation. 'I wasn't in Bridge.' 'I missed summer CSP.' 'I'm not in Bridge.' 'I'm a legacy.'** You know I don't want to say what I would normally say but -- Does it really matter? Does any of that stuff matter because it doesn't matter to this professor? It doesn't matter to her peer. You're still world star hip-hop. You're still BBUM. You still got here because of Bridge. You still got here because of Prop-2. **That is what I would like to see just the community stronger here**.

If this were true, it is possible that some students could matriculate hoping to find a "strong" and "tight-knit" Black community only to discover one that is small and fractured, hardly providing the support they may need and were told they could expect to find.

Conclusion

Institutional commitment to diversity is critical to efforts to yield Black undergraduate students. However, for the University of Michigan, conveying diversity commitments and values can be a difficult undertaking given the University's complicated past with respect to issues of race, diversity, and climate; legal restrictions imposed by Proposal 2; and relatedly, Black enrollment rates that continue to hover

around 4-5%. Amid these complexities, this chapter outlined ways that University representatives involved in recruitment convey institutional commitment to diversity in efforts to encourage undergraduate students to matriculate. Diversity commitment was conveyed through the structure and tactics used in targeted yield recruitment events; institutional language incorporating the words "diverse" or "diversity," the use of more subtle signals such as same-race recruiters; and through difficult dialogues initiated by students.

Taken together, these strategies were intended to help shape admitted students' impressions about institutional commitment to diversity in a positive way and yet, "diversity" in these contexts was rarely articulated explicitly and was done so briefly when it was mentioned at all. Consistent with the institution's official diversity endorsed by President Schlissel, fleeting references to diversity were broad and inclusive and often used to describe many different aspects of the University—from students and academic opportunities to the physical features of the campus itself—such that it was not clear to what "diversity" or "diverse" really referred. This inclusive language is certainly helpful for reaching a broader audience of admitted students. But as one participant pointed out, it may also be deeply frustrating for currently enrolled Black students who do not see themselves in the myriad ways "diversity" has being applied. I would add to this that it could also send unclear messages to prospective and admitted Black students concerned specifically about the status of Black or African American students on campus.

"Diversity" was not explicitly communicated in targeted events in urban recruitment contexts either, but the use of same-race representatives and the emphasis placed on organizations and university initiatives focused on supporting diversity held

160

promise as Black admitted students may ascribe to the University the racial diversity and the level of care/commitment these representatives seemed to exhibit. Moreover, admitted students were introduced to various robust supports available to them should they decide to enroll.

Questions initiated by parents and students themselves represent a final way in which institutional commitment to diversity was communicated. EMPs' recollections of how they responded to these inquiries illuminated just how difficult it was for some of them to talk explicitly about issues related to Black students. Despite the frequency in which Black students inquired about diversity and climate related issues in comparison to other racial/ethnic groups, non-Black EMPs were seemingly unprepared and admittedly uncomfortable answering these questions. Some tried explaining the implications Proposal 2 has had on the University. Other non-Black EMPs tried to offer a balanced approach by sharing statistics on Black student enrollment. Perhaps aware that these trends can be off-putting, they then followed up with information about the University's future plans and commitments to becoming more diverse. Still, there was doubt that these explanations actually resonated with students.

Black EMPs employed a different approach to handling these conversations. Drawing upon their own identities and experiences in predominantly white contexts, they shared honest accounts of the reality of Black students' experiences on campus, but in anticipation of students' likely concerns, also communicated talking points that emphasized (1) the Black student community as a place of safety and support for admitted students to leverage and (2) the campus racial climate and diversity challenges as unique preparation for life beyond college. In doing so, they reframed what were

161

seemingly negative aspects of the University's racial environment and offered a more positive perspective for Black admitted students to consider in their decision-making. For any potential drawbacks associated with such an approach (e.g., the risk of being too honest), evidence presented in the following chapter, on Black admitted students' perceptions of diversity and climate, suggest these strategies may have resonated with admitted students as they engaged in yield recruitment activities and made their college choice.

Chapter 6: Perceptions of Diversity Cues, Threat and College Choice

At the University of Michigan, leaders have focused on making discourse and programming around diversity a focal point of institutional efforts. However, personal narratives of currently enrolled students of color and institutional data suggest that in the post-Proposal 2 era, Black students in particular, have held different expectations and interpretations of diversity efforts. What is more, given various settings remain characterized by stigmatizing experiences, diversity programs and initiatives may not always bring about their intended outcome (e.g., improving racial diversity and/or enhancing campus climate). Understanding admitted students' impressions of the University with respect to diversity could illuminate both challenges and opportunities for leaders to refine their efforts. Therefore, this chapter examines how Black students admitted to the University of Michigan perceive the University's diversity commitments and racial climate, and how these perceptions contribute to their college choice decisions. In doing so we see that admitted students utilized information from their recruitment process, which is rife with cues about institutional diversity and racial climate, to determine whether the University would provide a safe, diverse and inclusive environment.

Three types of cues emerged from my analysis of students' yield-recruitment perceptions and experiences: (a) structural; (b) organizational; and (c) compositional. Structural cues refer to organizational policies, practices and structures (for example, admissions and recruitment practices) that signal various possibilities or contingencies for

163

individuals with a particular identity. Overall, admitted students had mixed

interpretations of these cues. Organizational cues describe social identities associated

with particular roles and organizations and was positively perceived across the sample.

Compositional cues, the number or proportion of a particular identity group, was the most

negatively appraised by admitted students. These three modes for signaling diversity

align with findings presented in Chapter 5, which revealed institutional diversity was

portrayed in the yield recruitment in myriad ways, depending on the context of the event

or interaction, the admitted student audience and speaker. Building on those findings, I

argue in this chapter that four factors influenced how Black admitted students' perceived

and appraised this information: pre-college racial contacts; racial incidents; vicarious

exposure to the University's diversity and campus climate; and finally, racial identity.

Ultimately, I found that students' appraisals of institutional diversity are but one factor

contributing to their college choice.

For enrollees (i.e., students who matriculated at the University of Michigan) and

non-enrollees (i.e., students who planned to enroll at other four-year colleges), financial

aid, academic prestige of the institution, and academic opportunities were important

considerations in their decision-making. However, admitted students' perceptions of

diversity were also critical. I observed a pattern of admitted students projecting their

perceptions of institutional commitment to diversity and racial climate on to their own,

likely experience if they were to matriculate at UM. In other words, for some admitted

students, the extent to which they believed they would be affirmed or marginalized, feel

welcomed or excluded, was a lens through which they considered the University of

Michigan and compared it to other colleges where they were also admitted.[20] I begin this

chapter by providing a brief discussion of college choice before transitioning to a more

extended discussion of the three diversity cues (i.e., structural, organizational and

compositional) salient in admitted students' college choice process. Next, I describe the

factors that shape admitted students' perceptions and appraisals of these cues. I also

examine students' perceptions of the University of Michigan as a safe or threatening

environment on the basis of these cues and the centrality of their racial identity.

The Role of Diversity in Admitted Students' College Choice

Nearly every student in the sample mentioned diversity as a preference in the

college or university they wanted to attend, but when and how this preference manifested

varied considerably. Students held different ideas of what diversity meant. For some

students they began their process with the idea that they wanted to attend an institution

that was racially diverse and inclusive—a place where they would "be able to relate to

others" and feel "welcomed." For example, when I asked Alicia-NE[21] what influenced

her decision to *not* choose the University of Michigan, she responded:

> It was basically their lack of diversity. My father and friends of his told me that,
> and people who went there, and people who go there told me that it's extremely
> segregated and that the people of color you do see are mostly like rich, so they're
> not as relatable to us and who we are. That was really it basically. That's just a big
> factor for me, that if the college doesn't have it, it was basically a no.

Ironically, Alicia-NE chose to enroll at Yale, an institution with an elite culture and

historical legacy of discrimination against applicants of color. Although Alicia-NE

---

[20] My findings will also present students' perceptions and experiences at other institutions as a way to
compare, contextualize and amplify yield-recruitment at UM.
[21] To differentiate enrollees from non-enrollees in my discussion of findings, I use "E" for enrollee and
"NE" for non-enrollee behind students' names.

submitted an application to the UM, she did not give the University much consideration after realizing what she described as its "lack of diversity."

In other instances, admitted students in my sample focused on academic opportunities and financial aid in shaping the list of colleges they would apply to and *then*, after receiving their admissions offers, closely interrogated diversity and the experiences of Black students as part of their larger choice set. There were also a few admitted students who did not realize just how critical diversity was to them until *after* they had visited a campus that they perceived to be lacking in racial diversity. For Alexa-NE and a few other non-enrollee students, UM was that campus:

> I don't know, after the Michigan tour I felt like I wanted to go to a more diverse school and like one of the things Michigan State prides themselves on is being really diverse and like even pushing it so they become more and more diverse. Like I was told that…they would talk about it but I could also just see it on campus.

Seeing and "feeling" diversity turned out to be quite significant in the perceptions that students formed about the colleges they were interested in, as Alexa-NE's comment suggests. She decided to enroll at Michigan State University where Black students were 9% of freshman enrollment in Fall 2016, compared to 4.6% at the University of Michigan.

What was consistent across the sample is that in theory, diversity cues—features of the campus that signaled diversity commitments and racial climate—conveyed to students the status of their racial/ethnic identity, including the likely possibility that they would be vulnerable to stigmatizing experiences (Steele et al., 2002). My findings suggest that in reality, however, not everyone perceived these cues or interpreted them in ways that were negative and potentially threatening to their racial identity. As a consequence, the presence and perception of cues did not always influence college choice

166

decisions in ways that one might expect. For instance, the fact that many non-enrollee students perceived Michigan to be considerably less diverse or to have a chilly climate compared to institutions where they matriculated—places like Yale, Princeton, and MIT—that have historically had their own racial challenges, was notable. It was also interesting (and surprising) that some enrollees who expressed a great deal of concern about the likelihood of experiencing racism or feeling isolated at UM, decided to enroll anyway. Across the board, I found that rarely was the information students perceived about diversity and its related contingencies for their racial identity—via cues—the single deciding factor in their college choice decision. To be clear, it was an important consideration for most students, but factors such as financial aid and institutional prestige were also critically important. In the next section of this chapter, I discuss three diversity cues that emerged in admitted students' discussion of their recruitment experiences, highlighting patterns and contradictions as a way to contextualize how diversity and race-related factors were part of the broader matrix of decision-making in which admitted students engaged.

Diversity Cues: Signaling Diversity Commitment and Racial Climate

How did admitted students perceive UM's institutional commitment to diversity and the racial climate? To answer this question, I draw from the concepts of perceived identity threat (Ethier & Deaux, 1990, 1994; Dutton et al., 1994; Byrd & Chavous, 2012; Steele et al., 2002) as well as the concept of situational cues (Steele et al., 2002; Steele, 2010; Purdie-Vaughn et al., 2008), both of which I presented in Chapter Three as part of the study's conceptual framework. Ethier and Deaux's (1990, 1994) perceived threat derived from the extent to which Latino students in their sample believed their ethnic

culture was incompatible with their predominantly white, elite college environments. They argued that contextual challenges posed potential threats to students' self concept (in relation to their identity).

Cues are features of a setting that "create the expectations that a person's treatment will be contingent upon one's social identities" (Purdie-Vaughs et al., 2008, p. 615). The racial diversity or proportional representation of individuals from various groups, for example, may signal an inclusive environment or the potential for positive intergroup relations. Likewise, race-neutral policies and practices and other commitments relevant to diversity may illuminate organizational values that align or contradict students' individual background experiences, values or commitments (Byrd & Chavous, 2012; Dutton et al.,1994). Using this integrated framework, three categories of diversity cues emerged from this study's analysis of students' recruitment experiences at the University of Michigan. Two of these cues (i.e., organizational and compositional) are reflected in social psychology studies (Murphy et al., 2007; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Steele et al., 2002; Steele, 2010). This study provides insight into a third cue, structural cues.

Through the analytic lens of social identity threat, which broadly conceives of individual responses to "stigma-relevant" environments, settings, or domains as a "function of cues (Major & O' Brien, 2005)," I analyze what these cues signal about the University's diversity commitment and racial climate. I also discuss how admitted students interpreted these cues, outlining explanations for divergence in perceptions and appraisals within the sample. I begin with structural cues, which will help set the context for the remaining sections of findings.

Structural cues. Structural cues pertain to organizational policies, practices and structures, including undergraduate recruitment, that convey contingencies relative to particular identity groups. As an example, the visibility of people of color coordinating a college fair or the allocation of time to discuss diversity programs at an outreach event might signal that diversity is an institutional priority and that persons of color are positively regarded as a result. It is primarily through yield recruitment events that students gained information about racial/ethnic student organizations, campus initiatives, and offices focused on fostering a diverse and inclusive climate. However, I found that the practices and identities of individuals associated with recruitment efforts themselves, and not only the formal information presented at recruitment events and activities, played a significant role in shaping students' perceptions related to the University's diversity values and commitments.

The structure and foci of the myriad types of recruitment activities students participated in—from campus tours they coordinated on their own to events such as Campus Visit Day which targeted underrepresented students—conveyed facets of diversity at the University. Jeremy-NE is a Black male who visited Michigan multiple times as part of the Big House PILOT program, a student-run initiative aimed at bringing diverse students to campus and supporting them through the University's application process. He shared that while he was initially "very, very skeptical" of UM, given that he had heard about the institution's negative treatment of Black students in the past, the program's very explicit focus on diversity and inclusion, including the opportunity to connect with current students of color and participate in workshops on social identity, led him to believe diversity (and Black students) were valued:

169

> **Being able to sit down with the students at Michigan and speaking to them about how we identify ourselves and how we identify with other people** and what that looks like and how we can break stereotypes and try to stop ourselves from using stereotypes when we interact with different people. That type of experience really shaped how I saw Michigan. **It totally changed my perspective and while I do consider Michigan to still be a major predominantly white institution I do see it, at least from my perspective, as being a school that is becoming progressive and is becoming aware of the need for more diversity on campus.**

While Jeremy-NE was the only student in the sample that had participated in the PILOT program, he was not the only one who shared positive reflections on the University's yield recruitment. Nathan-E, a biracial male from Texas, noted that when he attended Scholar Power, a targeted event for underrepresented students in engineering, "They [staff and administrators] made it seem like diversity in both a racial/ethnic sense, as well as...political, or any kind of cultural sense" was important. The visibility and leadership of Black staff on the program for the event further reinforced this idea.

This is because the social identities of individuals serving in particular recruitment roles may reflect the status of certain identity groups within a setting. To that end, in addition to Nathan-E, a few students interpreted the visibility and roles occupied by Black persons in recruitment activities as a reflection of the University's diversity commitment. Elaborating on her thought, Alicia-NE noted, for example, "the people I've been in contact with who ran all the programs, they were Black, and they were very successful, and they were employed by the university." Megan-E intimated that the visibility of current Black students as panelists in one of the Campus Visit Day sessions was further indication of the positive status of Black students on campus:

> And we just had these three students come here. And they were diverse. They had probably three African-American students that helped...they had the people up there speaking in the different leadership roles, like the African-Americans and I

thought when they were speaking, "Like, oh, they put them in leadership roles, so they might not be racist.

When I asked Alexa-NE what gave her an impression of how current Black students were supported and/or valued at the University of Michigan, she mentioned the same event, recalling that the "student panel was actually Black" and perhaps surprising to her, they seemed "happy and proud of their school." Seeing and hearing these currently enrolled Black students was significant in shaping her perspectives about the role/status of Black students on campus. Essentially, Megan-E and Alexa-NE ascribed a perceived commitment to the broader population of Black students on the basis of the Black student panelists. In other words, their perceptions of Black students' "leadership," visibility and success in this recruitment context led them to believe that racial diversity and Black students on campus were positively regarded.

However, the status of Black students and what it signaled about diversity at UM was more difficult for several other admitted students in my sample to ascertain, including those who did not attend Scholar Power or were not one of the PILOT participants as Alicia-NE's comment explains:

> Whenever I visited, I saw people who worked for the university who were people of color, and then they brought in students who were people of color. But then, just walking around, or visiting other areas, I never saw any [people of color], hardly.

The disconnect that Alicia-NE alludes to reflects sentiments shared by a number of other students, particularly non-enrollees, who not only noticed a lack of racial diversity on campus but also suggested that the structure of the yield recruitment events they attended made them unclear about the University's commitment to diversity. From their perspective, the events did not provide sufficient insight into the experiences of currently

enrolled Black students on campus and did not expressly signal "diversity" in communications to students inviting them to the events or activities that were planned. Although major yield events like Campus Visit Day were targeted at underrepresented students, most students may not have realized that diversity was even an aim. This is because there was a perceived absence of a focus on diversity or race in how these events were communicated to students and/or executed—I suspected because of the legal constraints in the state's affirmative action ban. Admitted students' reflections about their yield-recruitment experiences at other institutions suggest that an explicit diversity framing, on the part of the college, can be highly significant in shaping students' impressions.

Race-centric recruitment events at other universities. More than half of the non-enrollee sample had been invited to Black or multicultural yield-recruitment events at other institutions that admitted them. Typically held over a weekend, these recruitment events at other universities ranged anywhere from one to three days and often included structured events hosted by Black student organizations and related units on campus. Mary-NE, a biracial student, recalled that her invitation to the University of Virginia's two-day Spring Fling made it very clear that she was being invited to an event for admitted African American students *only*. A quick search on Google turned up the 2017 flyer which listed a performance from the Black Voices Gospel Choir, a dialogue with members of the Black Student Alliance on "topics related to students of African descent," a showcase of multicultural student organizations, and a cookout among the programming sponsored by the university's admissions office. Non-enrollees also attended yield recruitment events with similar race-centric structures at Stanford. Other

172

campus visits emphasized race by providing a prominent role for currently enrolled Black students and Black student organizations in yield recruitment efforts.

Indeed, one of the things admitted students who attended these yield-recruitment events liked most were the opportunities afforded to engage with currently enrolled Black students. Curious about what it was like to be Black on these campuses and concerned about past incidents, which some were aware (e,g., racial incidents at Oberlin College), these intimate conversations gave students very honest perspectives on the challenges as well as recent progress and support structures in place to address issues related to race and diversity. One might suspect that students would be turned off by the honest depictions of life for Black students in these institutional settings. However, admitted students found the information helpful and appreciated the opportunity to get the "real" take on what they could expect to experience should they decide to enroll.

There were some students who experienced Michigan's recruitment events and were very complimentary. For instance, Jonie-E found the event she attended to be "very put together," noting that it made her confident she "chose the right school." However, particularly among non-enrollees, they perceived an absence of structured opportunities to meet current Black students that ultimately put Michigan at a comparative disadvantage. When I asked admitted non-enrollee students to contrast their recruitment experiences at Michigan with other institutions they had a strong feeling of being both "wanted" and "welcomed." This sentiment was shared as students reflected back on their interactions with colleges like Yale, Stanford, and Boston University, notably private schools. Students who participated in these events perceived the universities to have a more visible commitment to diversity as well as a strong, cohesive Black community--

173

irrespective of if this was actually the case. By comparison, judging from their yield recruitment experiences at UM alone, admitted students agreed that institutional commitment to diversity seemed more ambiguous. In Table 6.1, I include a selection of quotes that illustrate the structural cues for diversity students perceived at UM versus other institutions where they ultimately enrolled.

From students' perspective, yield recruitment events on campus can be fruitful opportunities to check existing impressions about the university. Ariana-NE noted that she had read bad things about "race relations" at the University of Michigan and wanted to get a sense for how current students actually felt, but the "lack of programming or discussions about what it's like to be a black student on campus" made it difficult for her to get the information she was seeking. About diversity she reiterated, "it wasn't present that much during my campus visit." Tracy-NE described her experience at UM as "one big group of people, so I didn't really get any special time, as a Black student...it was just pretty general."

Edith-NE agreed that not only did not she not get a sense for what it was like to be a Black student at Michigan, the engineering event she attended also lacked structured opportunities to cultivate community with students or allow her time to do so on her own:

> In the program, we didn't have student hosts who were Black... We stayed off-campus. There were very few other students in the program who were black and then I also didn't get the chance to ... Since our schedule was packed, I didn't get the chance to go out of my way and interact with current black students as much as I wanted to.

She added about her experience at MIT, the fact that "I got to know a lot of current and other [Black] admitted students...it felt like home before I even got there." Alicia-NE echoed similar comments about Yale: "I felt like I was already a part of the [Black] community even though I was not even a student there yet." These comments suggest

174

Table 6.1

Comparison of Student's Experiences of Yield Recruitment at UM vs. Select Institutions

College	Comparative Recruitment Experience	UM Recruitment Experience
Oberlin [Tracy-NE]	When I visited Oberlin, I was around a lot of other black students, and they were just being completely honest about their experience. Like, the good and the bad about it. I got to attend a lot of events while I visited Oberlin, that was just geared towards being a black student, which was very nice.	Whereas when I visited Michigan it was just ... it was just pretty general. It wasn't anything just like, as a black student, you have this here available for you. If you ever feel alone, there's this support system here for you. There's these professors here that are ready to talk to you.
Princeton [Ariana-NE]	… They had quite a bit of programs that minorities and students of color could go to. And I remember this one instance, we were just in the basement talking to current students along with admitted students as well and students honestly kept it very real about their experiences and I just liked how open they were about sharing and how they also mentioned they get together like that and talk about what's going on all the time. So that's when I noticed that it was really important to me to have that at whatever school I went to.	I actually didn't have the experience of like getting to interact with a lot of the black upperclassmen at the school.
Stanford [Tara-NE]	One thing about Stanford is that…we got to ... there's like a black recruitment orientation committee and they had a party and then there was a welcome for black students and the black faculty and alumni really welcomed us and assured us all that we'd be looked out for.	My impression is not that diversity is something that's highly valued. I think there's obviously diversity there but I don't know if it's something that's a main priority or concern of students or faculty.
MIT [Edith-NE]	I like being able to not only connect with other black students but to also see, in talking to current students, the work that they've done on campus like working with administration and stuff to make the school a more diverse and inclusive place…Because of that, I got to know just a lot more about what it meant to be black at MIT.	In the program, we didn't have student hosts who were Black... We stayed off-campus. There were very few other students in the program who were black and then I also didn't get the chance to ... Since our schedule was, I didn't get the chance to go out of my way and interact with current black students as much as I wanted to.

that creating opportunities for admitted Black students to engage with currently enrolled Black students was a significant feature of these race-centric visits.

Given the current racial context and historical racial legacies of these institutions, the perceived presence of a strong commitment to diversity and an existing Black community put students at ease, knowing that they already had a group of people with whom they could identify:

> I guess it made me a bit more optimistic about going to a school that's I guess predominately white and known for having just as an Ivy League, an elite culture, but it was just very warm and welcoming...And it was just nice knowing that there were people I can talk to...[Ariana-NE, Princeton]

> I think I just feel more comfortable at Oberlin, just because I have first hand experience with that community. So, I'd probably feel more comfortable at Oberlin, but I think if I had a chance to interact with more black students at Michigan, I'd probably feel that same sense of comfort. [Tracy-NE, Oberlin]

What is more, these yield-recruitment initiatives made non-enrollee students feel more socially equipped and less wary about entering an elite predominantly white institutional setting. At the same time, structured opportunities to connect admitted Black students with an existing community (students, faculty and staff) conveyed to them the organizational values and commitments related to diversity in a way that they found accessible and useful in their decision-making. By comparison, the perceived absence of these opportunities and the race-neutral framing at UM may have led some students to lack clarity about the University's commitment to diversity and how its current population of Black students experienced the campus. This may be less so for in-state students or those who attended select high schools targeted as part of the Admitted Student Celebration Days (as these typically included student panels) or the two students

176

who participated in the PILOT program and Scholar Power, two unique recruitment opportunities.

As some of the students' comments allude to, introducing admitted students to campus organizations and initiatives can also be an important facet of community building, an additional source of safety, and an indication of the institution's commitment to supporting diversity. Next, I turn to a discussion of students' perception and appraisals of organizational cues at the University of Michigan.

Organizational cues. Organizational cues illuminate contingencies for social identity groups associated with particular roles or organization. They convey whether identities associated with such roles and/or organizations will have limited or abundant opportunities in a given setting (Steele et al., 2002). To illustrate the logic of this cue, if a Latina student sees that there are several Latino student organizations at a particular college, this may indicate to her that engagement and leadership opportunities for Latinos in this context are plentiful, and more importantly that Latino students are welcomed (versus excluded) in the campus. Conversely, if there are a disproportionate number of opportunities that are available to White students only or that exclude Latino students, this could signal the possibility that there are restrictions imposed on Latino students that are tied to their racial/ethnic identity. Across both enrollees and non-enrollee groups in my sample, admitted students were both aware and complimentary of what they characterized as an "overwhelming amount" of student organizations available for students of color to pursue their interests and meet other Black peers. All of which, from their perspective, demonstrated the University's commitment to supporting diversity and inclusion.

The presence of these supports was particularly important for enrollees--some who had been in touch with members of different groups, including the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) or were participating in campus initiatives such as the M-STEM Summer Academy[22] and CSP Summer Bridge at the time of their interview. Not only were admitted students able to meet other Black students, University staff involved in these programs were more likely to be persons of color and the aim of these initiatives implied support for diversity. Drawing from his experience in M-STEM, Cameron-E pointed out that the allocation of resources to a program that served a significant proportion of the incoming cohort of Black engineers demonstrated the University's value for racial diversity—a sentiment that a few other students in these programs also shared:

> It's a program right now that's built off the idea they wanted a diverse group of kids, which is why there's so many, proportionate to the incoming class, there's a huge amount in the program. That gave me the impression that they want to give the resources so they can make sure diverse groups succeed at the school.

Again, while the M-STEM Academy at UM does not explicitly focus on race (as prohibited by affirmative action ban), the history of the original program[23] as well as Cameron-NE's recognition of the identities of the students supported by the program reflects the University's support of individuals from historically underrepresented groups. Megan-E, a Biology/Pre-Med major similarly believed that initiatives she had heard about in STEM "designed for people of color" were just a few of the many "different clubs and programs for different races"—that made her believe UM was committed to

---

[22] M-STEM is a cohort-based academic program focused on helping underrepresented students in engineering transition to and be successful in the early part of their undergraduate career at the University of Michigan. The program begins in the summer term.

[23] The Meyerhoff Scholars program was developed at UMBC in 1988 to increase and support underrepresented minority students in STEM. It is recognized as a national model and exists in different forms on multiple campuses.

making sure Black students felt included. In short, admitted students agreed that the availability of various organizations and institutional supports was a positive indicator of the University's values.

Related to this idea, I found that beyond signaling a formal commitment to diversity, some admitted students (notably those who attended predominantly Black high schools) thought of campus programs as a tool for adjusting to and navigating the University's racial environment. Jason-E conceived of these programs and offices as important for helping students "to feel comfortable with their surroundings"—a function he desired and "admired" given his transition from a predominantly Black community in Chicago to a predominantly white environment. Cameron-E, who attended a predominantly Black school on the East Coast, shared a similar reflection in thinking about his involvement in M-STEM:

> I believe it was there are 16 African American women in the incoming engineering class and 12 of them are in M-STEM and there are 25 incoming Black males in the engineering class, and of that there's, what, 13 in M-STEM? So it's just like, essentially the entire Black engineering class I already know. Or like, more than half.

He presumed that as a result of his involvement, he would cultivate a community to help him acclimate to the racial and academic demands of the institution.

Jeremy-NE, who ultimately matriculated at Ohio State, similarly envisioned campus organizations and offices functioning almost like a safety net,

> Then making sure that there were organizations on campus or offices at least where if I felt like I'm not being treated equally or respected as I should be I have someone I'm able to go talk to. There are services available for me. Those things for me were very important when I visited any college or looked at any college.

For enrollees who had not participated in M-STEM, they had an impression that Black student organizations such as the Black Student Union and NAACP, versus university

179

offices and initiatives, would be important for their wellbeing as Black students. When Dana-E was deciding on her admission offer, she recalled that one of her teachers offered her some critical advice: "I would definitely suggest joining the Black Student Union or another black organization." Zara-E received a similar message from older graduates of her high school that were enrolled at UM. They suggested that for her to "feel comfortable at UM" she would likely need to join Black student organizations.

Taking into consideration the normal adjustments and transition challenges that all students may encounter as they begin college, why would Black students need to find additional support for themselves, outside of institutional structures and settings within the University? The presence of these organizations should, ideally, suggest there are positive contingencies associated with being Black (e.g., opportunities for leadership and extra-curricular engagement) and that the University is a space where diversity is promoted and communities related students' shared interests are encouraged. However, that joining "Black student orgs" was frequently repeated as a solution or strategy for dealing with a possible lack of inclusion or other diversity challenges suggests that the "abundance" of Black student organizations may be as much an indication of the University's issues with racial climate, students' unmet needs related to race and diversity, and/or desires for safe spaces as it is an example of the institution's commitment to diversity.

Compositional cues. Compositional cues refer to the number or proportion of individuals in a setting who share a given social identity—in other words, its composition. A low count might signal a greater likelihood of marginalization on the basis of identity (Purdie- Vaughns, et al., 2008; Steele, 2010). When I asked admitted students to reflect

180

on their recruitment experience and describe an aspect of the University of Michigan they found less appealing (a follow up to something they found appealing or positive), almost universally they pointed to the perceived lack of racial diversity, using a variety of similar phrases to describe the campus: "very, very white;" "white-washed" or simply, "no diversity." Notably, nearly half of the sample specifically pointed out the representation of Black students on campus. Admitted students' observations focused not only on the profound whiteness of the campus or a lack of diversity broadly, but also on what they perceived to be a very small population of Black students—the University's challenge with racial diversity writ large.

"Are there any more Black people here?" Compared to admitted students who recalled observing the lack of diversity during campus visits, when students spoke about not seeing Black students during yield recruitment events, it was often from the vantage point of being the "only one" or one of a few Black students at a recruitment event or activity. There was a vulnerability or self-awareness of racial identity students described that was distinct from admitted students who made more general observations about racial diversity. Below I include an example from Charlotte-E who reflected on her experience at an admitted student reception in Chicago, followed by Jihan-E's recollection of an on-campus event she attended with her family at the College of Engineering:

> I**t was intimidating, I guess. Because I was the only ... I wasn't the only one but I was one of four.** It was like me and mom were just ending there and we didn't know what to do, or how to do anything. I guess we got comfortable eventually but from first, from the jump, it was like this is not what I'm used to, at all.

> I remember when we first got there...I was kind of looking around to see the audience. ..T**here was like 200 families there. My mom, my aunt, and I were**

looking around, and I think there was only one other family there that was black amongst the 200 that were there, so my mom and my aunt were like, "Are you sure about this?" And I'm just like, "Yes, I'm sure." **It was kind of a little bit of a culture shock for me**, but I kind of knew that it was gonna happen, **but I didn't think it was gonna be that bad.**

In both instances, Jihan-E and Charlotte-E found themselves in settings in which they were immediately attuned to the composition of the group they were in, realizing that they were a numerical minority.

Other admitted students recalled similar experiences as they walked throughout campus. Struck by the "concentrated whiteness," they were prompted to count the number of currently enrolled Black students they spotted, as demonstrated in the following quotes.

> *Jasmine-NE:* **Yeah, it wasn't as diverse as I would like, which shouldn't really be a factor, but it kind of is for me.**
> *Interviewer:* What made you say it wasn't as diverse? What do you see or what did you experience that made you draw that conclusion?
> *Jasmine-NE:* **Me and my mom were joking there were no black people really. We started counting. I don't think I reached past five that day.**
>
> I know when I visited, I looked around to see if I could see people like me around, like, "**Are there any more black people here?**" I have a lot of friends of different races, but I just feel like when you go somewhere, **you just find other black people.** It didn't influence my choice of going to Michigan, but I didn't know it was a predominantly white institution. [Nina-E]

These instances represent the tendency for individuals with historically marginalized identities to search for what Steele (2010) calls "identity-mates" in order to assess the status of their identity group in the setting. Because of the low count, admitted students largely expressed concern about feeling alienated and alone. Jonie-E tried to convey this "feeling" to me during our interview:

> The **most negative aspect** for a person of color like myself, **is just the lack of diversity you feel.** That's all really. Because the campus is nice, the students or

182

people, they are very nice. **It's just the diversity is kind of an issue 'cause you feel kind of alienated in a sense.** When other students come back and talk to you about it, that's like the first thing they mention, is just how low the diversity really is.

Tracy-E, who was the only Black person on her campus tour, recalled a similar feeling of being "alone" and "really out of place." And Dana-E described when, during her recruitment experience, she first realized she would be among a small minority of Black students. "In that specific moment, it kind of felt like I was not good enough to be here." That admitted students only saw a handful of currently enrolled Black students during their campus visits made them question their sense of belonging at the University—even before they enrolled and began taking courses.

These experiences also made some admitted students concerned about the possibility of experiencing bias or mistreatment. Zara-E "worried that there might be some different...that I might have to experience some type of racism if I attend this school. And Megan-E confessed that although she was looking forward to meeting people from different races, one of the reasons why she, too, was "looking for how many African Americans were there" during her time on campus is that she wanted to ensure there were "enough." In her words, enough people of her identity such that she "could always just have people to talk to if something were to happen where somebody was racist."

What is critical about the compositional cues that admitted students observed is what some believed it signaled about their place within the University as well as the type of racial climate they could expect to experience. For admitted students who decided to matriculate, the compositional cues conveyed to them a significant possibility: that they would be vulnerable to different forms of racial stigma; they might feel alienated, at times; and consequently, may not feel a strong sense of belonging. The

underrepresentation of Black students also made some enrollees as well as non-enrollees skeptical of the institution's espoused commitment to diversity.

Divergent Perceptions of Cues

As the preceding section suggests, admitted students were exposed to diversity-specific cues throughout their experiences and interactions with the University of Michigan, both before and during their yield-recruitment process. These experiences illuminated notable patterns among the majority of the sample. Based on this information, students had mixed perspectives about institutional diversity and climate at the University. Both non-enrollees and enrollees were largely concerned about the lack of diversity they perceived during their campus visits (compositional). Several students in the non-enrollee sample who attended targeted recruitment weekends at other institutions were unclear about whether diversity was a priority at the University of Michigan, however. Students perceived that an emphasis on diversity—either through information covered or opportunities to connect with currently enrolled Black students—was largely missing from the UM yield recruitment activities they attended (structural). Yet the "overwhelming amount" of race- and culture-based student organizations "available" as well as university initiatives and offices that seemed supportive of underrepresented students and diversity was an indication of the University's solid commitment (organizational). Students' varying perceptions highlight the ways in which diversity cues could contradict each other—undermining students' positive perception of the University rather than build towards a coherent narrative.

At the same time, there were students in my sample who held wildly different perspectives of the University—who did not perceive and appraise diversity cues in the

ways we might expect. Within this smaller group, for example, there were a few students who expressed more positive sentiments about the campus, including Chinyere who said, "diversity is huge" at Michigan and believed the University was going a "great job" making their STEM programs "diverse." Moreover, where other admitted students described the University as "white-washed" and that everyone seemed to "look and dress the same," a few other students were impressed by the diversity they perceived. Brittany-E commented that what she liked about Michigan is "not everyone is the same and people are accepting of diversity." In fact, the diversity she perceived—"racial, social, about everything" is what attracted her to UM to begin with. And while more than half the sample of admitted students expressed concerns about how they might be treated given their racial minority status, a good number of students (10) also suggested they found the University "very welcoming" and "safe walking around." Zara-E tried to elaborate on this feeling: "It's hard to explain. I just felt extremely comfortable being on the campus. I was really comfortable just having conversations with these students that attended there. I don't know. It just seemed like a very opening (sic) environment." Zara-E's assessment of her experience on campus raised key questions about differences in how students read and interpreted diversity cues and arrived at different appraisals of the University campus environment raised.

Factors Contributing to Divergent Perceptions

What factors help explain the divergence in how students perceived the racial diversity commitment and climate at the University of Michigan? And what might account for the differing interpretations of these cues? One explanation is that students have access to different pieces of information that then leads to different interpretations.

185

Although there are standard practices and structures used in the University's yield recruitment efforts, as described in Chapter 5, differences in admitted students' area of study, residency or geographic location, and application submission date can be among the many factors shaping how and what information the University decides to communicate or the information students have access to. As an example, a few engineering students in the study visited the campus multiple times for various university-sponsored events. Other students visited once or not at all. With regard to the latter, without the experience of a campus tour, admitted students were likely to rely more on the information sent to them to shape their impressions. These admitted students were also not exposed to compositional cues in the university setting, which was largely perceived and interpreted as a negative feature of the campus across the sample. Thus, they may have formed form more positive impressions about the University's commitment to diversity given the information they had access to. Conversely, by relying solely on materials they received in the mail or available online, admitted students may have missed critical opportunities to contextualize inherently negative information such as the percent of Black student enrollment through conversations with EMPs and/or a campus visit.

In addition to these possible explanations for divergence in students' perceptions and appraisals of cues they encountered during their recruitment and college choice process, my analysis highlights four additional factors: (a) pre-college racial contacts, (b) race relations in the U.S., (c) vicarious experiences, and finally, (d) racial identity. These factors contributed to students' impressions of the University's diversity commitments and racial climate as well as the extent to which they perceived the University setting as a

potentially threatening environment. I turn to a discussion of each of these factors in the next section of this chapter.

Pre-college Racial Contacts

Across the sample, I observed different patterns in the extent to which students' pre-college racial contacts contributed to their perceptions of the University of Michigan campus environment. In this section, I describe differences in the perceptions of students with predominantly Black versus predominantly White pre-college racial contacts. I noted, for example, that students from predominantly Black high schools or communities were more attuned to the racial composition of the University during their yield recruitment experiences (e.g., campus tour; information sessions, etc.). Admitted students from predominantly white settings were either desensitized to compositional cues, or conversely, more perceptive of them. I discuss each, in turn.

Predominantly Black pre-college settings. Those who attended predominantly Black high schools or lived in predominantly Black communities were not only more perceptive of a lack of racial diversity. These students also shared that during moments when they were first made aware the (small) size of the Black student population, it evoked a range of feelings—shock from the experience to anxiety about the idea of transitioning from being a racial majority growing up amongst "all minorities" to being in a very small racial minority. This was the sentiment that Jonie-E, who was from a predominantly Black suburb in Michigan, described:

> ...I think it's just more a fact that because I went to a school that was primarily African American and then I'm just going to an area like the complete opposite. I think it was just a little--I guess like a mini culture shock...in a sense.

With this culture shock came concerns for admitted students about how to fit in to this new, "very white" education setting as well as what their white peers would think of them—questions that they likely never considered in racially homogenous settings (school, church or community) in which they were the majority. Referencing Black-White racial tensions in her hometown of Chicago, for example, Charlotte-E described the notion of "being an African American going to school with a lot of Caucasians is scary." Concerned about what she thought her White peers might say or believe about her, she was committed to showing that she deserved to be at Michigan. She vowed to "not give them the excuse to question my work ethic." Even before starting any classes, Charlotte-E's comments highlight the self-imposed burden she was already experiencing to dispel stereotypes associated with her Black identity in a predominantly white environment.

An additional group of enrollee students who also were from predominantly Black communities or high schools started their college choice process knowing that they wanted to attend PWIs and would likely experience some kind of mistreatment or judgment on the basis of their racial identity. Unlike the first group, who were seemingly caught off guard by UM's racial environment and small population of Black students. A response from Jihan-E illustrates how this group of admitted students expected these occurrences and prepared themselves accordingly:

> I always knew that I wanted to go to a college where there are predominantly white students, so I kind of always had it in the back of my mind. Yeah, I'm not gonna always be the majority, but in high school, most of my friends were black, so it was definitely going to be a different experience going to college and not having that around, just because I don't know how to explain. It's just a different atmosphere. I don't know, 'cause I already knew that was gonna happen. I was

gonna go to a college ... I was gonna be the minority, so I kind of already braced myself for that.

The notion of bracing oneself was similar to the mental preparation Karl-E engaged in, drawing from his experience living in a Black community and attending both predominantly Black and predominantly White schools at different points in time. Thinking back on his high school experiences he knew there might be more "in your face" type of incidents (in college) that required preparation: "I knew that I was gonna have to prepare myself in a different way maybe than I had before." In leveraging his high school experiences, he readied himself for the racial environment he expected to encounter at the University of Michigan.

Predominantly white pre-college settings. Students with exposure to predominantly White high school and community contexts had a different perspective on the University. For these students, being in a predominantly white space was a "normative" experience. Megan-E, who attended a private Christian school shared that she was often "the only Black person doing a program or in a room." She had grown accustomed to being "the only one" given the racial make-up of her school as well as her academic interests (i.e., Biology/Pre-Med). And as the quotes below from Jalin-NE and Nina-E illustrate, these pre-college racial contacts led admitted students like Megan-E and others to feel equipped to navigate settings that might be characterized by stigmatizing experiences:

> **It was very white at the University of Michigan but I've always been able to navigate those spaces.** I can be just as comfortable in a group of white people as I can be in a group of black people. That's just because of the environment that I grew up in, and the different institutions I've experienced. Whether it's been a school, or summer camp or class, ACT prep or whatever. [Jalin-NE]

Yeah, I mean ... I feel like I'm just used to it. I'm used to being the only one. It's like I'm coming from an environment where I'm just around ... like I said, my high school, it was very diverse. I took AP classes and I was separated from my friends a lot. I'm pretty much used to it. **If I was being the target of racism or anything, that's a whole other situation. If it's a feeling, like being in the minority, I'm used to it. I guess it doesn't affect me a whole lot.** [Nina-E]

The distinction that Nina-E makes between having a racial minority identity and experiencing racism is an important one. Her comment suggests that for some students, the "feeling" of being a racial minority could, in and of itself, lead one to react to the negative possibilities associated with their minority identity status. Other students may have a higher threshold--racism or another overt form of bias--that must be met in order to elicit similar perceptions of threat. Whatever the case, for some admitted students exposed to predominantly white settings, they may be desensitized to cues in the campus environment that other students might perceive and appraise as a threat to their identity.

Interestingly, there were a few students in my sample who, because of mistreatment they experienced in their predominantly white pre-college contexts, were more attuned to the racial dynamics at Michigan. I would presume these students were concerned about whether they would experience something similar, given that UM is also a predominantly white campus. To illustrate this logic, take London-E who recalled that after she was admitted to the University of Michigan and visited, she was wary of potential bias in her interactions with U-M professors because in high school, White teachers "talked to Black students in a different way" and did not give them the same quality of support they gave to White students.

Together, these examples suggest that admitted students' pre-college racial contexts shaped their perceptions of the University in different ways. Based on these

contexts, some admitted students perceived features of the campus environment (i.e., racial composition) as an indication of identity-threat contingencies. In contrast, other admitted students expressed indifference, in part, because they had become acclimated to such environments before college.

Relevance of Racial Incidents to College Choice

The broader context of racial relations was the second factor shaping admitted students' perceptions of the University of Michigan's diversity commitments and racial climate. At the time of the data collection, events happening within the broader context of U.S. race relations-- including the police shootings of Black men, Alton Sterling and Philando Castile, and racial incidents on college campuses-- sensitized some students to race relations in the U.S. and led them to be more mindful of the college environments they were considering. One student shared that he had been called the N-word while visiting a large, predominantly white public university that, before the incident, had been his top choice. Rick-NE, who matriculated at the University of Chicago, expressed great concern about his decision to do so given a high profile controversial police shooting that gripped the city. I discuss the role that police violence and campus racial incidents had in making some admitted students more attuned to the racial tensions as they engaged in their college choice process.

Police shootings. In thinking about colleges, Tracy-NE, from Texas, noted that "race issues apparent in America" involving violence against unarmed Black men and the suspicious death of Texas resident Sandra Bland, made her more aware of her need for a "sense of community" and strong desire to "be around other Black people." It was one of the reasons why she considered applying to HBCUs. These events also made her more

diligent in her search for information about racial climate and the experiences of Black students at the various colleges where she gained admission. It was notable that she was the only student who brought up BBUM and other recent incidents at the University of Michigan --information she learned from searching for, "Black life at Michigan" on Google.

For Melissa-NE, who attended a predominantly white high school and chose to attend a historically Black college, "race relations" and "the environment we're in" was a significant factor in her deliberations about where she would enroll. Compared to the University of Michigan where she was concerned about the lack of racial diversity and had been warned by family and friends of its negative climate for Black students, she considered Florida A & M University to be "safe." I asked her to elaborate on this appraisal:

> **It's kind of refreshing to go to a school and feel safe and not having to worry about race.** You know if someone doesn't like you, it's not because you're black, it's because they don't like your personality or something like that. **It's just a very safe environment where you don't have to worry about any racial issues** and you can really just focus on your studies and focus on having fun and enjoying your college experience while you're there without anything else. **And then it's also nice when you see something in the news that's racial you don't have to worry about someone raising their hand and making a comment that's kind of ignorant. Everyone kind of agrees with you and you have someone to lean on and someone to talk to and understand what you're feeling.**

Melissa-NE's comments hint at the idea that in the wake of racial tensions, there were admitted students wanted to know that they could process these events in a welcoming environment. By choosing to matriculate at Princeton, Ariana-NE believed that she had found a "school that recognizes those issues." Jalin-NE, a native of Chicago, described having a similar expectation of Georgetown, where he matriculated:

192

I feel like in that situation, as a Black student at Georgetown, I could be vocal and express whether I was angry or how I felt. I feel Michigan would be quiet to it and I feel like the students will be quiet, too. At Michigan, I feel like I wouldn't be able to have that voice to say anything. And that no one else would be really saying anything.

Admitted students' comments highlight a preference for institutions that feel less threatening to their identities. Their reflections suggest a need for places where they can authentically process racial tensions occurring on the national scene, and openly express the emotions that these incidents often evoke.

"Frat culture." A number of students also mentioned that racial incidents associated with white fraternities and sororities on predominantly white campuses made them uneasy about racial dynamics at the University of Michigan and other large public universities. Edith-NE pointed out that in light of incidents at the University of Maryland and other campuses, the issues "students face in choosing between colleges or deciding which colleges to apply to...is not only 'is this campus diverse but will it be inclusive?'" Rick-NE was "terrified" of "frat culture" at U-M, and Chinyere-NE, whose older sister was a student at UM at the time of our interview, noted that "heavily Greek-based schools," like the University of Michigan, gave her and her parents great cause for concern. Students associated this culture with exclusion, a lack of diversity and racism. Citing her knowledge of recent incidents at "a lot of big state schools," this aspect of the social climate was an important consideration in Edith-NE's decision to decline offers from the University of Michigan as well as the University of Maryland-College Park— the flagship campus in her home state. This "frat culture" was also one of the key reasons Rick-NE and Chinyere-NE decided against the University of Michigan. The huge presence they believed these organizations had on campus made them concerned

about the culture of the University as a whole. Moreover, the notion that their social lives might somehow be dependent upon affiliating with white fraternities and sororities was particularly distressing for Rick-NE, a biracial student, who also had been admitted to the University of Maryland-College but ultimately decided to attend the University of Chicago.

Vicarious Exposure to Diversity and Climate

Vicarious exposure to diversity and the racial climate at UM—information received from trusted sources, including family members, peers from their high schools and teachers—is the third factor that influenced admitted students' perceptions of the UM campus environment. There were students in both the non-enrollee and enrollee sample that had heard positive things about the University—that "it was a really good school," offered a "great degree" and overall, a great college experience with unmatched alumni connections and strong athletics. Tara-NE's father was extremely positive of the University having gone there himself for graduate school.

Similarly, Karl-E's parents —both of whom earned their doctorate degrees at the University of Michigan—shared positive aspects of their experiences. They had caring advisors who were white. And they found support from different pockets of the University—"black students, black faculty" during their time on campus. But they were also were very forthcoming in some of their challenges they had as Black doctoral students at Michigan in the 1990s. For example, Karl-E's mother told him that there were teachers trying to "inhibit" her from "doing well in class because of racism." In the end, when he was trying to decide between the University of Michigan and Northwestern University, he recalled having an important conversation with his father:

So, right before I made my decision, my dad was telling me, because it was basically between Michigan and Northwestern ... They gave me similar amounts of aid in terms of what my dad would have to pay and he said he could. **And he was saying that Michigan, like he can't put it into words, but there's something that he feels I would be able to get at Michigan that I wouldn't be able to get anywhere else.** And I've heard overwhelmingly positive things about Michigan from him, as well as he doesn't shy away--you know, I know that the campus has problems, like any other public school campus or private school campus, honestly.

The very balanced perspective Karl-E received from his parents, in part, shaped his perceptions of the campus environment. He was aware of the University's challenges with respect to supporting diversity and Black students, in particular. And he was also very familiar with BBUM because his father, a professor of Black studies, wrote and taught about it. From his parents, Karl-E was also able to draw from their accounts of the community of support they eventually found at Michigan. Compared to a student whose perceptions of the University's racial climate might be significantly shaped by the stark underrepresentation of Black students they perceived during their campus visit or that, based on some other cue, might question the University's diversity commitments, Karl-E is an example of how admitted students' appraisals of the institution may be fluid. In his case, the positive vicarious accounts from trusted sources (parents) that share his identity helped to contextualize other negatively appraised diversity cues (e.g., racial composition) in forming his perceptions of the University's commitment to diversity and racial climate.

In much the same way, negative vicarious accounts can also amplify, or at least complicate admitted students' interpretations of cues. When I asked admitted students about their initial impressions or followed up on comments they made about diversity at the University of Michigan, it was clear that high school friends and in some instances,

teachers and family members, had relayed their own negative opinions or experiences

with UM. Sometimes these were vague comments such as those shared by Natalie-NE

and Melissa-NE, the only non-enrollees who opted to attend an HBCU in the sample:

> And just hearing that from people I know who've gone there. The atmosphere, I've heard, is different for everybody, but I know just speaking to some African American kids my age, some say ... I wouldn't say it's racist, but it's an adjustment from going to Detroit to Ann Arbor I guess you could say. [Natalie-NE]

> I've heard that they have had some racial issues in the past.
> I don't know in detail but I think my parents mentioned that they have friends with kids who went there who were black and didn't have as good an experience as they would have liked to. [Melissa-NE]

Similarly, for Nadia-E, an enrollee, she noted that her teachers were "wary" of her going

to UM. They were concerned that: "With me being an African American female that I

wouldn't get the treatment I deserved inside my craft." At the time, Nadia-E had just

auditioned for the University's theatre program, which historically has enrolled very few

Black students.

There were also admitted students who recalled receiving very detailed,

sometimes unsolicited, accounts of Black students' experiences at Michigan. I quote at

length two examples. In one instance, Zara-E recalled one of the stories she heard from

her peers who participated in a summer enrichment program for high school students on

UM's campus, in which a young Black woman believed she was targeted by other

program attendees because of her race.

> Some of the kids who went with them on these summer programs who weren't predominantly black or weren't a minority period, they would treat them really badly literally for no reason. For example, one girl went to a summer program and I guess she was washing her clothes at some point. What one of the kids did who was with them, mind you they're all high schoolers who are going to their summer program, they took her laundry out and then they threw her laundry all across the hallways while she was in the middle of washing and doing the laundry. I wasn't

sure if she reported it, but she did end up telling Mrs. Ella (UM admissions counselor) about the event. [Zara-E]

And here, Tracy-NE describes racial incidents involving currently enrolled Black students at UM that point to issues of physical safety:

> There was one story about a student who was in dance class and one of the students accidentally got her foot in her weave and had pulled out her weave. She was in a lot of pain and a lot of students were laughing at her. There were stories about apparently some black students were walking around and white students would go up to them and say, "I earned my way here," hinting that black students only got into Michigan through Affirmative Action and not through other credentials. It was things of that nature. [Tracy-NE]

Although the method of vicarious exposure to the UM campus environment was different, Zara-E's information came directly from a high school friend and Tracy-NE's from an online college admissions discussion board, both can potentially cause admitted students to doubt the institution's commitment to diversity, express concerns about the racial climate and/or contemplate their own likely experience at the University—all on the basis of incidents that did not happen to them but to other Black students.

What is also particularly important to note about students who reported being vicariously exposed to the University's racial climate is that those who were still interested in the University of Michigan appeared to be more vigilant in their search for additional information, perhaps to complicate, confirm, or disconfirm that which they had already received. Edith-NE hinted at this process:

> Yeah. I'd say almost every student that visits any given campus has preconceived notions about that campus. I guess for a big state school like Michigan, since there is a big, I guess, football culture or just sports culture in general, I guess that comes with a bunch of stereotypes and stuff that had been portrayed and furthered by the media. So, when you visit, you see that to be true like, "This is a very good exclusive environment that I don't see myself fitting in at" or "Can I see myself fitting in here and having a good time?"

In light of the information Zara-E heard, she consulted additional friends and her high school counselor who collectively advised her to simply get involved in Black student organizations.

Tracy-NE, on the other hand, asked her father about his experience at UM given he had attended the University years ago for graduate school. During her campus visit, she also asked her tour guide, who was white, if it would be possible for her to speak to current Black students, which could not be arranged. In the end, not only did she *not* get the information she was hoping for, but also the experience of being the only Black person on her campus tour and seeing only a handful of other Black students during her visit confirmed, rather than disconfirmed, her impressions about climate and diversity which were shaped initially by others' experiences at UM (i.e., family).

In short, admitted students' vicarious exposure to aspects of UM's campus was critical both in complicating their perceptions and interpretation of cues they encountered and information they received from other sources. In some instances, as I have discussed, this allowed admitted students like Karl-E to arrive at a more balanced perspective of the campus, especially since the vicarious accounts contradicted cues he had already appraised negatively (e.g., compositional cues). But in other cases, negative vicarious accounts amplified diversity cues, confirming admitted students' impressions about aspects of the campus environment.

Racial Identity

Racial identity is the fourth and final factor that shaped students' perceptions of the diversity cues in their yield recruitment experiences at the University of Michigan, and may help to explain divergence in student views. Organizational scholars of

recruitment have suggested that the extent to which individuals perceive cues is also related to their social identity (Avery & McKay, 2006; Kim & Gelfand, 2003). Therefore, during each of my interviews with students, I asked them to rate the importance of their various social identities—race/ethnicity, gender, social class—using the following scale adapted from the College and Social Identities Study (CASIS) and included in Appendix C: (a) not at all important; (b) a little important; (c) somewhat important, and (d) very important. But first, I provided examples to help participants understand the concept of social identity and to clarify what I was asking them to do.

My analysis of their responses suggests that surprisingly, the majority of the sample indicated that their race/ethnicity was "very important to them." In other words, that race/ethnicity was highly central to their concept of self (Sellers et al., 1998). This was the case for 16 out of 20 non-enrollees and 13 out of 15 enrollees. In both groups, the remaining students rated their race/ethnicity as "somewhat important." Interestingly, each of these students (4 non-enrollees and 2 enrollees) identified as biracial.

When I asked students to elaborate on the meaning of their identity or to explain their rating, it was clear that for some students, their experiences of the institutional context as well as broader racial issues unfolding at the time (mentioned earlier in this chapter) made their racial identity more salient—noticeable or important—to them. And consistent with the Multi-Dimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) (Sellers et al., 1998), the extent to which race becomes salient in a given context or situation is related to racial centrality. This relationship is illustrated in comments from two enrollees elaborating on the meaning of their racial identity in the context of their recruitment experiences and college choice:

I just feel like all the stuff that's going on with my race is something that's very important to me and the fact that I'm going to a school like this, I just feel like that's something, I don't know, it's just really important to me as being the minority and I'm seeing that I'm the minority more when I'm here. [London-E]

So I feel that I'm very comfortable with my ethnicity and I have no problem admitting that I'm African American. It's just that at the University of Michigan because we are such a very small minority, I feel like it's just much more pronounced. So it's just like everybody is very aware that you are not Caucasian so it's a little more important to me. I have to seek out other people who may or may not have the same cultural difference as me. [Jonie-E]

The centrality of London-E and Jonie-E's racial identities helps explain why both students were generally quite perceptive of diversity cues (i.e., compositional) that made their identities more salient in the University of Michigan context broadly, and/or in specific settings or activities (i.e., yield recruitment).

Participant's racial identity centrality may have also reflected individual assessments of situational contexts of college choice, including their experience of being one of a few Black students at an admissions reception or yield recruitment event and the perceived likelihood of their token status in various campus settings as a student. Jonie-E alluded to this salience in her recollections of her recruitment interactions and experiences:

As a person of color, the first thing I noticed that it was definitely a PWI, or primarily white institution, so that kind of gave me cause for concern, 'cause I know there were only four percent—African Americans makes up only four percent of the school's population, so it's kind of a little worrisome.

She also added that during her orientation of 200 people, "I could count on my hand literally how many African Americans there were. I was either the only one, or there was like four of us." While she had already matriculated by this time, Jonie-E's attention to this compositional cue, the number of Black students attending freshman orientation, demonstrates a bidirectional relationship between centrality and salience—the way in

which racial centrality shaped her attention toward cues in her recruitment process that made her race salient.

Thus, repeated exposure to diversity cues might also help explain the large proportion of high-identity central students within the sample and further illustrate the relationship between salience and centrality. As with the example below, Alexa-NE alludes to her perceptions and experiences of compositional cues during each of her visits to the University of Michigan campus:

> I didn't like, every time I was there, me and my friends would play a game of how many people of color we could find, and we counted, and there weren't a lot, do I didn't like that. So, that was a big factor in my decision...The max I think we got was 10 on the one day. [Alexa-NE]

It was not uncommon for other students, including those out-of-state, to visit the campus multiple times or be exposed to diversity cues through a combination of yield recruitment events (For example, a campus tour on one day and a admitted student reception another time). Therefore, students' encounters with diversity cues that made their racial identity *salient* (though college recruitment/college choice process), ultimately may have also increased the *centrality* or importance of some students' racial identity.

There are several other examples in admitted students' reflections about yield recruitment activities that illustrate the relationship between racial centrality (through racial salience) and their perceptions of cues. Many of these I've alluded to previously in the section on compositional cues. I include one additional example from Jason-E, a student from Chicago who was admitted to the College of Engineering:

> *Jason-E:* I remember during some of the tours, we would walk in on classes, or not necessarily walk in but kind of view from the outside, what classes were going on and what they kind of looked like. Something that I did notice right off the bat was there were no black people in the classes, and the classes were, for the most part, predominantly white. So what me and a lot of my fellow classmates

realized is that going into these schools, we are going to be some of the only black people in class, and that's something that ... Being the only ... You have to kind of have a pretty—well your identity at those times becomes pretty important to you.

Kelly: How did that make you feel?

Jason-E: Having to represent a whole body of people, it's kind of a heavy weight, a heavy job to do. Especially when you're trying to focus on academics and things like that. So yeah, I feel like it can be kind of frustrating.

In addition to illuminating the role of racial identity in students' perceptions of the University's features, Jason-E's comments also hint at the undue burden that some admitted students might feel as a racial minority in a predominantly white institution. The centrality and salience of their identities, it seems, made admitted students more aware of the need to disprove stereotypes and represent Black people well given their underrepresentation in various campus settings. What is more, the notion that Jason-E might have to "represent" his racial/ethnic group well could be perceived as a potential consequence or threat to his identity, especially in classroom settings.

Taken together, these findings suggest that among students for whom race is more important to their identities, they are more perceptive of compositional cues such as the number or percentage of Black students at the University of Michigan. Based on the logic of social identity theory, these students should also be more vulnerable to identity threat.

Perceived threat. Several students in both enrollee and non-enrollee samples indicated that as they were thinking about where they would enroll for college, it was important to them to choose an institution where they could see themselves. As I discussed earlier in the chapter, some students in my sample expressed concerns about experiencing challenges to their self-concept, some form of bias (e.g., racism or discrimination) or doubts about their safety. However, my findings suggest the more pervasive issue, which their concerns reflect, is whether they would "fit" and feel

202

"comfortable" given their racial identity and the University of Michigan's elite, predominantly white campus. And further, whether they would find a sense of community. I discuss the implications for these notions of fit and how students' perceptions of community contribute to their feelings of identity- threat (or safety) at the University of Michigan.

Using the information gathered during their college choice process (i.e., yield recruitment activities like campus tours), admitted students' perceptions of Michigan's racial climate and commitment to diversity gave them a sense for whether they could expect that their identity would be affirmed (safe) or, alternatively, marginalized (threatened). For Tara-NE, who matriculated at Stanford, thinking about her college options was, in her words about a matter of if "this was a place I could see myself…" Reflecting on her recruitment experiences at UM, she noted that it was hard to "see" herself because she did not see or meet any Black students. By comparison, at Stanford, she was able to connect with other currently enrolled Black students as well as faculty and staff, which all signaled positive contingencies associated with being Black at Stanford.

Tara-NE's comments highlight that for some Black admitted students, their challenge in considering the University of Michigan was in discerning what the cues they perceived actually meant for their identity. In other words, did seeing so few Black students on campus really signal bad possibilities? Did it necessarily suggest that discrimination, racism or tokenism was imminent? What did it indicate about students' racial identity? For student participants who opted to enroll at historically black institutions or had at least strongly considered enrolling at these institutions, diversity

cues and what they signaled about the nature of Black students' status was a

consideration in their decision-making. Dana-E, who had been going back and forth

between Howard University—her "dream school" and the top contender in her choice

set—and the University of Michigan, shared that she was doubtful of UM's ability to

support her racial identity as a predominantly white institution:

> This is not an all black world, but in these four years, I know that HBCU's are about the fact that they're not nurturing only your intellectual side, but you as a person. Could U of M do that? Could they build me up as a person? My identity and my social identity, especially with everything that's going on in our country at the moment? That was a concern.

Zara-E also weighed the status of her identity and whether she believed she would "feel

comfortable" as a Black student on campus:

> Well, I guess since I was deciding on whether or not I wanted to go to U of M and it would be a good fit for me, **I needed to first feel, I guess, comfortable enough to know that my race wouldn't ... I wouldn't be treated differently because of my race at the school or I wouldn't just get in because of my race. I wanted to first make sure that the school, U of M, and my race weren't going to conflict.** I don't know how to exactly explain that but **I just wanted to feel comfortable at a school that I'm paying to go to and not have to worry about, I guess, being construed as a stereotype among the staff and students.** I don't know. It's hard to explain.

Tracy-NE, who also contemplated attending an HBCU, was more concerned with

determining what being a numerical "minority" in a predominantly white institution like

Michigan would mean for the prospect of community building and support. Comparing

Michigan to an HBCU she presumed, "my Blackness wouldn't make me a minority.

They [HBCU] had that sense of community everywhere; I would never have to search for

it."

Indeed, if there was any bad possibility that concerned admitted students as they

engaged in their decision-making and weighed college options, including UM, it was

whether they would find a robust community of Black students. Megan-NE, a biracial

student, shared that not only was she "more attuned" to her racial identity but reflecting

on her decision-making, she noted: " I think I was trying to find a campus where I would

feel not only welcomed and supported type of thing but also like I would get to meet

people from very different backgrounds and a strong Black community." The presence of

a Black community made some admitted students feel at ease and more comfortable

about choosing predominantly white institutions with questionable legacies with respect

to race and diversity. The lack of a perceived community, by comparison, led others to

express concern about potential threats; it seemingly amplified questions about whether

they would "belong."

What seemed to be important about finding a community was, in the words of

Jasmine-NE, being "able to relate to other people" without needing to fundamentally

change oneself to do so. As a biracial student because she didn't see "more people either

mixed or Black" it made her uneasy that she would have to change even the slightest

things about herself, like her sense of humor. While Jasmine-NE thought she could still

fit in at Michigan she added, "It would just be like a different me, almost." She contrasted

this version of herself with what she expected at St. John's University, where she chose

to enroll:

> St. John's, there's so many different types of people. I'm not even sure I could
> name them all, there was just so many different ... I already know one of my
> roommates are black so it wouldn't be as ... I wouldn't have to try to fit in as hard.

Ultimately, being able to relate to others without needing to change her identity was

important to Jasmine-NE. She elaborated on the importance of "staying true" to her self:

> Nobody really wants to change ... they don't want to filter what they say or who
> they are, you know? Sometimes there's just things you don't want to say in front

of other people who might not understand or get it. Especially with the whole Black Lives Matter right now.

Other participants described a similar desire to authentically express themselves, including aspects of their racial identity. I noted that Melissa-NE and Natalie-NE, both of whom matriculated at HBCUs, presumed that they would naturally be a part of a supportive environment where they could be themselves without having to "explain anything to anybody" or feeling the need to change in order to fit in.

It is important to note, however, that not everyone shared concerns about the status of their racial identity, belonging, or finding a welcoming community. Brittany-E conceived of the University as a welcoming and inclusive environment and did not perceive the possibility of identity threat that I observed among some of the other admitted students in my sample:

> Growing up in the school that I have. **I just learned to accept that maybe I'm a minority for most of my life in the various places I go.** That doesn't mean I have to conform to fit in to what everyone else's standard of normal is…. **I just feel prepared, with the mindset that not everyone will accept me, there will be tensions.** Just stay true to who I am and just join a community that fight to stop the tension, or relieve it, I guess.

Still, for several participants who were doubtful about whether they would feel comfortable or had, at some point, believed they might experience challenges to their racial identity decided to matriculate at the University of Michigan anyway.

Comments throughout interviews with several students in the enrollee sample suggested they perceived UM's campus environment to indeed pose a threat to their racial identity. However, responses to questions asked during the interview to actually determine their perception of threat adapted from the Perceived Threat Scale suggests otherwise. The questions, included in Appendix C, were aimed at understanding whether

206

admitted students would feel the need to change parts of their racial/identity (i.e.,

compatibility) and if they believed they would find a sense of belonging. My analysis

suggests that across the sample, the *safety* that some admitted students presumed they

would find in Black student organizations mitigated threats they may have otherwise felt

at UM and indeed some had described. That is, even as some enrollee students were

apprehensive about racial climate and institutional diversity and the consequences for

their own identity, they matriculated with the intent to strategically draw upon Black

student organizations as a source of support.

Coping: Black Student Organizations

My analysis to this point hints at strong evidence for the following pattern among

the majority of enrollee students: they expressed some anxiety, fear or doubt about the

University of Michigan's racial environment and its significance for their racial identity,

but were optimistic that they would find diversity and a sense of community in Black

student organizations. An additional review of the data pointed to many instances in

which admitted students intimated these organizations could be a form of coping or,

perhaps, an intentional strategy for helping them to feel safe and supported as Black

students on campus. I discuss two key ways in which admitted students discussed the role

of Black student organizations at the University of Michigan and how they planned to

leverage such organizations in order to navigate the campus environment.

Culture and diversity. There were students who entered the University with the

mindset that they would need to seek out Black student organizations. Since Jihan-E

always planned to attend a PWI, she had always intended on joining the Black Student

Union or a similar organization, recognizing that "culturally" it would help

"accommodate" her culture in college, an idea that Dana-E also shared. From Dana-E's perspective, it was important to be "around" her "people" and in order to do that she realized she "would have to join a Black organization." Moreover, the absence of Black people in various settings on campus suggested this was her best alternative: "Because me just walking around campus I never see just a group of Black students unless they're part of an organization…In classes, there's only a couple of us." I heard a similar sentiment from London-E who initially thought Michigan was more diverse then it turned out to be. She realized, " I just need to join clubs where diversity will happen…I just have to make it that way, my own, I guess." Aware of the racial make-up of the campus, students like London-E, Dana-E and Jihan-E believed Black student organizations to be promising sources of diversity and culture.

Safety and comfort. I also found that during the yield-recruitment process, a number of students were strongly encouraged by peers, teachers and even university representatives to join Black student organizations as a way to "feel comfortable" in the campus environment. Teachers for both Zara-E and Dana-E strongly suggested they join Black student organizations. Zara-E also recalled the personal experience shared by a Muslim student panelist during one of her recruitment activities that left an indelible impression:

> There was the girl who was Muslim and she was saying how she would just-- **there would be moments where she would feel uncomfortable on the campus just because she would always wear her hijab** and she would just notice kind of getting looks from people but then at the same time **she was able to join different clubs and organizations where she felt comfortable and she could be around people who were,** I guess, more accepting of other people and they were also probably a minority. It was just small stuff like that.

> I talked about it to a few of the graduates from my high school. **Whenever they would come back and visit, they would always talk to us about how if you**

really want to feel comfortable at U of M being a black student and all, definitely try to join a student org or a club that either has a lot of minorities in it so you can feel more comfortable or just a club that's like predominantly black. I think, I did talk about it with my college counselor a little bit, but for the most part, she was just saying that definitely get comfortable with your clubs and orgs.

Together, Zara-E's comments provide more insight into the high expectations that various individuals seem to have of Black student organizations at the University of Michigan. These organizations help students adjust culturally. They provide a sense of comfort and community. To reiterate London-E's point, they are the place where "diversity will happen."

Connecting Black student organizations to the concept of threat, I found that the presence of organizational cues—Black student organizations—and the expectations students placed on these groups to provide safety, diversity, and a sense of community mitigated the threat that students might otherwise perceive and respond to in their college choice process. The vast majority of the enrollee students who were highly race central were not deterred from enrolling at UM as social identity threat would suggest. Instead, they planned to strategically draw upon the multiple functions these organizations served. What is more, admitted students' reliance on Black student organizations reflects my finding that across the sample, admitted students uniformly and positively appraised Black student organizations (organizational cues). It is also consistent with talking points Black EMPs referenced relative to the "small but strong" Black community in efforts to encourage students to enroll (presented in Chapter Five).

Conclusion

Although perceptions of institutional commitment to diversity and racial climate were not sole or deciding factors in Black admitted students' college choice, they were

209

nonetheless important considerations in the complex matrix of decision-making in which students were engaged. Admitted students considered race and diversity features of the campus among other factors among others, including financial aid, academic opportunities, and institutional prestige as they decided where to enroll. But more than outlining students' college choice, this chapter offers insight into how and why students considered diversity and climate in their decisions.

And for these questions, this chapter contributes a theoretically robust analysis of the role of individual differences and contextual features in students' college choice. My findings illuminate the ways in which admitted students perceived and appraised structural, organizational, and compositional diversity cues in their college choice phase and yield recruitment activities and how these perceptions informed their impressions of the University of Michigan campus environment. While there were patterns across the data that suggested students appraised these cues in rather consistent ways, there was also divergence within and across the samples of non-enrollees and enrollees, where, for example, some students had much more positive or indifferent stances toward the University's climate and diversity. This chapter provides empirical support for four factors explaining this divergence: pre-college racial contacts, the role of racial tensions, vicarious exposure to the University's diversity and climate, and racial identity.

Finally, the ways in which Proposal 2, the statewide affirmative action ban, has conditioned the environment is also important to note. As the majority of admitted students visited the campus at some point during high school, some even multiple times, the implications of Proposal 2 are apparent in what was clearly visible to students—the handful of Black students that stuck out to them as they walked throughout campus or sat

in largely white auditoriums—as well as what was missing: yield recruitment activities that explicitly foregrounded race, included opportunities to connect with Black students, or structures that allowed students to get a real sense for what it was like to be Black at Michigan.

Together, these features led some students to be anxious about entering the campus environment, concerned about the potential threat to their racial identity. But they chose to enroll anyway, citing their intention to join Black student organizations, which they saw as a source of safety and comfort and a place to experience diversity. In short, students' plans to participate in identity-affirming activities were critical to their college choice. This finding is consistent with my observation that among the three diversity cues students' perceived, organizational cues were the most positively appraised across the sample. It also suggests that in efforts to yield Black students, the talking point that Enrollment Management Professionals (EMPs) reiterated about leveraging Black student organizations may be effective for those who hear it. However, the convergence around this theme also suggests there may be an undue expectation from university staff *and* Black students (incoming and currently enrolled) that Black student organizations will be everything that the university is not, filling the gap in students' needs for identity expression, belonging and safety. That student organizations emerged as a significant factor in enrollee students' discussions about their yield-recruitment experiences and college choice suggests highlights strategic and proactive engagement on the part of some admitted students on one hand, and on the other, that there is much to do to help create an environment where Black students feel welcomed and affirmed.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Implications

Little empirical research exists on the relationship between affirmative action and college choice although affirmative action bans likely shift university behavior, including enrollment management practices, and shape portrayals of institutional commitment to diversity and campus climate—all of which may have implications for where highly qualified Black students choose to enroll. Motivated by the goal of understanding Black students' underrepresentation in selective post-affirmative action contexts, this study sought to examine the University of Michigan's yield-recruitment efforts and how it conveys institutional commitment to diversity as well as Black admitted students' perceptions of the racial environment as potential factors contributing to their college choice decisions. In this concluding chapter, I summarize findings of this study in relation to prior research; discuss its empirical, methodological, and theoretical contributions; outline implications for enrollment management and institutional policy and practice; and propose avenues for future research.

Discussion of Findings

An important aspect of this research study's design was to capture: (a) an *institutional perspective* on the recruitment activities undertaken to yield Black students and (b) *perspectives of Black students* admitted to U-M, specifically as it concerned their perceptions of the campus environment and enrollment decisions. University efforts and student perceptions work together, I argue, to shape Black students' college choice. I review key findings from the institutional and student perspective in this section.

Institutional Perspective. Given the current legal environment for affirmative action, yield-recruitment strategies aimed at enhancing racial diversity have become increasingly consequential. Enrollment Management Professionals involved in yield-recruitment efforts at the University of Michigan were very much aware of the challenges and distinct considerations necessary to yield Black students who represent just 4.6% of the undergraduate student population—some EMPs more than others. That is, encouraging admitted Black students to enroll in a predominantly white institution with a small existing Black student population and climate issues lingering from years past, necessarily would involve reassuring students of the institution's values and commitments relative to diversity (Alger, 1998; Espinosa et al., 2015). My institutional findings offer insights into the ways in which EMPs conveyed this commitment in the context of yield recruitment.

Avery and McKay (2006) note that targeted recruitment efforts in corporate settings serve as a "means for organizations to influence job seekers impressions of them"—a form of impression management (p. 164). I similarly found that targeted recruitment events were an important avenue for the University of Michigan to convey its commitment to diversity to underrepresented students, including first-generation students, low-income students and those living in geographic regions underrepresented at the University, all of which by default, included Black students as well. In three categories of targeted events I observed—Scholar Recognition Dinner, Campus Visit Day, and Admitted Student Celebration Days—the *ingratiation* of targeted students—"a strategic attempt to enhance a firm's attractiveness" (Avery & McKay, 2006, p. 163) was evident in their structure and design. For example, the elegant ambiance at the Scholar

Recognition Dinner, which targeted students from underrepresented areas in Michigan, included a reception with a pianist and strolling hors d'oeuvres and a plated dinner with department leaders throughout campus--attempts to enhance the University's attractiveness.

Admitted Student Celebration Days, events that took place in urban settings in Chicago and Detroit were attended by predominantly Black and/or Latino admitted students. The incorporation of University staff with racial identities that mirrored those of the students whom they sought to recruit also represents a form of ingratiation, although it is unclear if it was an intentional strategy (Avery & McKay, 2006). Likewise, as with diversity job fairs or corporate recruitment events held at minority serving institutions (Avery & McKay, 2006; Rivera, 2012), when representatives from different offices across campus travelled to these events to recruit Black students in their home environment—a setting with a connection to their racial/ethnic identity—the University communicated to students they were "valuable and worth pursuing" (Avery & McKay, 2006, p. 168). Such efforts were also likely to be viewed as an indication of the University's intent to enroll a racially diverse study body.

Beyond these strategies, recruitment in the corporate sector has focused on diversity ads and corporate diversity statements as an ingratiation tactic (Avery, 2003; Braddy et al., 2006; Slaughter, Sinar & Bachiochi, 2002; Walker, Field, Bernerth & Becton, 2012). In higher education, college viewbooks and mission statements can be important in communicating institutional commitment to diversity (Hartley & Morphew, 2008; Klassen, 2000; Osei-Kofi & Torres, 2013; Pippert et al., 2013). I found that the language around diversity conveyed in yield-recruitment settings represented additional

214

methods for communicating institutional commitment to diversity and shaping admitted students' impressions. Thus, my findings demonstrate that the use of diversity impression management in undergraduate recruitment is not only reflected in the events themselves, but also the discourse used in these events and other related settings.

Surprisingly, "diversity" was not mentioned in yield events nearly as much as I expected given the enthusiasm EMPs expressed during their interviews about the University's diversity efforts in recent years. When "diversity" was mentioned explicitly, it took two forms: normative statements, which focused on values and commitments as well as descriptive statements that, as the name suggests, described aspects of the University (Ahmed, 2015). Dean Munson's comments lauding the institution's strategic diversity plan during his remarks at the Scholar Recognition Dinner (p. 130) is both an example of a normative statement and it also reflects the impression management strategy, *promoting effective diversity management,* which involves touting an organization's accomplishments or accolades with respect to diversity.

Descriptive diversity statements were generally used in "meet and greet" receptions with a broader audience of students (predominantly White) instead of targeted events attended by mostly Black students. In broad recruitment contexts, EMPs used "diversity" to describe many different aspects of the University and framed "diversity" in the "broadest possible sense of the word"—mirroring the official diversity language framed, endorsed and repeated by President Schlissel (Ahmed, 2015). This inclusive framing is consistent with findings from previous studies of diversity in higher education broadly (Ahmed, 2015; Marichal, 2009) and at the University of Michigan, more specifically (Berrey, 2015; Garces & Cogburn, 2015; Green, 2004), which demonstrate

215

the prevalence of increasingly vague conceptions of diversity as race-conscious policies and practices became more controversial.

Across yield-recruitment events and interactions, commitment to diversity was also signaled rather than explicitly named. In broad recruitment events, for instance, diversity was conveyed through diversity-related concepts, phrases or opportunities (i.e., names of university courses, study abroad in particular countries, etc.) as well as through the University's involvement in local community causes (i.e., Flint water crisis)—all of which alluded to diversity's value at the institution without EMPs ever actually saying "diversity." Touting organizational support of or involvement in socially responsible endeavors, especially those serving underrepresented or historically marginalized groups, is an example of *exemplification* in Avery and McKay's (2006) list of diversity impression management tactics.

Importantly, demonstrating diversity in this way may have contributed to admitted students' positive impressions of the University's diversity commitments, notably among white students. There is strong evidence that in elite institutions, commitment to diversity has become an "unofficial marker of institutional prestige" and a critical part of yielding white students (Stevens, 2007, p. 180). Indeed, in Ellen Berrey's (2011) acclaimed ethnographic case study of admissions at the University of Michigan, she observed that in admissions events, diversity was a "strategic middle road…and a sales pitch to appeal to white students" (p. 575). In the current study, how diversity was conveyed in broad yield-recruitment contexts at Michigan was likely to resonate with admitted White students as much, if not more, than admitted Black students.

The above discussion of findings has illuminated the ways in which EMPs

conveyed institutional commitment to diversity in more formal recruitment settings. My

findings also provide insight into how commitment to diversity was conveyed in

exchanges outside of the structure of formal presentations in yield-recruitment contexts.

The basis of these inquiries, frequently initiated by Black students or parents, was

apprehension about campus racial climate and/or the small population of Black

undergraduates on campus. In participant interviews, Non-Black EMPs characterized

these as "difficult" conversations and expressed unease in responding. Some responses

were similar to *defensive impression management tactics*—the use of an excuse,

justification, denial or apology by an organization to try to explain its unfavorable or

complicated diversity reputation (Avery & McKay, 2006).

Black EMPs, on the other hand, were quite candid about the racial environment

for Black students. In their anticipation of the specific concerns Black students would

likely have and express (based on previous experiences and reoccurring questions), Black

EMPs' responses reflected two talking points. The first focused on the strength of the

Black student community (despite its small size) and the second reframed diversity and

climate issues at the University as a way to prepare students for the racial realities in life

beyond college. I likened Black EMPs use of talking points to *anticipatory impression*

management, a strategic effort to attenuate reputational consequences or intense scrutiny

following events that are commonly perceived as negative (Elsbach, Sutton & Principe,

1998). Anticipatory tactics can be employed to project positive and/or negative images to

either "avert negative perceptions and behavior, or to encourage positive perceptions and

behavior" (Elsbach et al., 1998, p. 69). In the case of yield recruitment, I would argue

Black EMPs used talking points to positively reframe Black students' perceptions of

217

aspects of the University (diversity and racial climate), commonly regarded as negative, in order to encourage Black admitted students' matriculation.

It is impossible to determine with certainty how effective this reframing was for students who heard it or, for that matter, how admitted students received any of the impression management strategies I observed. However, there is solid evidence from admitted students in my sample that institutional commitment to diversity was an important consideration in their college choice process and that a strong Black student community was both a hope and expectation at UM for those who decided to enroll. In the next section, I explore admitted students' perceptions of diversity, racial climate and additional insights from their yield-recruitment experiences and college choice.

Student Perspective. How admitted students' perceived institutional commitment to diversity varied across the sample but was a function of the presence and perception of diversity cues—features of the campus environment—that they appraised and then ascribed to Michigan. My study provides insight into *structural cues*, which I add to the list of contextual cues that Steele et al. (2002) introduced in their conceptualization of social identity threat. Structural cues, pertaining to recruitment policies and practices were perceived and appraised positively by some admitted students and negatively by others. For instance, the visibility of Black staff and students in certain recruitment events was a positive indication of institutional commitment to diversity for some students (Thomas & Wise, 2003). Other students noted that at UM, racial diversity did not appear to be a focal point of recruitment events or that there were inadequate opportunities to connect with enrolled or incoming Black students as part of these events, especially in comparison to multicultural or Black recruitment weekends they participated in

elsewhere. As a result, some students were either uncertain about the University's commitment to diversity or believed that it did not exist.

Organizational cues, which highlighted Black student organizations as well as institutional offices and initiatives aimed at supporting diversity, were positively appraised by admitted students across the sample. Students generally were impressed by the abundance of Black student organizations, cultural groups and overall the availability of these supports. Like the Latinas in Perez and McDonough's (2008) study of college choice in California who described the presence of cultural centers as "a safe haven" and "signal of institution-wide commitment to making the campus more diversity-friendly" (p. 262). Black admitted students in my sample pointed to these organizations as a positive indication of the University's commitment to diversity, although they had differing interpretations. There were students who perceived diversity-related offices as a supportive environment or safe place to turn to should they have a stigmatizing experience (Strayhorn, Terrell, Redmond & Walton, 2010). Among other students, these cues conveyed Black students' positive status within the campus—that, for instance, their leadership aspirations or interests in extra-curricular activities would not be limited because of their racial identity (Steele et al., 2002). However, that students perceived there to be an abundance of Black student organizations could just as well signal inadequate institutional structures or climate issues (Solórzano, Yosso & Ceja, 2000).

The last category of diversity cues—*compositional cues*—was most negatively appraised by admitted students, perhaps because the count or percentage of individuals with a particular identity conveys whether members of this group will be in the minority and consequently, the extent to which they are likely to be valued or affirmed in the

219

setting (Steele et al., 2002; Steele, 2010). Several admitted students—both enrollees and non-enrollees--expressed both shock and concern by the lack of racial diversity they observed. The size of the Black student population in particular, compelled participants to count the Black students they saw during their participation in various yield-recruitment events and activities (Steele et al., 2002; Steele, 2010; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). As famous tennis player Arthur Ashe once reflected, "Like many other blacks, when I find myself in a new public situation, I will count. I always count. I count the number of black and brown faces present…" (Ashe, 1993, p. 131). Though imperfect, counting "identity-mates" provides clues about the status of one's identity in a particular context (Steele, 2010). But even for those who did not engaging in counting as they participated in recruitment activities, admitted students largely had a difficult time grasping how an institution could be reasonably committed to diversity with Black student enrollment at just 4.6 percent. As a result, compositional cues signaled mostly bad contingencies among enrollees and non-enrollee participants.

Despite the patterns I observed in admitted students' perceptions of these cues, there was still divergence within the sample. Not all students perceived cues or interpreted their meaning in the same way (e.g., the possibility of racism, mistreatment or isolation or other forms of stigma, etc.). For instance, although most students observed a lack of racial diversity and expressed some level of concern over the small population of Black students and the bad contingencies it suggested, there was still a share of admitted students who were either indifferent to compositional cues or read the University as diverse and very welcoming.

Differences in students' perceptions and appraisals of institutional commitment to

diversity and campus climate were likely influenced by differential exposure to cues. That is, not all students had the same yield-recruitment experiences and interactions, and thus received the same information. But even if all 35 students in my sample were exposed to the same cues, they still would not have interpreted this information in the exact same way. The characteristics, predispositions, background and past experiences which individuals bring to a situation or setting shapes its meaning (Major & O'Brien, 2005). Therefore, the same cues in the same setting or context may be "perceived and appraised differently by different individuals" (Major & O'Brien, 2005, p. 400). I found that at least four key factors shaped students' perceptions of the University campus environment (via cues): (1) Pre-college racial contacts (2) Racial tensions happening in the U.S. (3) Vicarious exposure to institutional diversity and climate and (4) Racial identity (centrality and salience).

Consistent with other studies (Butler, 2010; Chavous et al., 2002; Ethier & Deaux, 1990, 1994), *pre-college racial contacts*, conceptualized as the racial make-up of the high schools students attended, shaped admitted students' perceptions of the campus environment. I also found that the *prevalence of racial tensions*—occurring both on college campuses and in society at large—was a surprising factor contributing to admitted students' perceptions of the University. Likewise, *vicarious exposure to the campus diversity and/or climate* through friends, family or teachers complicated admitted students' appraisals, often making them more vigilant in their search for confirming or disconfirming information (Steele, 2010).

The fourth factor contributing to the divergence in students' perceptions was their racial identity. I observed that the centrality of students' identity—which I gathered from

221

the meaning they attached to their identity (e.g., "It's not all of who I am" versus "it as critical to me and everything I do") as well as the salience that some students described during their yield-recruitment experiences—was especially helpful in understanding admitted students' perceptions of cues (Avery & McKay, 2006; Kim & Gelfand, 2003; Sellers et al., 1998). There were admitted students who recognized almost immediately that they were a racial minority in a predominantly white setting while a smaller share of students seemed to barely notice.

Racial identity also has implications for admitted students' appraisals of identity-threatening settings. Students for whom race/ethnicity was very important to their self-identity, for instance, were generally more perceptive of compositional cues such as the number of Black students at the University. And based on social identity theory, these students would also be more vulnerable to identity threat. First, they possess a generally stigmatized identity in society (Steele et al., 2002) and second, there is a greater potential for mismatch or incompatibility between their racial identity and the racial context of the University of Michigan (Byrd & Chavous, 2012; Ethier & Deaux, 1990, 1994). Yet for reasons I alluded to earlier (i.e., the full range of individual and background experiences not explored in this study) (Major & O'Brien, 2005), not all individuals perceived threat. Notably, there were students in my sample who gave no indication that they believed UM to be a threatening campus environment or that they were concerned about their identity in any way.

However, there were several admitted students, particularly enrollees, who on the basis of comments they made (e.g., concerned about racism or discrimination; motivated to prove their value; feeling alone, etc.) gave the impression that they did, in fact,

222

perceive the University of Michigan to be a threatening environment. But many of these students still decided to enroll. The question is why.

Identity orientations. One might expect the various cues signaling threat would lead admitted students to *not* choose to enroll in the University of Michigan, especially students with a high racial centrality (Steele et al., 2002). These students would be more attuned to cues that signal identity threat than those lower in centrality. Historically, social identity theory has supported this particular perspective—that is, the perception of threat (e.g., the possibility of token status and other bad contingencies associated with identity) and high identity centrality would result in avoidance and withdrawal from settings, situations or domains (Steele et al., 2002; Davies et al., 2002; Davies et al., 2005; Murphy et al., 2005).

By comparison, empirical studies focused on African American students in predominantly white institutions including, potentially threatening settings, offer a more nuanced, culturally grounded explanation of the role of identity centrality in such contexts. Rather than high identity centrality uniformly leading to more risk, identity can actually serve as a protective factor that leads to students' resilience and positive engagement in contexts/settings in which they may be devalued or stigmatized (Davis, Aronson & Salinas, 2006; Smalls, White, Chavous & Sellers, 2007).

Even in instances where students' centrality is, in fact, associated with perceived threat, this perception might also lead students to proactively identify and strategically leverage identity-affirming resources such as Black student organizations to protect and support them. In her analysis of perceived ethnic fit among Black students in a predominantly white institution, Chavous (2000) found that her participants showed a

small but significant association with perceived threat where higher centrality related to more threat. But higher centrality was also positively associated with students' increased participation in Black student organizations. These findings are consistent with other empirical studies that have demonstrated students' engagement in racial/ethnic identity-affirming organizations in their transition to predominantly white colleges (Ethier & Deaux 1990, 1994), in cultivating a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2013) and leveraging safe spaces for support (Solórzano et al., 2000).

My findings also provide insight into participants' orientations toward student organizations and their important role for high race central students in PWIs. Some admitted students may have, on one hand, perceived the possibility of identity threat, but on the other, had the means to leverage resources or strategies[24] (i.e., a strong racial identity and Black student organizations) to mitigate this potential threat (Davis et al., 2006). That is, enrollees who alluded to threat in their interviews, conceived of Black student organizations as a mechanism not only for limiting exposure to prejudiced individuals but also for mitigating the impact of exposure to spaces or aspects of the University they perceived to be threatening. These organizations were expected to be a site for cultivating a sense of belonging, identity expression in a predominantly white context and, among a select few, an opportunity for engagement in activism, institutional transformation and social change. The prospect of access to Black student organizations, as well as the multiple functions they served, made some admitted students feel more comfortable choosing to enroll in the University of Michigan.

---

[24] Recognizing the ways in which the promotive function of racial identity complicates traditional social identity perspectives (Smalls et al., 2007), Major and O'Brien (2005) introduced an identity challenge frame which highlights coping resources and strategies individuals may use to overcome or meet the demands of identity threat: "the ability to limit exposure to others who are prejudiced, strong group identity, or dispositional optimism" (p. 402).

Understanding college choice. The findings summarized above underscore a broader trend in my study: diversity plays a complicated role in Black students' college choice. My analysis suggests that in the current post-affirmative action era where race consciousness is noticeably absent and yet racial incidents are seemingly on the rise, institutional commitment to diversity was important for students. These findings confirm previous studies that have highlighted the importance of institutional commitment to diversity for Black job seekers (Avery & McKay, 2006; McKay & Avery, 2006; Kim & Gelfand, 2003) and/or speculated on its importance in higher education recruitment and student enrollment (Alger, 1988; Espinosa et al., 2015; Natour et al., 2012). However, the Michigan case complicates findings generated in California's post-affirmative action context that suggest Black students' perceptions of a negative racial climate and/or tenuous commitment to diversity explains their low yield rates (Kidder, 2012; Wilbur, 2010). I highlight two unique aspects of the Michigan case before moving on to discuss the contributions and implications of this work.

First, even as the majority of my sample described wanting to attend college characterized by a diverse and inclusive environment, what constituted "diverse" and inclusive was not the same for all students. For some admitted students in my sample, they were seemingly fine with matriculating at historically and predominantly white institutions, satisfied with the promise of a strong Black community or with the opportunity to join Black student organizations. These students matriculated at the University of Michigan. They also enrolled at colleges such as Yale, MIT and Princeton[25]

---

[25] Ironically, a few of these institutions had racial incidents that transpired during the 2015-2016 admissions cycle (Jackson, 2016; Jaschik, 2015), the period of time in which students were engaged in recruitment and decision-making. In addition, their historical legacies with respect to climate and diversity challenges are well documented (Charles, Fischer, Mooney & Massey, 2009; Synott, 2013).

where they perceived themselves to already be a part of what they characterized as a network of currently enrolled and incoming Black students, and in some cases more racial diversity and inclusiveness than what they perceived at UM. Other admitted students for whom diversity was important desired to be in a much more racially diverse and inclusive environment, like Howard University or even Stanford where, for instance, a few students in my sample lauded the university's strong network of Black faculty, staff, alumni, and currently enrolled students. Table 7.1 presents a typology of diversity at the institutions where non-enrollees matriculated. The colleges are placed in one category of "diversity type" based on dominant characteristics but may otherwise fall into multiple categories or types.

Second, admitted students' negative appraisals of the campus environment were not necessarily the sole factor in their college choice. As I mentioned previously, students who seemed most concerned about climate and diversity enrolled at the University of Michigan despite having these concerns (expecting to leverage Black student organizations). And while there were non-enrollees in my sample who also had concerns about the institutional environment, desired more information about life for Black students on campus, or were not compelled by UM's commitment to diversity, especially in comparison to other institutions they visited and/or where they ultimately chose to enroll, only in a few instances were these concerns cited as the deciding factor in students' decisions to *not* matriculate at the University of Michigan. I found that admitted students' college choice was a complex process in which, in addition to diversity features, students' considered institutional prestige, financial aid and academic opportunities.

Table 7.1. *Typology of Diversity at Institutions where UM Non-Enrollees Matriculated*

Diversity Type	Description	College
Racially Diverse & Identity Affirming	Historically Black colleges and universities that serve a predominantly Black student body and are considered identity-affirming spaces	• Florida A & M • Howard
Racially Diverse Spaces & Activities	Host race-centric recruitment events and/or provide Black "spaces" for Black students on campus	• Stanford • Northwestern
Engaged Black Community	Active and engaged community of Black students on campus that participate in recruitment	• Yale • Princeton • MIT
Locational Diversity	Urban location of university contributes to diversity on campus	• St. John's University • University of Pennsylvania
Social Justice & Service	Social justice mission connotes a form of diversity and inclusion	• Georgetown • Oberlin
Diverse Public Mission	Institutions are somewhat diverse because of public mission	• Indiana University • Michigan State • Ohio State • UNC Chapel Hill
Ambiguous Diversity	Diversity is not reflected in recruitment or in student population	• University of Chicago • Boston University • Kettering

Consistent with a vast body of research on financial aid (see, for example, Avery & Hoxby, 2004; Kim, 2012; Kim et al., 2009), students were typically drawn to institutions that provided more aid than those that did not. In some instances, UM was competitive financially but in other cases--compared to private institutions or in-state offers from public universities, Michigan was not able to meet or exceed students' award packages. Notably, there were a few in-state and out-of-state students who flipped to the UM after receiving a competitive package.

Institutional prestige was also an important consideration in college choice across my sample (Bowman & Bastedo, 2009; Griffith & Rask, 2007; McDonough, Antonio, Wapole, & Perez, 1998). Prestige was a key reason why students were drawn toward other higher-ranked universities and similarly, why some in-state students chose to matriculate at Michigan. Students also weighed academic opportunities in their decision-making including interdisciplinary programs, research and study abroad and time to degree for their intended major. Aware of the University's academic reputation and plentiful opportunities, it was hard for them to turn down the offer of admission.

In sum, this study provides evidence that admitted students' preferences for and perceptions of diversity and race-related features—often through their yield recruitment experiences and interactions—manifested differently in students' college choice process. In addition, findings illuminate the importance of these organizational features as part of the broader matrix of admitted students' decision-making rather than as the deciding factor where admitted Black students chose to enroll.

Contributions

Empirical contributions. This study makes important contributions to our understanding of Black students' college choice in post-affirmative action contexts. Undergraduate recruitment represents a critical aspect of students' decision-making as initially posited by Hossler and Gallagher (1987). As an enrollment management function, recruitment has become increasingly important in post-affirmative contexts where institutions seek creative ways to enhance student diversity (Espinosa et al., 2015) and yet it is understudied in the higher education literature. The current study is the only one that, to my knowledge, examines undergraduate yield recruitment and its role in student choice, highlighting the implications of affirmative action for institutional practice. My findings therefore add to a sparse theory-based empirical literature on college recruitment.

In studying recruitment, I illuminate how it serves as an avenue for communicating institutional values and exposing admitted students to race and diversity-related features of colleges and universities, filling a critical gap the college choice empirical literature. I build upon previous studies that have examined the implications of Michigan's statewide affirmative action ban for diversity discourse (Berrey, 2011, 2015), policies and practices at the University of Michigan (Garces & Cogburn, 2015).

At the same time, my findings offer insight into the importance of such factors for developing a more nuanced perspective of Black students' college choice in selective, post-affirmative action contexts than has been possible with empirical studies that focus disproportionately on financial aid and prestige and/or omit organizational diversity factors (e.g., diversity, climate, racial composition, etc.). Moreover, by studying the

229

University of Michigan case, I contribute to and complicate research conducted on Black

students' college choice (Contreras et al., 2016) and postsecondary destinations in

California (Kidder 2012; Wilbur, 2010)—a state characterized by a unique higher

education arrangement (i.e., California Master Plan), racial demography and history with

respect to affirmative action.

Methodological contributions. The case study approach employed in this project

also deepens our understanding of college choice from an *institutional* and *student*

perspective. Interviews and ethnographic observations offered a rare glimpse into the

practice of undergraduate recruitment in a selective public university, including the legal

framework that university professionals must operate within given an affirmative action

ban. Semi-structured interviews with both enrollees and non-enrollees provided an

opportunity to understand admitted students' perceptions of and experiences with the

University of Michigan (vis-à-vis other colleges where they were admitted).

In addition, given the purposeful timing of data collection, I was able to ascertain

how admitted students read and responded to contextual diversity cues and other aspects

of the UM campus environment as close to real time as was possible. Because I collected

data before most students began courses, the study design also mitigated recall bias,

which can be a limitation of college choice studies. Relatedly, in comparison to analyses

of nationally representative survey data or institutional studies of enrollment, my case

approach foregrounded the role of context and the dynamic interactions between students

and colleges emblematic of recruitment and the college choice process.

Theoretical contributions. In order to adequately analyze and interpret Black

students' college choice, this study employed an interdisciplinary framework. In doing

so, there are key theoretical contributions worthy to note. Historically, scholars have largely drawn from sociology and economics in order to study college choice; however, these conceptualizations have not explained how Black students interpret and appraise non-economic attributes such as diversity and climate that tend to be more important to them. Moreover, decision-making is inherently a psychological process (Beresford & Sloper, 2008), and therefore belongs in our field's conceptualizations of college choice.

The use of social identity theories from various social science traditions, most notably psychology, helps explain the ways in which Black students may perceive, appraise, and respond to information about their identity in relation to the college environment in their decision-making. Specifically, social identity threat outlines how aspects of the campus environment signal institutional values and commitments, students' status given their racial identity, and consequently, the extent to which the campus environment or various settings are likely to pose an identity threat.

The explicit focus on racial identity offers insight into how Black students might differentially interpret and respond to this contextual information as they engage in their recruitment and decision-making process. As a result, racial identity in the current study advances college choice research beyond the mere inclusion of race as a categorical variable, an approach that facilitates comparative analyses across groups but does little to inform how individuals within those groups read and respond to the college environment in disparate ways (Chavous, 2000). Together, these social identity constructs facilitated a deeper theoretical exploration of Black student' college choice desperately needed to make sense of persistent inequities in Black student enrollment in selective, post-affirmative action contexts and the implications for increasing racial tensions at PWIs.

From an institutional perspective, my study offers a strong theoretical framing for examining yield recruitment in higher education contexts. By employing impression management theory, an organizational psychology model that has been used to examine corporate recruitment, it deepens our understanding of what yield recruitment is and how it can be used to advance institutional diversity goals in a sociopolitical environment where institutions feel constrained in their policies and practices. Like corporate firms interested in diversifying staff, impression management provides a lens for exploring how college and universities can engage in various tactics and discourses with the aim of shaping targeted students' impressions about institutional commitment to diversity. A theoretically grounded analysis of how and if institutions convey messages to students whom they wish to enroll is a significant contribution to the college choice empirical literature that historically has emphasized the role of students' characteristics and background in enrollment decisions.

Implications for Practice

This study broadens our understanding of the decision-making considerations for Black students through a case study of students admitted to the University of Michigan, post-Proposal 2. By emphasizing how students read and respond to the university's portrayal of its commitment to diversity, the campus climate it creates, and its responses to Proposal 2, findings reveal important implications for institutional practice.

Translating institutional commitment to diversity. For all the enthusiasm EMPs shared about the university's renewed commitment to diversity, "diversity" itself was not an explicit focal point in recruitment events I observed. "Diversity" was mentioned in passing, it seemed, or was communicated in more subtle ways as I

232

discussed in Chapter 5. Discussions or mentions of racial diversity or race were all but absent. As a result, there were several students who found it difficult to ascertain the university's commitment to diversity on the basis of recruitment events alone. This was especially the case for some non-enrollees who compared their yield-recruitment experiences at Michigan to race and diversity-centric events at other colleges where they often met Black faculty, staff and/or students and felt like they got a better sense for the value of diversity and life on campus for Black students.

Certainly, the affirmative action ban poses constraints for what the University can do and say as it relates to race-conscious policies and practices. However, my findings suggest that if practitioners want prospective Black students to know the institution's commitment to diversity during the recruitment phase, they should talk about it more directly and more openly across the various university-sponsored events and activities. Enrollment management professionals should work with top administrators and legal counsel to find other ways to explicitly convey to students the institution's values and diversity and equity efforts (to students in Michigan and beyond). Moreover, it is important that this communication does not merely emphasize "diversity" broadly but also articulates how the University plans to enact policies, practices and norms (in the short and long term) that can work to mitigate the racial inequities that some Black admitted students astutely sensed in their college choice process.

Responding to students' diversity and climate concerns. It was clear in my analysis of institutional data that university representatives had different levels of comfort and preparation in addressing Black students' questions about racial diversity and climate. Non-white EMPs struggled through these questions as I noted in Chapter 5.

233

Some participants tried to explain inequities in enrollment by describing the negative implications of Proposal 2 outside of the University's control. Others focused on student enrollment data (e.g., geographic diversity reflected in student body) but also tried to reassure students that UM was still very much committed to improving diversity, including the representation of students of color. Black EMPs took a very different approach, however. They provided candid accounts of what Black students might encounter on campus because of their identity but then offered talking points that helped to reframe or cast this information in a positive light. While I recognize there is a certain credibility that Black professionals may inherently have because of their shared identities with students, my findings speak to the need for white enrollment professionals to be just as prepared and comfortable addressing Black students' questions and concerns.

Of course, there is always a risk that being honest about challenges may result in some admitted students deciding not to matriculate. However, several students in my sample (particularly, non-enrollees) were clear that they were actually looking for honest information about what life was like for Black students on campus and would have been well-served by these insights. While Black EMPs were more likely to "keep it real" with Black admitted students, they only talk to a fraction of those who are considering UM and often these conversations have to be prompted by students' questions and concerns. The fact that UM did not generally provide this information (or facilitated opportunities) put the institution at a disadvantage compared to some of the other colleges where students enrolled such as Princeton, MIT, Yale, among others. These colleges are not necessarily more racially diverse or inclusive. Yet they seemed to—at least from students' perspective—do a good job of relaying the reality of campus life, often by

234

engaging currently enrolled Black students in recruitment efforts. The University of Michigan should seek to increase the number of Black students it hires to be student ambassadors for campus tours and other recruitment purposes as well as consider other opportunities (activities or events) where prospective Black students can connect with currently enrolled Black students before they make their enrollment decision.

The role of Black student organizations. My findings provide strong evidence for the need to support Black student organizations, which played a critical role in yield recruitment and students' perceptions of the campus environment at the University of Michigan. University professionals emphasized the strength of the Black student community and pitched the availability of these organizations as evidence that despite small numbers, Black students could find a diverse and supportive community of same-race peers. This portrayal of the Black student community was read and interpreted positively by students in my sample. So much so, that many of the students who expressed concern about racial diversity or climate each pointed to Black student organizations and the Black community (which they used interchangeably) as their strategy for navigating the campus.

The salience of this theme in institutional and student perspectives leads me to believe that university practitioners and students themselves may be placing undue expectations on Black student organizations to meet their various needs for support (e.g., identity expression, sense of belonging, etc.) Institutional agents need to critically examine how to create a campus environment where students feel supported and where participation in Black student organizations is not a means for survival. Aligning services, designing appropriate transitional scaffolds, and regularly assessing the

235

institutional climate on several factors (for both prospective and currently enrolled students) are just a few initial areas of potential action.

Implications for Future Research

While college choice has been a robust area of higher education research for more than two decades, few studies have explored Black students' decision-making in post-affirmative action contexts and none have focused on the University of Michigan despite its seminal role in affirmative action legal developments over the past decade and difficulty increasing Black student enrollment. This study examined college choice from an institutional and student perspective, exploring undergraduate yield recruitment and the ways in which students perceive, appraise and respond to non-economic institutional attributes such as diversity commitments and racial climate which are especially critical in the University's post-Proposal 2 era. This study addresses existing gaps in the literature and provides several avenues for future research, which I discuss below.

Foregrounding context in college choice. Findings underscore the utility of employing a contextual approach to the study of college choice. Campus visits were a critical source of information, giving students a sense for the racial climate and diversity commitments of institutions they were considering and the possibility of experiencing identity threat. Potential areas of inquiry might focus on the role of prospective and admitted students' participation in on-campus events and activities (e.g., campus tours) since those figured quite prominently in the impressions admitted students in my sample formed of the University of Michigan and other colleges they visited.

Broader racial tensions (i.e., policy shootings and campus incidents) also shaped students' perceptions of the race and diversity features of campuses, demonstrating that

students' decision-making is not happening in a vacuum. Both students' and institutions are shaped by what happens within the walls of the college campus as they are by what happens across the "local, regional, and national landscape" (Ledesma, 2016, p. 10). Future college choice research must continue to explore how students read and respond to dynamic sociopolitical events and organizational contexts in their decision-making.

Finally, students' pre-college racial contexts such as their high schools and neighborhood communities should be explored in future studies of college choice. It is important to not only understand the correlations between pre-college and college racial composition (Butler, 2009, but also *how* these pre-college contexts shape where students decide to apply and enroll, the strategies and coping resources students intend to leverage in their adjustment to college (which can also affect students' college choice) (Major & O'Brien, 2005), and the extent to which these pre-college racial experiences moderate students' vulnerability to perceived threat as they negotiate their identity in a changed context (Chavous et al., 2002; Ethier & Deaux, 1994).

Analysis of individual differences. Traditional (quantitative) college choice studies using large datasets serve many important purposes. However, the corresponding analyses require essentializing racial/ethnicity—a complex identity-- into binary categories. In a quantitative study, for example, each of my participants would be grouped in the category of "Black/African American." This categorical description would likely preclude researchers (and consumers of research) from understanding individual differences within this racial/ethnic group[26] and how these differences manifest in

---

[26] Students often described their racial/ethnic identities in complex ways. One student (Jalin-E) said he was technically biracial but was raised by a single Black mother, thus he identified as Black. Another participant (Nathan-E) was biracial and but phenotypically looked white, and this shaped his interactions with people from different racial/ethnic backgrounds. And another students (Micala-NE) selected her

237

students' college choice process in disparate ways. The current study's findings highlight the need for additional explorations of individual characteristics in students' decision-making in a range of institutional settings, including selective campuses affected by affirmative action legal measures, predominantly white institutions and historically black colleges and universities. Future research on college choice in these settings might explain not only *if* but *how* or *why* individual characteristics and interactions with the college environment help inform student outcomes and experiences (Chavous, 2000).

In addition, the disproportionate number of students in my sample whose racial identity was highly central suggests future analysis of Black students with varying levels of centrality is warranted in the study of college choice. This particular design would help researchers understand if the patterns and themes I observed in the current study hold up among students with differing racial centrality or if the patterns are germane to students for whom racial identity is highly central. This analysis would shed light, for example, on whether and how students of varying identity centrality perceive congruence or fit between themselves and the University of Michigan on the basis of their racial identity and encounters with various cues during their college choice process—empirical work that is essential for advancing college choice research as well as informing enrollment management practice.

For instance, the important role of racial centrality is also seen in the types of yield recruitment events that students were drawn to (e.g., race-centric) and in their comments about the ways in which Michigan's recruitment approach, wherein race and diversity are not explicitly foregrounded, did not necessarily align with their preferences.

---

identity as "Black/African American" on her application form because that is what people assume she is, but shared with me that she actually identifies as mixed race. Racial identity is complex and manifested in this study in interesting ways.

238

But future research might reveal distinct patterns in how students with differing identity centrality read and respond to the university environment and recruitment practices (compared to highly central students). Not all Black students will desire a heavy emphasis on race or diversity (and there is even evidence of this in the current study). And some students, as I discovered, may find that broad and inclusive diversity discourse and practices to be insufficient. The charge for enrollment management professionals is to acknowledge differences amongst prospective Black students whom they wish to yield and to adapt enrollment management practices accordingly. But this is also the challenge.

Indeed, enrollment management professionals at Michigan and other institutions, will need to find ways to attend to individual differences amongst Black prospective and admitted students while acknowledging fit—both from a student and institutional perspective—on a number of metrics including but not limited to diversity and climate. Moreover, the reality that Michigan and other institutions must grapple with is that there is no one size fits all when it comes to recruitment, there are not infinite human and financial resources, and there is a legal framework that institutions still must operate within as they pursue efforts to improve racial diversity. These critical considerations necessitate empirical studies on enrollment management policies aimed to support diversity in institutions that are constrained by legal mandates.

Implications of targeted recruitment. Additionally, more research must examine how students, particularly students of color, may experience targeted recruitment and whether these efforts bring about the desired outcome: improving student diversity. Research from the organizational psychology literature suggests employees of color may experience harmful effects when they are recruited to an organization that they

believe values diversity, only to experience some form of racial stigma that contradicts this belief (Avery et al., 2013; Avery & McKay, 2005). A "violation" of the psychological contract between employer and organization implied when a company engages in diversity recruitment may lead to myriad outcomes including unmet expectations, dissatisfaction and low levels of engagement (McKay, 2005, Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Turnley & Feldman, 1999, 2000). Longitudinal analysis of the 35 participants in my study could shed light on the extent to which students' expectations about diversity and climate at the institutions where they matriculated aligned with their actual experiences of those campuses.

Appropriate data and methods. As a methodological note, researchers conducting empirical studies of college choice should consider methods appropriate for examine setting cues, racial identity, and the contextual nature of college campuses. In addition to student level analysis of racial identity, perceptions, and appraisals, the appropriate data is needed to model or explore organizational features of campuses. Scholars may wish to engage in qualitative inquiry, institutional case studies, content analyses of recruitment materials, hierarchical modeling and mixed methods approaches—all of which would be useful for examining both contextual and individual-level factors contributing to students' college choice.

Race relations and Black students' college choice. Finally, integrating each of these avenues for research, the overarching implication of the current study's findings is the need for additional research on Black students' college choice given increased public attention to racial incidents on college campuses, police shootings involving Black men and women, immigration policy, resurgence of white supremacy groups, and broader

240

discourse around race in the U.S. Amid the rise in racial tensions and reports of surges in enrollment at HBCUs (Strauss, 2016), more research should investigate Black prospective students' perceive, interpret and respond to racial features of college campuses and how they adjust to their college environments once they enroll.

Concluding Statement

Motivated by the aim of understanding the underrepresentation of Black students in highly selective, post-affirmative action contexts, this study examined the phenomenon of college choice, from an institutional and student perspective, to determine how and if race and diversity related features of the campus environment affect the decision-making of Black students, and consequently historic inequities in their representation at public selective universities. I found that enrollment professionals engaged in efforts to shape prospective Black students' positive impressions of the University, particularly with respect to diversity and climate. The strategies for doing so were a function of the event or activity, the professional, and the identity and background characteristics of students themselves.

My findings also suggest that while the majority of admitted students were widely interested in diversity and several were concerned by the lack of it they perceived at UM, diversity and/or racial climate were rarely the sole factors shaping students' decision-making. Students also weighed other critical factors including prestige, financial aid and academic opportunities. Significantly, admitted students also considered whether they could access or cultivate a strong Black community, particularly if they were choosing to matriculate at predominantly white institutions. Taken together, Black students' college choice in UM's post-Proposal 2 era is complex. It reflects differing expressions of

students' dispositions and preferences for diversity, keen perceptions of the campus

environment, and finally, their sense of agency.

Appendices

Appendix A:

Student Participant Recruitment Email

To: [prospective student participant]

From: Kelly Slay

Subject: Paid $$$ Opportunity for Individual Interview

Hello!

You have been invited to participate in an interview as part of the *Choosing Colleges Study*. You are receiving this invitation because you were admitted to the University of Michigan but decided *not* to accept the University's offer. **The interview provides a $XX cash incentive for study participants!**

The interview will be conducted by myself, Kelly Slay, a PhD student at the University of Michigan, and is expected to last between 60-75 minutes. During this interview, you

244

will be asked to reflect on your experiences learning about the University of Michigan during the application process and making your decision about what college you have chosen to attend in the fall. I am also interested in learning more about your background and how it relates to your experiences, beliefs, and expectations about college. **Should you be selected for the interview, you will receive the $XX Amazon gift card electronically once the interview is complete. Please note that your participation is voluntary.**

If you would like to be considered for an interview, please click here to complete a brief (3-5 minute survey), read more information about the study, and review the consent. You will also be asked to provide your general availability so that we can schedule an interview by phone at a time that is most convenient for you. I will then follow up with you in a subsequent email, text, or phone call. If you are not able to access the form or prefer to express your interest another way, you may also choose to call (734) 215-5752.

Again, click here, if you would like to participate!

Thank you,

Kelly Slay, PhD Candidate
UM School of Education
University of Michigan - Ann Arbor

Appendix B:

Staff Participant Recruitment Email

To: [prospective staff participant]

From: Kelly Slay

Subject: Friendly request for interview

Dear [participant name],

My name is Kelly Slay and I am a PhD student in the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the School of Education. I also completed my undergraduate work at Michigan. I believe that you may have received an email from [OEM contacts] recently regarding my interest in meeting with you in the near future. As part of my dissertation, I am conducting a study on the recruitment experiences and college choice decisions of Black students admitted to the University of Michigan. I am particularly interested in understanding these dynamics given Michigan's affirmative action ban.

Surprisingly little empirical research exists on the implications of these bans for students' enrollment choice yet there are good reasons to expect affirmative action bans shift enrollment management behaviors, such as undergraduate student recruitment and yield practices, as well as student behaviors, such as their choice about where to enroll. My case study of the University of Michigan explores recruitment and yield practices, Black admitted students' perceptions of the University through their recruitment experiences, and other factors that influence their college choice. Given your role as a [insert specific role] for [insert geographic area or function], I believe your insights would be tremendously helpful for my dissertation work. Are you available for a 45 minute interview during the week of [date]? I'm happy to meet at your office, reserve a space at the School of Education, or to speak by phone; whatever is most convenient for you. And if that week is not does not work for you, please feel free to suggest a few alternative dates that better suit your schedule.

Thank you for considering this request and my very best regards as you continue working to shape U-M's next freshman class!

All the best,
Kelly

Student Interview Protocol

STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL for
Choosing Colleges in Post-Affirmative Action Contexts
Approximate Interview Time: 60-75 minutes
Incentive Amount: TBD

INTRODUCTION
1. Thank participant for their time.
2. Describe the goals of study.
3. Go over IRB document. Confirm consent to audio-record the interview; mention benefits for accuracy in transcription and in my attention during the interview.

TRANSITION

There are a few topics that I would like to discuss with you today. I would like to get a sense for your high school background, your experience learning about various colleges and universities, and finally your decision on where you've decided to begin college in the fall.

Before we get started, I would like to encourage you to speak freely as there are no right or wrong answers and all the information that we'll discuss today is confidential. If there are any questions you prefer not to answer, please feel free to pass. And, if you need to end the interview early, or would like to take a break to collect your thoughts for a moment, just let me know. It will not in any way compromise the study. I may stop you at times to confirm my understanding of your experiences, and you may notice me jotting down notes from time to time; I'll only be doing this to help me follow up on different points throughout our discussion. Finally, I want to be respectful of your time, so I will continue to move through our topics of interest, but please let me know if there is anything I'm missing or if I move on and you want to go back and add to a previous topic. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background

1. Why don't you start by telling me where you are from? What high school did you attend? {Public or Private}
2. How would you describe your high school?
   a. Size

        b. Demographic

        c. College-going culture?

3. At what point during high school did you begin seriously thinking about college?

College Search

4. Students are often encouraged to make a list of colleges they are interested in applying to. How did you decide on what colleges you were interested in?
        a. What three colleges were at the top of your list?
        b. What specific things did you learn about these colleges before you started submitting your applications? Did you visit any of these schools before you submitted your application?

5. What colleges were you admitted to? For each one, list three words to describe that particular institution. Or, what three words that come to mind when you think of that particular college.

U-M Recruitment and Search Experiences

6. Now, I'd like for you to talk about your experience applying to the University of Michigan. Why did you apply?
        a. Do you have any family or friends of family affiliated with U-M?
        b. Did you ever participate in some kind summer program?
        c. Did you utilize social media?

7. Did you have the opportunity to visit the University before you submitted your application? What about attend a college fair? What were those experiences like?

8. When did you hear back from U of M? What was it like to hear that you had been admitted?

U-M Yield Activities and Experiences

Transition: Now I'd like to talk through the period of time after you had been admitted to Michigan and what your experience was like making a decision between this college and the others that you had been admitted to.

9. There are a few things that colleges do to encourage students to enroll. I'm going to list a few of these things and I'd like you to tell me which ones you experienced:
        a. Campus visit {describe what kind of visit and when}
        b. An event at a local hotel or business hosted by alumni
        c. A phone call from a staff member or alumni of the University

10. {I applicable, what about alumni event or phone calls stood out to you?
        a. What positive things about your experiences come to mind?
        b. What negative things?

11. {If visited campus}What was your experience like visiting the campus? What did you notice about the campus that you liked as you walked around?
        a. Probe for specific examples

12. Similarly, were there things that you noticed that you didn't like so much?
    a. Probe for specific examples
13. Compared to some of the other schools [if applicable] that you were admitted to, did you feel that the University of Michigan really wanted you to choose their institution? In other words, did you feel like you were recruited?
14. Will you be starting college in the fall (or this summer)? Where will you enroll?
15. What were the top three factors that influenced your decision to enroll at [insert university]
16. {For UM non-enrollees} What top three factors influenced your decision to not choose the University of Michigan?
17. Financial aid can be important for students. How did the type of financial aid that you received factor into your decision?
18. What role did your family, friends, teachers or mentors play in deciding where you would enroll?
    a. Are there people in your family that have gone to college?
19. Did you utilize social media? In what ways?
20. What types of things did you hear about the University of Michigan? Did your recruitment experiences confirm or disconfirm?

Social Identities

Transition: A part of this project focuses on social identities and how they relate to individuals' perceptions of the University of Michigan and experiences deciding where to enroll in college. Social identities include categories that people can use to define themselves and others. Examples might include race, ethnicity, gender, religion, social class, political affiliation and so many others. The list of endless. People have numerous social identities that are important to them in different ways. Before we discuss this in more detail, I am going to read a list of different identities and I'd like you to tell me how important each one is to you. You can give different identities the same rating, for example if race/ethnicity and social class have both been somewhat important to you, that is fine. [List identities]

Next, I want you to rate how important each one has been as you've learned about the University of Michigan or interacted with staff, alumni, faculty or any other persona affiliated with the University. This could include anything from campus visits to a brochure you received in the mail. The basic idea is to understand the importance of your social identities in the context of your interactions and experiences with the University of Michigan.

21. I would like to begin with talking about the importance of race/ethnicity. I noticed that you rated your racial/ethnic identity as [refer to rating] important in your experiences with the University of Michigan. Can you say more about how this identity is relevant to you? {If the student lists other identities as very important, probe about this before moving on to final set of questions}.

Perceptions of Threat

22. First, how would you define diversity? I'm interested in racial diversity.
23. Do you believe the University of Michigan is a place where diversity is valued? Please explain. *{I realize you may not know these things definitively, but I'm more interested in your perceptions and impressions based on your experience thus far}*
24. Do you think you this is a place where Black students are valued? Mixed race, bi-racial students, or other students of color?
    a. What gave you that impression? Were there specific things you heard? Experienced? Probe for specific examples.
25. {Not sure if I'll ask this} Reflecting on your experiences learning about the University of Michigan, do you believe that the University of Michigan is an institution that is committed to supporting Black students and other students of color once they enroll?
    a. What gave you that impression? Were there specific things you heard? Experienced? Probe for specific examples.
26. I would like you to think about the prospect of entering the University of Michigan as a freshman this fall—even if you have already decided not to enroll here. How do you, as a Black student, biracial, or person of mixed race, imagine fitting in at the University of Michigan? Would you belong?
    a. Do you think there are parts of you that you would have to change to fit in?
    b. Or, do you feel like you would have to change parts of your racial identity depending on the race/ethnicity of other people you are with?
27. Have your thoughts about fitting in here affected your thinking about your decision to enroll at the University of Michigan? In what ways?
28. How does this compare to [insert institution where enrolling if not U of M]? What are your thoughts about how to be successful as a Black student in this environment?

Conclusion

29. During our interview, we have covered a number of different topics related to your university experiences. I want to make sure we have not missed anything. Is there anything else that we have not discussed that you feel is important to share?

Thank You

Thank you for your time and participation. I appreciate all of the information you have shared—it has been extremely informative and helpful. If at any point after this interview you would like to continue reflecting on your experiences or if you have additional comments that you would like to add, please feel free to email, call, or text me. You should be receiving your Amazon e gift card within the next 3-5 hours.

Social Identities Check List

	0 not at all important	1 a little important	2 somewhat important	3 very important
Race/Ethnicity				
Gender				
Social Class				
Race/Ethnicity AND Gender *(for instance, being an African American woman)*				

SOCIAL IDENTITIES THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU

	0 not at all important	1 a little important	2 somewhat important	3 very important
Race/Ethnicity				
Gender				
Social Class				
Race/Ethnicity AND Gender *(for instance, being an African American woman)*				

How important are the following social identities to you?

How important has the following social identities been to you in your <u>U-M</u> <u>recruitment experiences?</u>

Are there other social identities (outside of those listed above) that have been <u>very important</u> in your <u>university experiences</u>? If so, please list them.

UNIVERSITY REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL for *Choosing Colleges in Post-Affirmative Action Contexts*

INTRODUCTION
4. Thank participant for their time.
5. Describe the goals of study.
6. Go over IRB document. Confirm consent to audiorecord the interview; mention benefits for accuracy in transcription and in my attention during the interview.

TRANSITION
There will be three main topics I would like to discuss: your role in [insert office], your recruitment processes, and how you and your colleagues think about diversity. If there are any questions you prefer not to answer, please feel free to pass. And, if you need to end the interview early, that is completely fine, too; it will not in any way compromise my research study. Do you have any questions? Great, well I'll go ahead and get started.

1. Can you start by telling me how long you've worked in [insert office] and what is it that you do here?
    a. What is your level of interaction with prospective students?
    b. Does your work also cover prospective students who may be interested in the College of Engineering, Ross, the Music School, etc?

2. When does recruitment officially begin for your office? And when does it end?
3. What is your office's philosophy or orientation about recruiting?
    a. Is there a training of some sort that you and your colleagues have to attend?
4. What sources of information do you and your office utilize to stay abreast of campus life to answer questions for prospective students and their families?

As I mentioned in the overview of the study, I am really interested in understanding what undergraduate recruitment looks like at the University of Michigan. In the next few questions I would first like to discuss recruiting students to encourage them to

apply to the University and then we'll transition to a few questions about yielding students.

5. What are the strategies your office uses to recruit students?
6. *For the past few years, and certainly since going to the Common Application, the number of applications to the University has increased dramatically. How has this changed the way you recruit students?*
    a. *Probe: Has it made your job easier? More challenging? Please explain.*

Let's transition to a discussion about yielding students admitted applicants. In what ways are the processes of recruitment and yield recruitment different?

7. What specific strategies does your office employ to yield students?
    a. Of these, which seem to be most effective?
8. Reflecting on recruiting experiences—both general recruitment and yield recruitment—what are appear to be some of the positive attributes about the University that students seem excited about? What about negative?
    a. Are there patterns across groups?

For the remaining of the interview I would like to hear your insights on recruitment and yield as it relates to diversity and attracting students to the University from specific communities.

9. *How did Proposal 2 change the way the University recruits students? What about yield?*
    a. *How has the University tried to address this challenge?*
10. The Fall 2015 enrollment data shows that the University had the most racially diverse freshman class since largest percentage of Students of Color class since 2005. What do you attribute to this improvement in enrollment numbers over years past?
11. *Public data from the registrar's office suggests the general yield rate for entering freshmen class has hovered around 40% for the past few years and yield rate for Black students has ranged from XX to XX.*
    a. What do you attribute to the difference?
12. How would you describe the University's commitment to diversity?
13. How would you describe the climate for Students of Color here at the University?
    a. Probe: What are your sources of information? Do you hear it from students? Do you see this climate through other facets?
    b. How do you think the climate affects recruitment efforts?
    c. In your experience, is this something that comes up in your interactions with Black students and their families? Their concerns about climate at the University?
14. In 2013, the #BBUM Twitter campaign brought international attention to the University of Michigan, but not necessarily in a good way. How do you think that incident affected the ability to yield Black students?

15. There are a few studies on universities in California which suggest Students of Color seem to value organizational diversity more than other groups of students. Reflecting on your recruiting experiences, have you found this to be generally true among applicants at the University of Michigan?
16. *How do you think what is happening here at Michigan is similar to other institutions that struggle to enroll Students of Color?*
17. *I know that the University has recently launched a campus-wide diversity initiative and the Wolverine Pathways preparatory program.*
    a. *Do you have a sense for how that might change recruitment?*
    b. *What are your expectations for yielding Students of Color? Black students?*
18. As we near the end of this interview, is there anything that you feel that the University could be doing to encourage more Black admits to enroll here?
19. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your time - I really appreciate it. Your insight into this topic will allow me to gain a full perspective on undergraduate recruitment at the University of Michigan. I am planning to spend the next few weeks interviewing staff. *Can you provide me with a few suggestions of colleagues that you would suggest I interview? Thank you!*

Thank participant once more for their time and encourage them to follow up if they have additional comments or any questions.

Appendix E:

University Staff Interview Protocol

UNIVERSITY REPRESENTATIVE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL for
Choosing Colleges in Post-Affirmative Action Contexts

INTRODUCTION
  7. Thank participant for their time.
  8. Describe the goals of study.
  9. Go over IRB document. Confirm consent to audiorecord the interview; mention benefits for accuracy in transcription and in my attention during the interview.

TRANSITION
There will be three main topics I would like to discuss: your role in [insert office], your recruitment processes, and how you and your colleagues think about diversity. If there are any questions you prefer not to answer, please feel free to pass. And, if you need to end the interview early, that is completely fine, too; it will not in any way compromise my research study. Do you have any questions? Great, well I'll go ahead and get started.

  20. Can you start by telling me how long you've worked in [insert office] and what is it that you do here?
      a.   What is your level of interaction with prospective students?

  21. When does recruitment officially begin for your office? And when does it end?
  22. Is there a training of some sort that you and your colleagues have to attend?
  23. What sources of information do you and your office utilize to stay abreast of University life—both academically and socially—to answer questions for prospective students and their families?

As I mentioned in the overview of the study, I am really interested in understanding what undergraduate recruitment looks like at the University of Michigan. In the next few questions I would first like to discuss recruiting students to encourage them to apply to the University and then we'll transition to a few questions about yielding students.

  24. What are the strategies your office uses to recruit students?

Let's transition to a discussion about yielding students admitted applicants. In what ways are the processes of recruitment and yield recruitment different?

25. What specific strategies does your office employ to yield students?
    a. Of these, which seems to be most effective?
26. Reflecting on recruiting experiences—both general recruitment and yield recruitment—what are appear to be some of the positive attributes about the University that students seem excited about? What about negative?
    a. Are there patterns across groups?

For the remaining of the interview I would like to hear your insights on recruitment and yield as it relates to diversity and attracting students to the University from specific communities.

27. The Fall 2015 enrollment data shows that the University had the most racially diverse freshman class since largest percentage of Students of Color class since 2005. What do you attribute to this improvement in enrollment numbers over years past?
    a. What strategies do you believe work well for recruiting Black students?
28. On the other hand, what are some of the challenges with recruiting Students of Color? Black students?
    a. How, if at all, has the University tried to work around these challenges?
29. Can you share a story about one of the challenges that you've encountered in your efforts to yield Students of Color? Black students?
    a. *Probe:* How did your office respond to these challenges?
30. In yielding Black students, are there particular aspects of the University that seem to be most appealing to this group?
31. Likewise, are there particular aspects of the University that seem to be least appealing to this group?
32. How would you describe the University's commitment to diversity?
33. How would you describe the climate for Students of Color, Black students here at the University?
    a. Probe: What are your sources of information? Do you hear it from students? Do you see this climate through other facets?
    b. How do you think the climate affects recruitment efforts?
    c. In your experience, is this something that comes up in your interactions with Black students and their families? Their concerns about climate at the University?
34. In 2013, the #BBUM Twitter campaign brought international attention to the University of Michigan, but not necessarily in a good way. How do you think that incident affected the ability to yield Black students?
35. There are a few studies that exist from universities in California which suggest Students of Color seem to value organizational diversity more than other groups of students. Reflecting on your recruiting experiences, have you

found this to be generally true among applicants at the University of Michigan?

36. As we near the end of this interview, is there anything that you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your time - I really appreciate it. Your insight into this topic will allow me to gain a full perspective on undergraduate recruitment at the University of Michigan. I am planning to spend the next few weeks interviewing staff. Can you provide me with a few suggestions of colleagues that you would suggest I interview? Thank you!

Thank participant once more for their time and encourage them to follow up if they have additional comments or any questions.

Appendix F:

Observation/Field Note Template

(TITLE)

(Date)

Key Observation Rubric

Discourses of race and diversity

The perceived racial identity of the University representative

The approximate number of prospective students that appear to be African

American/Black

compared to the size of the group

The physical setting and non-verbal communication in the setting (from African

American/Black students and their families)

For tours/visits, the places that are visited on campus

Description of activity
Describe what I observed (who, what, when, where, and how). Reference any direct
quotes, additional file names of recordings, photos, or information.

Reflections
General thoughts and ideas about the observation, including things I should do
differently.

Emerging questions/analyses
Potential lines of inquiry and theoretical application.

Future action
A to-do list with, including a timeframe for each item.

Appendix G:

Table 8.1 *Diversity Related Developments at the University of Michigan, 1970s-2015*

Year	Event
1970	Black Action Movement (BAM) I – Students push for increase of Black students on campus
1978	BAM II – renewed effort to increase the enrollment of Black students on campus
1987	BAM III/United Coalition Against Racism (UCAR) protests that result in a six-point agreement with the administration that included official recognition of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., national holiday at U-M, increasing numbers of faculty, staff and students of color, and establishing an Office of Minority Affairs and the position of Vice Provost for Minority Affairs
1988	President James Duderstadt issues *Michigan Mandate: A Strategic Linking of Academic Excellence and Social Diversity,* a report that became U-M's diversity plan to increase campus diversity and improve the campus climate.
1990-1994	The Michigan Student Study (MSS) began as an initiative in 1990 to examine the impact on students of the University of Michigan's commitment to foster campus diversity efforts and educational excellence over their four years on campus
1995	University releases a document entitled: The Michigan Mandate Progress – A Seven Year Progress Report 1987-1994
1997	Two lawsuits filed in District Federal Court over U-M's admissions policies as related to recruiting and admitting students of color: *Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger*
2003	Supreme Court of the United States upholds the University of Michigan's right to include race as one of many factors in admitting students to U-M (*Grutter*) and at the time, reversed in part the U-M admissions policies involving U-M's undergraduate school
2003	U-M alters its undergraduate admissions policies in response to the Supreme Court's decisions, and does a comprehensive review of diversity activities on campus. Public efforts commence to amend the Michigan Constitution to eliminate the consideration of race and gender from the admissions, recruitment, and selection process.
2006	Proposition 2, which among other things, eliminates the use of race or gender in admissions considerations at Michigan's public campuses was passed by Michigan voters. This was an amendment to the Michigan Constitution.
2007	In response to a December 2006 charge by President Mary Sue Coleman, a 55 member Diversity Blueprints Task Force, issues a report that provided 168 recommendations for continuing campus diversity activities within the framework of the law. One recommendation implemented was the establishment of the Center for Educational Outreach.
2013	Members of the Black Student Union commence their campaign, #BBUM (Being Black at Michigan), to draw attention to declining Black enrollment and campus climate issues for students of color. Students submit a list of demands to President Mary Sue Coleman and Board of Regents
2014	In response to concerns brought to light by #BBUM, Vice Provost Martha Pollack convenes a diversity taskforce comprised of students, faculty, staff. Etc.
2014	U.S. Supreme Court upholds voter-approved ban. Board of Regents appoints Dr. Rob Sellers, Vice Provost for Equity, Inclusion and Academic Affairs. Board of Regents appoints Kedra Ishop, former Vice Provost for Enrollment Management and Director of Admissions at the University of Texas Austin, to the newly created Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management
2015	Diversity Task Force issues Report. Campus-wide Diversity Initiatives Launched.

Note: This modified version of was derived from Matlock, Wade-Golden and Gurin (2010)

References

American Civil Liberties Union (2014). *Schuette v. Coalition to defend affirmative action.* Retrieved from https://www.aclu.org/cases/racial-equality/schuette-v-coalition-defend-affirmative-action

Ahmed, S. (2012). *On being included.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2007). The language of diversity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(2), 235-256.

Alger, J. R. 1998. Unfinished homework for universities: Making the case for affirmative action. *Journal of Urban and Contemporary Law*, 54, 73-92.

Allen, W.R. (1988). Black students in U.S. higher education: Toward improved access, adjustment, and achievement. *The Urban Review,* 20(3), 165-188.

Allen, W.R., Bonous-Hammarth, M.E. & Teranishi, R. (2002). *Stony the road we trod: The Black struggle for higher education in California.* Los Angeles, CA: Choices.

Allen, W.R., & Solórzano, D. G. (2001). Affirmative action, educational equity, and campus racial climate: A case study of the University of Michigan Law School. *Berkeley La Raza Law Journal*, *12*(2), 237–363.

Allen-Taylor, J.D. (2013, November 6). Why black students are avoiding UC Berkeley. *East Bay Express.* Retrieved from http://www.eastbayexpress.com/oakland/why-black-students-are-avoiding-uc-berkeley/Content?oid=3756649

Alon, S., & Tienda, M. (2007). Diversity, opportunity, and the shifting meritocracy in higher education. American Sociological Review, 72(4), 487–511.

Alvarado, S.E. & Turley, R. L. (2012). College bound friends and college application

choices: Heterogeneous effects for Latino and White students. *Social Science Research*, *41*(6), 1451-1468.

Anderson, J. D. (2007). Past discrimination and diversity: A historical context for understanding race and affirmative action. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 204-215.

Agronow, S. and Horn, C. (2010). The effectiveness of California standards tests as alternatives to the SAT in Predicting Freshman Grades." In Grodsky and Kurlaender (Eds), *Equal opportunity in higher education: The past and future of California's proposition 209* (pp. 155-172). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Allen, W.R. Black students in U.S. higher education: Toward improved access, adjustment, and achievement. *The Urban Review*, 20(3), 165-188.

Avery, C., & Hoxby, C. M. (2004). Do and should financial aid packages affect students' college choices? In C. M. Hoxby (Ed.), *College choices: The economics of where to go, when to go, and how to pay for it* (pp. 239–302). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Avery, D. R., & McKay, P. F. (2006). Target practice: An organizational impression management approach to attracting minority and female job applicants. *Personnel Psychology*, *59*, 157–187.

Avery, D.R., Volpone, S.D., Stewart, R.W., Luksyte, A., Hernandez, M., McKary, P.F., & Hebl, M. (2013). Examining the draw of diversity: How diversity climate perceptions affect job-pursuit intentions. *Human Resource Management*, *52*(2), 175-194.

Bateman, M. & Hossler, D. (1996). Exploring the development of postsecondary

    education plans among African American and white students. *College and*

    University, *72*(1), 2-9.

Backes, B. (2012). Do affirmative action bans lower minority college enrollment and

    attainment? Evidence from statewide bans. *Journal of Human Resources*, *47*(2),

    435–455.

Banks, K.H. & Kohn-Wood, L.P. (2007). The influence of racial identity profiles on

    the relationship between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms. *Journal*

    of Black Psychology, *33*, 331-354.

Baron, R.A., Byrne, D.E., & Suls, J. (1989). Exploring social psychology (3rd Ed).

    Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Baum, S., & McPherson, M. (2008). Introduction. In S. Baum, M. McPherson, & P.

    Steele (Eds.), *The effectiveness of student aid policies: What the research tells us*

    (pp. 1–7). Washington, DC: College Board.

Becker, G.S. (1962). Investment in human capital: A theoretical analysis. *Journal of*

    Political Economy 70(5): 9–49.

Bell, D. (2003). Diversity's distractions. *Colum. L. Rev.*, *103*, 1622.

Bell, J.M. & Hartmann, D. (2007). Diversity in everyday discourse: The cultural

    ambiguities and consequences of "happy talk." *American Sociological Review*,

    72(6), 895-914.

Bennett, P.R., Lutz, A. & Jayaram, L. (2012). Beyond the schoolyard: The contributions

    of parenting logics, financial resources, and social institutions to the social class

    gap in structured activity participation. *Sociology of Education*, *85*(2), 131-157.

Beresford, B., & Sloper, P. (2008). *Understanding the dynamics of decision-making and choice: A scoping study of key psychological theories to inform the design and analysis of the Panel Study*. University of York, York: Social Policy Research Unit.

Bergerson, A. A. (2009). Special Issue: College Choice and Access to College: Moving Policy, Research, and Practice to the 21st Century. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, *35*(4), 1-141.

Berrey, E.C. (2011). Why diversity became orthodox in higher education, and how it changed the meaning of race on campus. *Critical Sociology*, *37*(5), 573-596.

Berrey, E.C. (2015). The enigma of diversity: *The language of race and the limits of racial justice.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Blume, G. & Long, M. (2014). Changes in levels of affirmative action in college admissions in response to statewide bans and judicial rulings. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *36*(2), 228-252.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2009). *Racism without racists: Color-Blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Bound, J., Hershbein, B., & Long, B. T. (2009). Playing the admissions game: Student reactions to increasing college competition. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *23*(4), 119–146.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In J. Karabel & A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Power and ideology in education* (pp. 487-511). New York: Oxford University Press.

Bowen, W.G. & Bok, D.C. (1998). *The shape of the river: Long-Term consequences of*

considering race in college and university admissions. Princeton, N.J: Princeton

University Press.

Bowen, W. G., Chingos, M. M., and McPherson, M. S. (2009). *Crossing the finish line:*

Completing college at America's public universities. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton

University Press.

Braddy, P.W., Meade, A.W., & Kroustalis, C.M. (2006). Organizational recruitment

website effects on viewers' perceptions of organizational culture. *Journal of*

Business and Psychology, *20(*4), 525-543.

Branscombe, N. R. & Ellemers, N. (1998). Coping with group-based discrimination:

Individualistic versus group-level strategies. In J. K. Swim & C. Stangor (Eds.),

Prejudice: The target's perspective (pp. 243-266). New York: Academic Press.

Branscombe, N. R., Ellemers, N., Spears, R., & Doosje, B. (1999). The context and

content of social identity threats. In N. Ellemers, R. Spears, & B. Doosje (Eds.),

Social identity: Context, commitment, and content (pp.35-58). Oxford,

UK: Blackwell.

Branscombe, N. R., Schmitt, M. T., & Harvey, R. D. (1999). Perceiving pervasive

discrimination among African Americans: Implications for group identification

and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *77*(1), 135.

Brown, M.T., Rashid, M. & Stern, D. (2010). The quest for excellence and diversity in

UC freshman admissions. In E. Grodsky & M. Kurlaendar (Eds.), *Equal*

opportunity in higher education: The past and future of California's Proposition

209 (103-122). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Brown, S. K., & Hirschman, C. (2006). The end of affirmative action in Washington state

and its impact on the transition from high school to college. *Sociology of Education, 79,* 106–130.

Butler, D. (2010). Ethnic-racial composition and college preference: Revisiting the perpetuation of segregation hypothesis. *American Academy of Political and Social Science, 627,* 36-58.

Byng, R. (2013, November 20). ##BBUM hashtag sparks dialogue about diversity at the University of Michigan. *Huffington Post.* Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/20/bbum-university-of-michigan-black-students_n_4310790.html

Card, D. & Krueger, A.B. (2005). Would the elimination of affirmative action affect highly qualified minority applicants? Evidence from California and Texas. Industrial & Labor Relations Review, 58(3), 416-434.

Carnevale, A. P., & Strohl, J. (2013). *Separate and unequal: How higher education reinforces the intergenerational reproduction of white racial privilege.* Georgetown University, Georgetown Public Policy Institute, Center on Education and the Work Force.

Catsiapis, G. (1987). A model of educational investment decisions. *Review of Economics and Statistics, 69,* 33–41.

Chang, J. (June 27, 2016). Diversity is not equity. Fisher decision is narrow victory. *Slate*. Retrieved from http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/ jurisprudence/2016/06/the_supreme_court_s_fisher_decision_is_a_hollow_victor y_for_affirmative.html

Chang, M.J. (2002). Preservation or transformation: Where's the real educational

discourse on diversity? *The Review of Higher Education*, *25*(2) 125-140.

Chang, M.J., Astin, A.W., & Kim, D. (2004). Cross-racial interaction among undergraduates: Some causes and consequences. *Research in Higher Education*, *45*(5), 527-551.

Chapman, R.G. (1984). Toward a theory of college choice: A model of college search and choice behavior. Alberta, Canada. University of Alberta.

Charles, C. Z., Massey, D. S., Fischer, M., & Mooney, M. (2009). *Taming the river: negotiating the academic, financial and social currents in selective colleges and universities.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Chavous, T.M. (2002). African American college students in predominantly White institutions: Considerations of race and gender. *African American Research Perspectives*, 8(1), 142-150.

Chavous, T.M., Harris, A., Rivas, D., Helaire, L., & Green, L. (2004). Racial stereotypes and gender in context: An examination of African American college student adjustment. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 51, 1-16.

Chavous, T. M. (2000). The relationships among racial identity, perceived ethnic fit, and organizational involvement for African American students at a predominantly White university. *Journal of Black Psychology, 26*(1), 79-100.

Chavous, T.M., Rivas, D., Green, L., & Helaire, L. (2002). The roles of student social and economic background, perceptions of ethnic fit, and racial identification in the academic adjustment of African American college students. *Journal of Black Psychology, 28*(3), 234-260.

Chavous, T.M., Rivas-Drake, D., Smalls, C., Griffin, T.M., & Cogburn, C.D. (2008).

Gender matters too: School-based racial discrimination experiences and racial identity as predictors of academic adjustment among African American adolescents. *Developmental Psychology*, *44*(3), 637-654.

Chavous, T. M., Bernat, D. H., Schmeelk-Cone, K., Caldwell, C. H., Kohn-Wood, L., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2003). Racial identity and academic attainment among African American adolescents. *Child Development*, *74*(4), 1076-1090.

Chavous, T.M. (2005). An intergroup contact-theory framework for evaluating the psychological impact of racial climate on predominantly White college campuses. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *36*(3/4), 239-257.

Cho, S., Hudley, C., Lee, S., Barry, L., Kelly, M., (2008). Roles of gender, race, and SES in the college choice process among first-generation and non-first-generation students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *1*(2), 95-107.

Cheryan, S., Plaut, V. C., Davies, P. G., & Steele, C. M. (2009). Ambient belonging: How stereotypical cues impact gender participation in computer science. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *97*, 1045–1060.

Cohn, D. and Caumont, A. (2016, March 31). 10 demographic trends that are shaping the U.S. and the world. *Pew Fact Tank.* Retrieved from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/31/10-demographic-trends-that-are-shaping-the-u-s-and-the-world/

Colburn, D.R., Young, C.E., Yellen, V.M. (2008). Admissions and public higher education in California, Texas & Florida: The post-affirmative action era. *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, *4*(1), 1-21.

Coleman, M.S., (201). Policy comment. In E. Grodsky & M. Kurlaendar (Eds.), *Equal*

opportunity in higher education: The past and future of California's Proposition 209 (103-122). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Contreras, F. (2005). The reconstruction of merit post-Proposition 209. *Educational Policy*, *19*(2), 371-395.

Contreras, F., Chapman, T., Comeaux, E., & Rodriguez, G. M. (2016, April). African American college choice processes in a post-209 era. Paper presented at annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, DC.

Comeaux, E., Martinez, E. & Chapman, T. (2016, February). Exploring high-achieving African American students' college choice processes. Paper presented at Ethnographic and Qualitative Research Conference, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Crocker, J., Major, B., Steele, C. (1998). Social stigma. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, et al. (Eds.). *The handbook of social psychology*, Vol. 2 (4th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Cross, W.E. (1991). *Shades of black: Diversity in African American identity*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Davis, C., Aronson, J. & Salinas, M. (2006). Shades of threat: Racial identity as a moderator of stereotype threat. *The Journal of Black Psychology, 32*(4)*, 399-417.

Desmond, M. & Turley, R.L. (2009). The role of familism in explaining the Hispanic-White college application gap. *Social Problems*, 56, 311-334.

DesJardins, S. (2002). An analytic strategy to assist institutional recruitment and marketing efforts. *Research in Higher Education*, *43*(5), 531-553.

DesJardins, S. Ahlburg, D.A. & McCall, B.P. (2006). An Integrated model of

application, admission, enrollment, and financial aid. *Journal of Higher Education*, *77*(3): 381-429.

Davies, P.G., Spencer, S.J., Quinn, D. & Gerhardstein, R. (2002). Consuming images: How television commercials that elicit stereotype threat can restrain women academically and professionally. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28(12), 1615-1628.

Davies, P. G., Spencer, S. J., & Steele, C. M. (2005). Clearing the air: Identity safety moderates the effects of stereotype threat on women's leadership aspirations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *88*, 276–287.

Davis, C., Aronson, J. & Salinas, M. (2006). Shades of threat: Racial identity as a moderator of stereotype threat. *The Journal of Black Psychology, 32*(4)*, 399-417.

Deil-Amen, R., Tevis, T.L. (2010). Circumscribed agency: The relevance of standardized college entrance exams for low SES high school students. *Review of Higher Education*, *33*(2), 141-175.

Dickson, L.M. (2006). Does ending affirmative action in college admissions lower the percent of minority students applying to college? *Economics of Education Review, 25,* 109-119.

D'Onofrio, K (December 1, 2015). More colleges commit to diversity initiatives. Retrieved from http://www.diversityinc.com/news/more-colleges-commit-to-diversity-initiatives/

Duderstadt, J. J. (2007). The view from the helm. *Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press*.

Dutton, J. E., Dukerich, J. M., & Harquail, C. V. (1994). Organizational images and

member identification. *Administrative science quarterly*, 239-263.

Elam, C., & Brown, G. (2005). The Inclusive University: Helping Minority Students Choose a College and Identify Institutions that Value Diversity. *Journal of College Admission*, *187*, 14-17.

Ellemers, N., Spears, R., & Doosje, B. (1999). *Social identity* (p. 144). Oxford.

Ellwood, D. T., & Kane, T. J. (2000). Who is getting a college education? Family background and the growing gaps in enrollment. In S. Danzinger &. W. J. Waldfogel (Eds.), *Securing the future: Investing in children from birth to college* (pp. 283–324). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Elman C & O'Rand, AM (2004). The race is to the swift: Socioeconomic origins, adult education, and wage attainment. *American Journal of Sociology*, *110*, 123-160.

Elsbach, K. D., Sutton, R. I., & Principe, K. E. (1998). Averting expected challenges through anticipatory impression management: A study of hospital billing. *Organization Science*, *9*(1), 68-86.

Emerson, R.M., Fretz, R.I., & Shaw, L.L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Engberg, M.E., & Wolniak, G.C. (2010). Examining the effects of high school contexts on postsecondary enrollment. *Research in Higher Education, 51*(3), 132-153.

Epple, D., Romano, R., & Sieg, H. (2008). Diversity and affirmative action in higher education. *Journal of Public Economic Theory*, *10*(4), 475-501.

Espinosa, L.L., Gaertner, M. & Orfield, G. (2015). *Race, class, and college access: Achieving diversity in a shifting legal landscape.* Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Ethier K.A. & Deaux K. (1994). Negotiating social identity when contexts change: Maintaining identification in responding to threat. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 67,* 243–251.

Ethier, K.A. & Deaux, K. (1990). Hispanics in ivy: Assessing identity and perceived threat. *Sex Roles*, *22*(7-8), 427-440.

Farrell, W. C., & Jones, C. K. (1988). Recent racial incidents in higher education: A preliminary perspective. *The Urban Review*, *20*(3), 211-226.

Feagin, J. R., Vera, H., & Imani, N. (1996). *The agony of education: Black students at White colleges and universities*. Psychology Press.

Fessenden, F., & Keller, J. (2015, December 9). How minorities have fared in states with affirmative action bans. *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/06/24/us/affirmative-action-bans.html

Fischer, M. J. (2010). A longitudinal examination of the role of stereotype threat and racial climate on college outcomes for minorities at elite institutions. *Social Psychology of Education*, *13*(1), 19-40.

Freeman, K. (2005). *African Americans and college choice: The influence of family and school.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Freeman, K. (1997). Increasing African Americans' participation in higher education: African American high-school students' perspectives. *The Journal of Higher Education, 68*(5): 523–550.

Freeman, K. (1999). The race factor in African Americans' college choice. *Urban Education, 34*(1), 4–25.

Frum, D. (2016, September 8). Whose interests do college diversity officers serve? *The*

Atlantic. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/09/ americas-college-diversity-officers/499022/

Gándara, P. (2012). California: A case study in the loss of affirmative action. *A policy report.* Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project.

Garces, L.M. (2013). Understanding the impact of affirmative action bans in different graduate fields of study. *American Educational Research Journal*, 5*0*(2), 251-284.

Garces, L. M. (2012). Racial Diversity, Legitimacy, and the Citizenry: The Impact of Affirmative Action Bans on Graduate School Enrollment. *Review of Higher Education*, *36*, 93–132.

Garces, L.M. (2014). Aligning diversity, quality, and equity: The implications of legal and public policy developments for promoting racial diversity in graduate studies. *American Journal of Education*, *120*(4), 457-480.

Garces, L.M. & Mickey-Pabello, D. (2014). The effect of affirmative action bans on the representation of students of color in medical schools. *Focus*, *31*(1), 29-31.

Garces, L.M. (2013). Understanding the impact of affirmative action bans in different graduate fields of study. *American Educational Research Journal*, 5*0*(2), 251-284.

Garces, L.M. & Cogburn, C.D. (2015). Beyond declines in student diversity: How campus-level administrators understand a prohibition on race-conscious admissions policies. *American Educational Research Journal*, *52*(5), 828-860.

Gasman, M.B. (2014, March 31). Presidents in denial. Inside Higher Ed. Retrieved from

https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2014/03/31/essay-college-presidents-are-denial-about-state-race-relations

Geiser, S., & Caspary, K. (2005). "No show" study: College destinations of University of California applicants and admits who did not enroll, 1997-2002. *Educational Policy*, *19*(2), 396-417.

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In *The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays* (pp. 3-30). New York: Basic Books.

Geva, S. (2014, October 29). University continues to struggle with minority enrollment. *The Michigan Daily.* Retrieved from https://www.michigandaily.com/news/minority-enrollment.

Gomm, R. Hammersly, M. & Foster, P. (2009). Case study and generalization. London: Sage Publicaitons.

Goyette, K. A. (2008). College for some to college for all: Social background, occupational expectations, and educational expectations over time. *Social Science Research*, *37*(2), 461-484.

Green, D. O. N. (2004). Fighting the battle for racial diversity: A case study of Michigan's institutional responses to Gratz and Grutter. *Educational Policy*,*18*(5), 733-751.

Griffin, K., Del Pilar, W., McIntosh, K., & Griffin, A. (2012). "Oh, of course I'm going to go to college": Understanding how habitus shapes the college choice process of Black immigrant students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *5*(2), 96.

Griffith, A., & Rask, K. (2007). The influence of the US News and World Report

collegiate rankings on the matriculation decision of high-ability students: 1995-
2004. *Economics of Education Review, 26*(2)*,* 244-255.

Grodsky, E., & Kalogrides, D. (2008). The declining significance of race in college
admissions decisions. *American Journal of Education*, *115*(1), 1–33.

Grodsky, E. & Kurlaendar, M. (2010). The demography of higher education in the wake
of affirmative action. *Equal opportunity in higher education: The past and future
of California's proposition 209*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic
inquiries. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, *29*(2), 75-91.

Guba, E.G. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research.
Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2, 163-194.

Gupta, V. K., & Bhawe, N. M. (2007). The influence of proactive personality and
stereotype threat on women's entrepreneurial intentions. *Journal of Leadership &
Organizational Studies*, *13*(4), 73-85.

Gurin, P., Dey, E., Hurtado, S., & Gurin, G. (2002). Diversity and higher education:
Theory and impact on educational outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review*, *72*(3),
330-367.

Gurin, P., Nagda, B. R. A., & Lopez, G. E. (2004). The benefits of diversity in education
for democratic citizenship. *Journal of Social Issues*, *60*(1), 17-34.

Iloh, C., & Toldson, I. A. (2013). Black students in 21st century higher education: A
closer look at for-profit and community colleges (Editor's Commentary). *The
Journal of Negro Education*, *82*(3), 205-212.

Hassan, C., Almasy, S. & Valencia, N. (2016, February 12). Cable News Network.

Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/12/us/texas-am-racial-incident/index.html

Harper, S. R., Patton, L. D., & Wooden, O. S. (2009). Access and equity for African American students in higher education: A critical race historical analysis of policy efforts. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *80*(4), 389-414.

Harris, A., & Tienda, M. (2010). Minority higher education pipeline: Consequences of changes in college admissions policy in Texas. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *627*(1), 60-81.

Hartley, M., & Morphew, C. (2008). What's being sold and to what end? A content analysis of college viewbooks. *Journal of Higher Education*, *79*(6), 671-691.

Hartocollis, A., & Bidgood, J. (2015, November 11). Racial discrimination protests ignite at colleges across the US. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/12/us/racial-discrimination-protests-ignite-at-colleges-across-the-us.html

Hinrichs, P. (2012). The effects of affirmative action bans on college enrollment, educational attainment, and the demographic composition of universities. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, *94*(3), 712–722.

Heller, D. E. (1997). Student price response in higher education: An update to Leslie and Brinkman. *Journal of Higher Education, 68,* 624–659.

Hinrichs, P. (2012). The effects of affirmative action bans on college enrollment, educational attainment, and the demographic composition of universities. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, *94*(3), 712–722.

Hite, R. E., & Yearwood, A. (2001). A content analysis of college and university

275

viewbook. *College and University*, *76*(3), 17.

Holloway, I., & Wheeler, S. (2002). The nature of qualitative research: Development and

    perspectives. In I. Holloway & S. Wheeler (Eds.) *Qualitative Research in Nursing*

    (2nd edition, pp 3-25). USA*:* Blackwell Science Ltd.

Hossler, D. and Gallagher, K. (1987). Studying college choice: A three-phase model and

    the implication for policy makers. *College and University, 2*, 207-221.

Hossler, D., & Stage, F. K. (1992). Family and high school experience influences on the

    postsecondary educational plans of ninth-grade student. *American Educational*

    Research Journal, 29(2), 425–451.

Hossler, D. (1986). *Creating Effective Enrollment Management Systems*. New York, NY:

    College Board Publications.

Hossler, D., Braxton, J., & Coopersmith, G. (1989). Understanding student college

    choice. *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research*, *5*, 231-288.

Hossler, D., Schmit, J., & Vesper, N. (1999). *Going to college: How social,*

    economic, and educational factors influence the decisions students make.

    Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Howell, J. (2010). Assessing the impact of eliminating affirmative action in higher

    education. *Journal of Labor Economics, 28*, 113–166.

Hoxby, C. M., & Avery, C. (2012). *The missing" one-offs": The hidden supply of high-*

    achieving, low income students (No. w18586). National Bureau of Economic

    Research.

Hurtado, S., Inkelas, K. K., Briggs, C., & Rhee, B. S. (1997). Differences in college

access and choice among racial/ethnic groups: Identifying continuing

barriers. *Research in Higher Education*, *38*(1), 43-75.

Hurtado, S., & Ruiz, A. (2012). *The climate for underrepresented groups and diversity on campus*. Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute.

Hurtado, S., Dey, E. L. Gurin, P., and Gurin, G, (2003). College environments, diversity, and student learning. In J. C. Smart (Ed) *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (vol. 18, pp. 145-190). UK: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Jaquette, O., & Curs, B. R. (2015). Creating the out-of-state university: Do public universities increase nonresident freshman enrollment in response to declining state appropriations?. *Research in Higher Education*, *56*(6), 535-565.

Jackson, G. (1982). Public efficiency and private choice in higher education. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *4*(2), 237-247.

Jaschik, S. (2016, July 8). Poll: Public opposes affirmative action. *Inside Higher Ed.* Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/07/08/poll-finds-public-opposition-considering-race-and-ethnicity-college-admissions

Jaschik, S. (2016, January 22) Oberlin president says no to black students' demands. *PBS News Hour.* Retrieved from http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/oberlin-president-says-no-to-black-students-demands/

Jackson, A. (2015, November 7) Yale University in upheaval after allegations of 2 racially charged incidents. *The Business Insider.* Retrieved from http://www.businessinsider.com/yale-university-racism-on-campus-2015-11

Kahlenberg, R.D. (Ed). (2014). *The future of affirmative action: New paths to higher education diversity after Fisher v. University of Texas*. New York, NY: The

Century Foundation Press.

Karabel, J. (2005). *The chosen: The hidden history of admission and exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Karabel, J. (1998). No alternative: The effects of color-blind admissions in California. *Chilling admissions: The affirmative action crisis and the search for alternatives*, 33-50.

Kaufmann, S. W. (2007). The history and impact of state initiatives to eliminate affirmative action. *New Directions for teaching and learning,2007*(111), 3-9.

Kennedy, R. (2013). *For discrimination: Race, affirmative action, and the law*. Pantheon.

Kidder, W.C. (2012). The salience of racial isolation: African Americans' and Latinos' perceptions of climate and enrollment choices with and without Proposition 209. Los Angeles: The Civil Rights Project.

Kidder, W. C. (2013). Misshaping the river: Proposition 209 and lessons for the Fisher case.

Kim, D. (2004). The effect of financial aid on students' college choice: Differences by racial group. *Research in Higher Education*, *45*(1), 43-70.

Kim, J., DesJardins, S.L., & McCall, B.P. (2009). Exploring the effects of student expectations about financial aid on postsecondary choice: A focus on income and racial/ethnic differences. *Research in Higher Education*, *50*(8), 741-774.

Kim, S. S., & Gelfand, M. J. (2003). The influence of ethnic identity on perceptions of organizational recruitment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 63*, 396–416.

Kinzie, J., Palmer, M., Hayek, J., Hossler, D., Jacob, S., Cummings, H., 2004. Fifty years of college choice: social, political, and institutional influences on the decision

making process. In: Conner, S.O. (Ed.), *New Agenda Series*, Lumina Foundation for Education, Indianapolis, IN.

Klasik, D. (2012). The college application gauntlet: A systematic analysis of the steps to four-year college enrollment. *Research in Higher Education*, 53(5), 506-549.

Klassen, M. L. (2000). Lots of Fun, Not Much Work, and No Hassles: Marketing Images of Higher Education. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, *10*(2), 11-26.

Kozlowski, K. (2015, Oct 13). UM enrolls most diverse class in a decade. *The Detroit News. Retrieved from* http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2015/10/12/um-reports-freshman-enrollment-diverse/73806620/

Kuhn, T. S. (1962). The structure of scientific revolutions (1st ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Ladson-Billings, G. (2003). It's your world, I'm just trying to explain it: Understanding our epistemological and methodological challenges. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *9*(1), 5-12.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, *2*, 257-277.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, *97*(1), 47.

Ledesma, M.C. (2015). Public discourse versus public policy: Latinas/os, affirmative action, and the court of public opinion. *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal, 9(1),* 57-72.

Lipson, D.N. (2007). Embracing diversity: The institutionalization of affirmative action as diversity management at UC-Berkley, UT-Austin, and UW-Madison. *Law &*

Social Inquiry, *32*(4), 985-1026.

Litten, L. (1982). Different strokes in the applicant pool: Some refinements in a model of student choice. *Journal of Higher Education*, *4*, 383-402.

Liu, G. (1998). Affirmative action in higher education: The diversity rationale and the compelling interest test. *Harv. CR-CLL Rev.*, *33*, 381.

London, B., Ahlqvist, S., Gonzalez, A., Glanton, K. V., & Thompson, G. A. (2014). The Social and Educational Consequences of Identity-Based Rejection. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, *8*(1), 131-166.

Long, M.C., (2004). College applications and the effect of affirmative action. *Journal of Econometrics*, *121*, 319–342.

Long, M. C., and Tienda, M. (2008). 'Winners and losers: Changes in Texas university admissions Post-Hopwood. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 30*, 255–280.

Long, M.C. & Tienda, M. (2010). Beyond admissions: Lessons from Texas. *The annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *627*, 5-11.

Long, M. C., Saenz, V., & Tienda, M. (2010). Policy Transparency and College Enrollment: Did the Texas Top Ten Percent Law Broaden Access to the Public Flagships?. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *627*(1), 82-105.

Lucas-Meyers, G. (2014). Diversity at U-M: A History. *Michigan Alumnus*.

Lucas, S.R. (2001) Effectively maintained inequality: Education transitions, track mobility, and social background effects. American Journal of Sociology, 106(6), 1642-1690.

Manski, C.F. & Wise, D.A. (1983). *College choice in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Major, B., & O'Brien, L.T. (2005). The social psychology of stigma. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *56*, 393–421.

Marichal, J. (2009). Frame evolution: A new approach to understanding changes in diversity reforms at public universities in the United States. *The Social Science Journal*, *46*(1), 171-191.

Maruyruma, G. & Ryan, C. (2014). *Research methods in social relations, 8th Edition.* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Matsuda, M., Lawrence, C., Delgado, R., & Crenshaw, K. (Eds.). (1993). *Words that wound: Critical race theory, assaultive speech, and the First Amendment.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

McDonough, P. M., Antonio, A. L., Walpole, M., & Perez, L. X. (1998). College rankings: Democratized college knowledge for whom? *Research in Higher Education*, *39*, 513–537.

McDonough, P. (1997). *Choosing colleges: How social class and schools structure opportunity*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

McKay, P. F., & Avery, D. R. (2005). Warning! Diversity recruitment could backfire. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *14*, 330–336.

McKay, P. F., & Avery, D. R. (2006). What has race got to do with it? Unraveling the role of racioethnicity in job seeker's reactions to site visits. *Personnel Psychology*, 59(2), 395-429.

McDonough, P. M., Antonio, A. L., & Trent, J. W. (1997). Black students, Black

colleges: An African American college choice model. *Journal for a Just and Caring Education*, *3*(1), 9-36.

Menicmer, S. (2016, July 19). Here's the Next Sleeper Challenge to Affirmative Action. *Mother Jones.* Retrieved from http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/07/abigail-fisher-going-stay-mad/

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miksch, K. (2008, April). *Academic freedom and ethnic diversity: Lessons learned from Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), New York, NY.

Milem, J. F., Chang, M. J., & Antonio, A. L. (2005). Making diversity work on campus: A research-based perspective. 1st paper in *Making Excellence Inclusive* initiative from the American Association of Colleges and Universities.

Milem, J. F., & Hakuta, K. (2000). The benefits of racial and ethnic diversity in higher education. *Minorities in higher education: Seventeenth annual status report*, 39-67.

Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M. & Saldana, J. (2014). Qualitative data analysis: A method sourcebook. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Milner IV, H. R. (2007). Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen. *Educational researcher*, *36*(7), 388-400.

Milner, R. (2008). Critical race theory and interest convergence as analytic tools in

teacher education policies and practices. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(4), 332-346.

Mor Barak, M. E., Cherin, D. A., & Berkman, S. (1998). Organizational and personal dimensions in diversity climate: Ethnic and gender differences in employee perceptions. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 34*, 82–104.

Morrison, E. W., & Robinson, S. L. (1997). When employees feel betrayed: A model of how psychological contract violation develops. *Academy of management Review, 22*(1), 226-256.

Moses, M. S., & Chang, M. J. (2006). Toward a deeper understanding of the diversity rationale. *Educational Researcher, 35(1),* 6–11.

Moses, M. S., & Saenz, L. P. (2012). When the majority rules: Ballot initiatives, race-conscious education policy, and the public good. *Review of Research in Education, 36*(1), 113-138.

Murphy, M., Steele, C.M. & J.J. Gross. (2007). How situational cues affect women in math, science, and engineering settings. *Psychological Science, 18* (10)*, 879-885.*

Natour, R., Locks, A., & Bowman, P. (2012). Diversity, merit and college choice: Role of a dynamic sociopolitical environment. In Bowman, P.J. & St. John, E. P. (Eds.), *Readings on Equal Education* (Vol. 25, 111-140) Brooklyn, NY: AMS Press, Inc.

Neblett, E. W., Jr., Shelton, J. N., & Sellers, R. M. (2004). The role of racial identity in managing daily hassles. In G. Philoge`ne (Ed.), *Race and identity: The legacy of Kenneth Clark* (pp. 77–90). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Press.

Nuñez, A. M., & Crisp, G. (2012). Ethnic diversity and Latino/a college access: A

comparison of Mexican American and Puerto Rican beginning college

students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *5*(2), 78.

Nuñez, A. M., & Kim, D. (2012). Building a multicontextual model of Latino college

enrollment: Student, school, and state-level effects. *The Review of Higher

Education*, *35*(2), 237-263.

Osei-Kofi, N., Torres, L. E., & Lui, J. (2013). Practices of whiteness: Racialization in

college admissions viewbooks. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *16*(3), 386-405.

Orfield, G., Marin, P., Flores, S. & Garces, L.M. (Eds.). (2007). *Charting the future of

college affirmative action: legal victories, continuing attacks, and new research.*

Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project at UCLA.

Oteri, L.A. & Malaney, G.D. (1990). Racism on campus: The negative impact on

enrollment. *College and University*, *65*(3), 213-226.

Pager, D., Bonikowski, B., & Western, B. (2009). Discrimination in a low-wage labor

market: A field experiment. *American Sociological Review*, *74*(5), 777-799.

Palmer, R. T., Wood, J. L., & Spencer, D. (2013). Diverging interests: Balancing racial

diversity and race-sensitive policies across state higher education

systems. *Journal of Black Studies*, *44*(4), 406-425.

Park, J. (2013). When diversity drops: Race, religion, and affirmative action in higher

education. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Paulsen, M. B. (2001). The economics of human capital and investment in higher

education. In M. B. Paulsen & J. C. Smart (Eds.), *The finance of higher

education: Theory, research, policy, and practice.* (pp. 55–94). New York:

Agathon Press.

Paulsen, M.B., & St. John, E.P. (2002). Social class and college choice:

Examining the financial nexus between college choice and persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education, 73(2),* 189-236.

Perez, P. & McDonough, P. (2008). Understanding Latina and Latino college choice. A social capital and chain migration analysis. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 7,* 249-265.

Perkins, L. A., Thomas, K. M., & Taylor, G. A. (2000). Advertising and recruitment: Marketing to minorities. *Psychology & Marketing, 17*(3), 235-255.

Perna, L.W. (2000). Differences in the decision to enroll in college among African Americans, Hispanics, and whites. *Journal of Higher Education, 71*, 117-141.

Perna, L.W. (2004). Understanding the decision to enroll in graduate school: Sex and racial/ethnic group differences. *Journal of Higher Education*, *75*, 487-527.

Perna, L. W. (2005). The benefits of higher education: Sex, racial/ethnic, and socioeconomic group differences. *The Review of Higher Education*, *29*(1), 23-52.

Perna, L.W., & Titus, M. (2005). The relationship between parental involvement as social capital and college enrollment: An examination of racial/ethnic group differences. *Journal of Higher Education*, *76*, 485-518.

Perna, L.W. (2006). Studying college access and choice: A proposed conceptual model. In J.C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher Education: Handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 19, pp. 99–157). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Perna, L. W. (2008). Understanding high school students' willingness to borrow to pay college prices. *Research in Higher Education*, *49*, 589–606.

Perna, L. W., Rowan-Kenyon, H. T., Thomas, S. L., Bell, A., Anderson, R., & Li, C. (2008). The role of college counseling in shaping college opportunity: Variations across high schools. *The Review of Higher Education*, *31*(2), 131-159.

Perna, L. W., & Steele, P. E. (2011). The role of context in understanding the contributions of financial aid to college opportunity. *Teachers College Record*, *113*(5), 895-933.

Perna, L. W., May, H., Yee, A., Ransom, T., Rodriguez, A., & Fester, R. (2015). Access to the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme: An exploration of opportunity to rigorous high school curricula. *Educational Policy*, *29*(2), 402-425.

Phinney, J. S. (1992).The multigroup ethnic identity measure: A new scale for use with diverse groups. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *7*, 156–176.

Pippert, T.D., Essenburg, L.J. & Matchett, E.J. (2013). We've got minorities, yes we do: Visual representations of racial and ethnic diversity in college recruitment materials. *Journal of Marketing in Higher Education*, *23*(2), 258-282.

Posselt, J. R. (2013). *The merit-diversity paradox in doctoral admissions: Examining situated judgment in faculty decision making* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Posselt, J.R., Jacquette, O., Bielby, R., & Bastedo, M.N. (2012). Access without equity: Longitudinal analyses of institutional stratification by race and ethnicity, 1972-2004. *American Educational Research Journal*, *49*(6), 1074-1111.

Purdie-Vaughns, V., Steele, C. M., Davies, P., Ditlmann, R., Randall Crosby, J. (2008). Identity contingency threat: How diversity cues signal threat or safety for African-Americans in mainstream settings. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

94 (4), 615-630.

Reyes, K.A. (2012, December). *Assessing how higher education administrators of color navigate spaces of advocacy for social justice* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

Rivera, L. A. (2012). Diversity within reach: Recruitment versus hiring in elite firms. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *639*(1), 71-90.

Roderick, M. Coca, V. & Nagoaka, J. (2011). Potholes on the road to college: High school effects in shaping urban students' participation in college application, four-year college enrollment, and college match. *Sociology of Education*, *84*(3), 178-211.

Roksa, J., Grodsky, E. & Hom, W., (2010). The role of community colleges in promoting student diversity in California. In E. Grodsky & M. Kurlaendar (Eds.), *Equal opportunity in higher education: The past and future of California's Proposition 209* (103-122). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Rowley, L. L., Hurtado, S., & Panjuan, L. (2002). Organizational rhetoric or reality? The disparities between avowed commitment to diversity and formal programs and initiatives in higher education institutions. Paper presented at American Educational Research Association in New Orleans, LA.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. (2009). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rynes, S. L. (1989). *Recruitment, job choice, and post-hire consequences: A call for new*

research directions (CAHRS Working Paper #89-07). Ithaca, NY: Cornell

University, School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Center for Advanced

Human Resource Studies.

Rynes, S. L., & Barber, A. E. (1990). Applicant attraction strategies: An organizational

perspective. *Academy of management review*, *15*(2), 286-310.

Saenz, V. B., Oseguera, L., & Hurtado, S. (2007). Losing ground? Exploring racial/ethnic

enrollment shifts in freshman access to selective institutions. *Charting the Future*

of College Affirmative Action, 79.

Santos, J. L., Cabrera, N. L., & Fosnacht, K. J. (2010). Is "race-neutral" really race-

neutral?: Disparate impact towards underrepresented minorities in post-209 UC

system admissions. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *81*(6), 605-631.

Schmidt, P. (2014). Lawsuits against Harvard and UNC-Chapel Hill Urge an end to race-

conscious admissions. The Chronicle of Higher Education. Retrieved from

http://www.chronicle.com/article/Lawsuits-Against-Harvard-and/150113

Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *The American Economic*

Review, *51*(1), 1-17.

Sekaquaptewa, D., & Thompson, M. (2002). The differential effects of solo status on

members of high-and low-status groups. *Personality and Social Psychology*

Bulletin, *28*(5), 694-707.

Sellers, R. M., Chavous, T. M., & Cooke, D. Y. (1998). Racial ideology and racial

centrality as predictors of African American college students' academic

performance. *Journal of Black Psychology, 24(1),* 8–27.

Sellers, R. M., Caldwell, C. H.; Schmeelk-Cone, K. H., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2003).

Racial identity, racial discrimination, perceived stress, and psychological distress among African American young adults. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 44(3),* 302–317.

Sellers, R. M., Linder, N. C., Martin, P. P., & Lewis, R. L. (2006). Racial identity matters: The relationship between racial discrimination and psychological functioning in African American adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 16*(2), 187–216.

Sellers, R. M., Smith, M., Shelton, J. N., Rowley, S., & Chavous, T. M. (1998). The multidimensional model of racial identity: A reconceptualization of African American racial identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 2*(1)*,* 18-39.

Sellers, R. M., & Shelton, J. N. (2003). The role of racial identity in perceived racial discrimination. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *84*(5), 1079.

Shah, A. (2002). The fight for integration. How two broke UT's color barrier and started a movement. *Daily Texan*.

Skrentny, J. D. (1996). *The ironies of affirmative action: Politics, culture, and justice in America*. University of Chicago Press.

Slaughter, J. E., Sinar, E. F., & Bachiochi, P. D. (2002). Black applicants' reactions to affirmative action plans: Effects of plan content and previous experience with discrimination. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *87*(2), 333.

Smalls, C., White, R., Chavous, T.M., & Sellers, R.M. (2007). Racial ideological beliefs and racial discrimination experiences as predictors of academic engagement among African American adolescents. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *33*, 299-330.

Smith, M. J. (2008). College choice process of first generation black female students:

Encouraged to what end? *Negro Educational Review*, *59*(3/4), 147.

Solórzano, D.G., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial
microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African
American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, *69*(1/2), 60-73.

Solórzano, D.G., Allen, W. & Carroll, G. (2002). Keeping race in place: A case study of
racial microaggressions and campus racial climate at the University of California,
Berkeley. *UCLA Chicano/Latino Law Review*, *25*, 15-111.

Solórzano, D.G. & Yosso, T. (2002). A critical race counterstory of affirmative action
in higher education. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, *35,* 155-168.

Solórzano, D.G.& Yosso, T. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counterstorytelling as a
an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *8,* 23-44.

Stake, R. (2005). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and
performance. *American Psychologist, 52,* 613–629.

Steele, C. M., Spencer, S. J., & Aronson, J. (2002). Contending with group image: The
psychology of stereotype and social identity threat. In M. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances
in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 34, pp. 379–440). New York, NY:
Academic Press.

Steele, C.M. (2010). *Whistling Vivaldi: How stereotypes affects us and we can do. Social
identity and social cognition*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

St. John, E. P., & Musoba, G. D. (2010). *Pathways to academic success: Expanding
opportunity for underrepresented students.* New York: Routledge.

St. John, E. P., & Asker, E. H. (2001). The role of finances in student choice: A review of

theory and research. In M. B. Paulsen & J. C. Smart (Eds.), *The finance of higher education: Theory, research, policy, & practice* (pp. 419–438). New York: Agathon Press.

Suurtamm, C. A. (1999). *Beliefs, practices and concerns about authentic assessment: Five case studies of secondary school mathematics teachers* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Toronto, Toronto.

St. John, E.P., Hu, S. & Fisher, A.S. (2010). *Breaking through the access barrier: How academic capital formation can improve policy in higher education*. UK: Routledge.

St. John, E. P. & Noell, J. (1989). The effects of student financial aid on access to higher education: An analysis of progress with special consideration of minority enrollment. *Research in Higher Education*, *30*(6), 563-581.

Strauss, V. (2016, September 11). Enrollments surge at historically black colleges amid rise in racial tensions. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/09/11/enrollments-surge-at-historically-black-colleges-amid-rise-in-racial-tensions/?utm_term=.588bea839cbb

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Synnott, M. G. (2005). The Evolving Diversity Rationale in University Admissions: From *Regents v. Bakke* to the University of Michigan Cases. *Cornell L. Rev.*, *90*, 463.

Synnott, M. G. (2013). *Student Diversity at the Big Three: Changes at Harvard, Yale,*

and Princeton since the 1920s. Transaction Publishers.

Strayhorn, T.L., Redmond, M.C., Redmond, J.S., Walton, C.N. (2010). Black cultural centers as supportive environments for African American Collegians at White Institutions. In T.L. Strayhorn & Terrell, M.C. (Eds.), *The evolving challenges of Black students: New insights for practice and research.* Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Strayhorn, T.L. (2013). *College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students.* New York: Routledge.

Tajfel, H. & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations.* Monterey, CA: Brooks-Cole.

Tajfel, H. (Ed.). (1978). *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations.* London: Academic Press.

Tajfel, H. & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of Inter-group Behavior. In S. Worchel & L. W. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations.* Chicago: Nelson-Hall

Taylor, M.S. & Bergmann, T.J. (1987). Organizational recruitment activities and applicants reactions at different stages of the recruitment process. *Personnel Psychology*, *40*, 261-285.

Teranishi, R. & Briscoe,K. (2008). Contextualizing race: African American college choice in an evolving affirmative action era. *Journal of Negro Education*, *77*(1), 15-26.

Teranishi, R. T., Ceja, M., Antonio, A. L., Allen, W. R., & McDonough, P. M. (2004).

The college-choice process for Asian Pacific Americans: Ethnicity and socioeconomic class in context. *The Review of Higher Education*, *27*(4), 527-551.

Tienda, M. (2010). Lessons about college admissions from the Texas Top 10 Percent law. In E. Grodsky & M. Kurlaendar. (Eds.), *Lessons about college admissions from the Texas Top 10 Percent law* (pp.195-210). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Tienda, M. (2014). Striving for neutrality: Lessons from Texas in the aftermath of Hopwood and Fisher." In R. Kahlenberg. (ed.), *New paths to higher education diversity after Fischer v. University of Texas* (pp. 91-98). New York: Century Foundation.

Tierney, W. G. (1997). Affirmative action in California: Looking back, looking forward. *Journal of Negro Education, 65*(2), 122–132.

Thaler-Carter, R. E. (2001). Diversify your recruitment advertising. *HR Magazine*, *46*(6), 92–100.

Thomas, M.K. (2004). Where college-bound students send their SAT scores: Does race matter? *Social Science Quarterly*, *85(*5), 1374–1389

Thomas, K.M. & Wise, P.G. (1999). Organizational attractiveness and individual differences: Are diverse applicants attracted by different factors? *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *13*(3), 375-390.

Tobolowsky, B.F., Outcalt, C.L., & McDonough, P.M. (2005). The role of HBCUs in the college choice process of African Americans in California. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *74*(1), 63-75.

Turley, R. (2006). When parents want children to stay home for college.

Research in Higher Education, *47(*7), 823-846.

Turner, J. C. & Oakes, P. J. (1989). Self-categorization theory and social influence. In P. B. Paulus (ed.), *The psychology of group influence* (2nd ed., pp. 233-275). Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum.

Turner, J. C. (1999). Some current issues in research on social identity and self-categorization theories. In N. Ellemers, R. Spears, &B. Doosje (Eds.), *Social identity* (pp. 6–34). Oxford, England: Blackwell.

Turnley, W.H. & Feldman, D.C. (1999). The impact of psychological contract violations on exit, voice, loyalty and neglect. *Human Relations*, *52*(7), 895-922.

Van Camp, D., Barden, J. & Sloan, L.R. (2010). Predictor of Black students race-related reasons for choosing an HBCU and intentions to engage in racial-identity relevant behaviors. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *36*(22), 226-250.

Van Camp, D., Barden, J., Sloan, L. R., & Clarke, R. P. (2009). Choosing an HBCU: An opportunity to pursue racial self-development. *Journal of Negro Education, 78(4), 457-468.*

Vega, T. (2014, February 24). Color bling notion aside: Colleges grapple with racial tension. The New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/ 2014/02/25/us/colorblind-notion-aside-colleges-grapple-with-racial-tension.html?_r=0

Walker, H. J., Feild, H. S., Bernerth, J. B., & Becton, J. B. (2012). Diversity cues on recruitment websites: Investigating the effects on job seekers' information processing. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *97*, 214–224.

Walton-Radford, A. (2013). *Top student, top school? How class shapes where*

valedictorians go to college. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Weiss, R.S. (1995). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. New York: Free Press.

Wilbur, S.A. (2010). Investigating the college destinations of University of California freshman admits. In E. Grodsky & M. Kurlaendar (Eds.), *Equal opportunity in higher education: The past and future of California's Proposition 209* (63-82). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Wolfenden, K. J. (2013). Race in elite American universities: Diversity as distraction. *Student Pulse, 5*(2), 1-5.

Woodhouse, K. (2014, January 20). University of Michigan promises to "take action" and improve racial diversity on campus. *MLive.* Retrieved from http://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/index.ssf/2014/01/university_of_michigan_officia_7.html

Woodhouse, K. (2015, November 10). Activists out two leaders. *Inside Higher Education*. Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/11/10/u-missouri-leaders-resign-amid-student-concerns-over-racism-and-diversity

Wong, A. & Green, A. (2016, April 4). Campus politics: A cheat sheet. *The Atlantic.* Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/04/campus-protest-roundup/417570/

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (Vol. 5). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Yin, R.K. (2014). Case study research design and methods (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Yip, T., Seaton, E. K., & Sellers, R. M. (2006). African American racial identity across

the lifespan: Identity status, identity content, and depressive symptoms. *Child*

Development, *77*(5), 1504-1517.