THE RIGHT TO THE UNIVERSITY: THE EXPERIENCES OF MEXICAN/MEXICAN AMERICAN/XICANX STUDENTS AT A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE UNIVERSITY IN UPSTATE NEW YORK

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ABSTRACT

Having the right to a space is not only the right to be present without being harassed or bothered, but it also includes the right to have a say in how that space should be experienced. Yet, spaces have long been contested and not everyone has equal access to shared spaces. This paper examines the experiences of Mexican/Mexican American/Xicanx (MMAX) undergraduate students at a predominantly white university in the Northeast. Drawing on in-depth interviews, participant observations, *pláticas*, and document analyses, I argue that MMAX students do not have the right to their respective university because their university does not address their specific needs as Students of Color. The denial of the right to their university is experienced through a lack of resources and institutional support. This includes, but is not limited to, (a) Inconsiderate University Investment Patterns; (b) Inadequate University Services; (c) Unequal Housing Accessibility; and (d) Unfair Treatment by Campus Police.

Keywords: racism in higher education, Mexican students, race and space, specific-need services

Introduction

In recent years there has been an increase of People of Color[1] making their way into spaces and settings previously occupied only by whites. This is especially the case in the realm of post-secondary education (i.e., higher education). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the greatest increase in terms of undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions was between 2000 and 2014, in which Hispanic student enrollment more than doubled (a 119% increase from 1.4 million to 3.0 million students)[2], Black student enrollment increased by 57% (from 1.5 million to 2.4 million students), and white student enrollment increased by 7% (from 9.0 million to 9.6 million students).[3] Since higher education has historically served whites, the shift in racial demographics and increase in presence of Students of Color in previously all-white educational spaces gives rise to a plethora of barriers for Students of Color.

Students of Color find themselves navigating a foreign space when attending a predominantly white university and they experience racism and other forms of discrimination because of their identities (Yosso et al., 2009).[4] For instance, González (2002) found that there was a lack of Latinx representations within the social, physical, and epistemological worlds of a predominantly white campus environment, which resulted in cultural deprivation, isolation, and alienation for Latinx students. Such finding is not surprising if you take into consideration that many universities were established and have historically remained accessible exclusively for whites only (Wilder, 2014). Thus, universities' hegemonic structures, practices, and ideologies help reproduce white students' privileged status while reaffirming the subordinate statuses of Students of Color (Cabrera, 2014; González, 2002; Gusa, 2010; Lipsitz, 1995; Muñoz, 2009). In this way, Students of Color find themselves constantly battling for space at their respective universities (Andrade, 2018).

In this article, I use qualitative research methods including in-depth interviews, *pláticas*, and participant observations to examine the racialized experiences of 20 Mexican/Mexican American/Xicanx (MMAX) students at a private, historically and predominantly white university in the Northeast.[5] Through the lens of critical race spatial analysis (CRSA), I analyze MMAX students' experiences with racism and I argue that MMAX students' specific needs as historically marginalized students are not met by university services. Specifically, I use the concept of having the right to a city or space to explore the various ways MMAX students are denied access to space and joyful experiences at their respective university. Given that all 20 participants expressed to me that none of them felt represented on campus and very few felt supported, I engaged in a project to examine the following two research questions: (a) How do MMAX students make sense of and navigate predominantly white spaces on campus? (b) How does the university's policy decisions, infrastructure, services, and cultural symbols impact the sense of belonging of MMAX students?

Contested Spaces: Race and Space

We must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality

of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology. (Soja, 1989, p. 6)

As alluded to by Soja, space is very complex and political. According to Monreal (2021), space(s) is/are defined as "the meeting point(s) of different relations" where "such relational 'meeting points' are inherently social and include, but are not limited to, encounters with/between physical places and landscapes, people, events, groups, imaginations, histories, and institutions" (p. 5). Yet, space is, more times than not, taken-for-granted. To a non-geographer, public space is a space that everyone has access to. To put it simply, it is open to the *public*, without any hesitation or contingency. In essence, in a perfect world, public space is a space in which people could move freely and interact with the environment without any fear of facing any ramifications for their "normative" actions and behavior as long as they adhere to societal mores and norms (such as decent exposure, i.e., wearing clothes). Further, the tailoring of public space towards the needs of a specific population has drastically changed the meaning of space in general.

To be sure, theorizing about public space is far more complex than one can imagine. For instance, Goheen (1994) reminds us that public space is always a negotiation, and some people benefit from it more than others. As a matter of fact, it has been speculated that all social space is at some level exclusionary (Mitchell & Staeheli, 2009). Moreover, Mitchell (1997) asserts that public space is not only a site for continual negotiations of the nature of "the public" and democracy, but also is itself a product of these negotiations (p. 327). While public spaces are sites of contestations and negotiations in which two respective ideological parties appear to have a say, like any ordinary negotiation, one party's needs and interests are prioritized and thereafter fulfilled at the expense of the others. This is especially the case when spaces are racialized and those who are "othered" make their way into these racialized spaces that are not "designated" for them. To this end, Pérez (2020) reminds us, "All space is racialized, gendered, and classed, and acts to transmit dominant narratives that when unmediated serve to normalize systems of power and privilege" (p. 1).

Undeniably, race and space intersect and condition each other (Delaney, 2002). Mitchell (2000) argues that race is constructed in and through space, just as space is often constructed through race. Thus, the co-production of race and space is never uncontested. Spaces and places have different functions for different people. The racial identity of a group of people plays a major role in influencing what a space will look like and how people will interact with it. Thus, spaces and places become racialized. Miles describes racialization as "those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectives" (as cited in Calmore, 1995, p. 1235). In essence, Calmore (1995) asserts racialization is "a 'dialectical process of signification' that reaches to the societal processes in which people participate and to the structures and institutions that people produce" (p. 1235). Extending on this definition specifically in relation to the racialization of space, Calmore maintains that this is the process by which location and community are carried and placed on racial identity.

Keeping in mind the function of race in space and place gives us a better understanding of

how we attribute meaning and value to distinct racialized spaces. In fact, because race and space have always played key factors in accessing opportunities in the United States, Lipsitz (2007) encourages readers to pay close attention to how white people's spatial interests are almost always put at the forefront and privileged, while historically marginalized communities' interests are often neglected and not taken seriously. He attributes this to the constant tension between Black and white spatial imaginaries. While a white spatial imaginary is based on exclusivity and augmented exchange value, ultimately functioning as a central mechanism for skewing opportunities and life chances in the United States, the Black spatial imaginary favors public expenditures for public needs, essentially helping to combat unfavorable exposure to dismal living conditions. In this way, interests conflict via imagination of what space should look like and who it should serve for what reasons.

        To better understand the racialization of space, specifically the notion of how most spaces privilege a particular set of people (whites), one must understand how race (specifically whiteness) operates in the United States in a broader sense. While race is most frequently examined as a social construct (i.e., simply a notion that has been human-made), it has real-life outcomes and consequences. The historic and current invisibility of whiteness in the United States has blinded us from its great influential presence, thus inhibiting us pinpointing it and disrupting it. Unsurprisingly, Dyer (1988) insists "white power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular" (p. 44). Because of this, whiteness can play a major role in various aspects of human life without being acknowledged or called on for its influence. For example, Pulido (2000) encourages us to rethink environmental racism in *relation* to white privilege not only because it is a distinct form of racism that underlies institutional and overt racism, but also because it "allows us to see how the racial order works to the benefit of whites" (p. 537). According to Pulido, thinking about environmental racism differently through a white privilege lens allows for us to better understand the various ways whites accrue environmental benefits by way of their whiteness. Often, this happens at the expense of People of Color in highly racialized society such as the US. If we adhere to Pulido's reconceptualization of environmental racism, where white privilege is at the forefront in illustrating the inevitable environmental benefits whites have access to, then higher education—specifically a predominantly white university—becomes a primary site where these benefits are accumulated.

        Theorizing unique perspectives of whiteness helps us better recognize not only its exclusiveness, but also the perpetual warranting of benefits attached to whiteness. In her groundbreaking piece, "Whiteness as Property," Harris (1993) suggests that because whites could not be enslaved or held as slaves, their white identity and whiteness served as sources of protection and privileges. Thus, the absence of these respective protectors meant being the object of property. Further, since only white possession and occupation of land was validated, it was thereafter privileged as the basis of property of rights. In this way, Harris (1993) maintains that possession, which is the basis for rights in property, was defined to include only the cultural practices of whites (p. 1721). Therefore, we must allow for an examination of property rights to inform how we think about the rights that are attached to whiteness. To embody characteristics of whiteness is to be

afforded rights metaphysically equivalent to property, such as the right to exclude, which is not necessarily given to those who do not embody characteristics of whiteness.

Knowing that there are both material and non-material benefits and advantages attached to whiteness warrants exclusivity and protection. This is made clear by Lipsitz (1995), who argues that there is an obvious possessive investment in whiteness, yet white people often reject it. Because there are policies put forth and sustained in their favor, there is not a need to disrupt the system, so to speak. Moreover, Lipsitz is adamant that those who are "white" are part of the race problem and can only become part of the solution if they recognize that as being true, which he attributes not necessarily to their race, but rather, their possessive investment in whiteness (p. 384). Ultimately, according to Lipsitz, it would behoove us as to acknowledge our society's possessive investment in whiteness because failure to do so hides the devastating costs of disinvestment in America's infrastructure and keeps us from facing our responsibilities to reinvest in human capital for everyone. Since whiteness yields actual economic, social, and spatial benefits only for those who appear as phenotypically white, those who are not seen as white suffer severely—both implicitly and explicitly.

Higher Education as a Hostile Space

If race is produced by space, then it takes places for racism to take place (Lipsitz, 2011, p. 5). Higher education, specifically a predominantly white university, is a prime example in which we see the structural benefits of being white unfold while we simultaneously witness how detrimental it is to be a Person of Color in an exclusively white university. A great case in point is underscored by Inwood and Martin (2008), who carefully illustrate the various ways racialized landscapes of universities are "whitewashed." In other words, racialized landscapes at universities inadvertently privilege whiteness even though they are perceived as nondiscriminatory to all its students. Yet and still, this white mainstream ideology in higher education is discriminatory toward Students of Color and is perpetuated through its denial, or what Gusa (2010) coins as *white institutional presence*. Likewise, in shedding light on landscape and architecture-based racism on university campuses, Muñoz (2009) argues that universities' seemingly neutral decisions about establishing a welcoming campus environment perpetuate and reward white-normative behavior.

Upon arriving to campus, Students of Color must learn to navigate spaces on campuses that are designed to preserve whiteness and the status quo (Pérez, 2020). The complexity of navigating "white" and "Black" spaces is made clearer by Anderson (2015), who asserts that "the racially black and white homogeneous spaces on either side of that line promote a basic confusion between race and class; Black skin is typically equated with lower-class status and white skin with privilege" (p. 19). Moreover, in speaking about exclusivity of "white spaces" in particular, Anderson (2015) argues that "the negative image of the iconic ghetto and the notion that all Blacks come from the ghetto serve to justify the normative sensibility of the white space that excludes or marginalizes Blacks, and in which Blacks are unexpected, and when present require explanation" (p. 19). Importantly, Anderson posits that although white people usually avoid Black space, Black people are required to navigate the white space as a condition of their existence. While Anderson's

poignant spatial analysis adheres to the Black-white binary, Guerrero (2017) reminds us that non-Black People of Color are also racialized and must navigate hostile spaces in ways that overlap or are similar, even though specific anxieties (like language barriers, citizenship status, and so on) are projected onto each group. Nonetheless, navigating white spaces is neither easier said than done and often results in a tremendous psychological toll on People of Color (Pierce, 1970; Smith et al., 2007).

In attempting to navigate predominantly white spaces at universities, Students of Color experience "racial microaggressions" (Yosso et al., 2009), which ultimately result in emotional, mental, and physical strain. Students of Color experience additional complications often having to do with their race, which are emotionally and physically draining, what Smith (2004) refers to as "racial battle fatigue." For example, Harwood et al. (2012) discovered that even in residential halls at universities, Students of Color are not free from racial discrimination. Specifically, they identified four themes revolving around racial microaggressions: (a) racial jokes and verbal comments; (b) racial slurs written in shared spaces; (c) segregated spaces and unequal treatment; and (d) denial and minimization of racism. Minikel-Lacocque (2013) also found similar results in her study where Students of Color experienced the following at their respective predominantly white university: getting stared at and feeling isolated; online hatred; ignored at bus stop and angry bus driver; stereotyping; and insensitivity and ignorance. As any ordinary college students, Students of Color undergo many adverse circumstances throughout their studies; however, unlike white college students, many Students of Color are immediately racialized and constantly questioned about their academic abilities (Smith et al., 2007; Yosso et al., 2009). These racial microaggressions serve as a reminder that a racially hostile campus environment certainly keeps race in its place (Solórzano et al., 2002).

The Right to a Space: A City or University

What does it mean to have the right to a city or a space? Responses vary depending on whom you talk to or whom you read. Most notably, associating it to a "cry and demand," the right to city is a notion put forth by Lefebvre (1996 [1967]), who argued that the right to the city means that you have a fundamental right to participate in the making of the city, that is, in shaping its every single aspect. Furthermore, in addition to co-constructing a city, Lefebvre (1991) adds that it also includes "the right to information, the rights to use of multiple services, the right of users to make known their ideas on the space and time of their activities in urban areas; it would also cover the right to the use of the center" (p. 34). Building on this notion, Mitchell (2003) insists that the right to the city is dependent upon public space, to which he prompts us to question who has the right to. Focusing on houseless people in public and the attempts to regulate them out of existence, Mitchell (2003) argues that a right to a public space such as a city must entail "the right to inhabit, to appropriate, and to control. And it must be affected through radical wrestling of power and a much fuller democratization of public space" (p. 9). In this way, the right to a space is not only the right to be present without being harassed or bothered, but it also includes the right to have a say.

To this, Harvey (2003) posits that the right to the city "is not merely a right of access to

what the property speculators and state planners define, but an active right to make the city different, to shape it more in accord with our heart's desire, and to re-make ourselves thereby in a different image" (p. 941). Further, to be clear as to whose rights need to be considered, Mitchell (2003) notes the following:

> Struggle for social justice in the city—for the right to the city—must therefore seek to establish a different kind of order, one built not on the fears of the bourgeoisie but on the needs of the poorest and most marginalized residents. (p. 9)

Evidently, as is, not everyone has an equal right to the city or public space. The exclusivity and neediness that ultimately fulfills expectations for the rich, erode the very "common understanding" nature of public space. The contradiction lies on the mere fact that public space has been shaped to the extent that only some (the rich and white) are afforded the freedom to interact with the environment in ways in which people have thought about public space (such as hanging out in the streets), while others (poor and mostly People of Color) are hyper-policed and constantly regulated because of their mere presence in these same spaces. Because of this quandary and many others, Marcuse (2009) points out a limitation and encourages us to think critically about what the right to the city even means by asking the following questions: Whose right are we talking about? What right do we mean? What city is it to which we want the right? (p. 189). Since some people already have the right to the city and spaces, Marcuse encourages us to think about those who have been materially and culturally excluded from the city and put their interests at the forefront in combatting already existing ideologies and fulfilled interests.

Regardless of whether students are on scholarships or paying out of pocket for their tuition, an enrolled student at a university is exactly that—an enrolled student—which should yield a relatively pleasant university campus experience and access to immediate resources such as classes, libraries, online databases, and so on. Still, Yosso et al. (2009) remind us that "in most university brochures, college represents a time of unbridled optimism, exciting challenges, and myriad opportunities. Few students would anticipate that their university experience might be marked by ongoing racialized and gendered incidents questioning their academic merit, cultural knowledge, and physical presence" (p. 659). Certainly, according to Yosso et al., "recruitment brochures would not advertise a campus climate wherein whites enjoy a sense of entitlement, while students of color face charges of being unqualified and 'out of place'" (p. 660).

In thinking about the notion of having a right to a city or space, from the perspective of a Student of Color, what does it mean to have a right to the university? That is, how can Students of Color interact with their campus environment freely and/or have a say at a predominantly white university without being impeded physically or psychology because of their mere presence? At first glance, the university seems to be accessible in every way, shape, or form to every single enrolled student; however, after a nuanced analysis this might not be the case at all. Unfortunately, historically marginalized individuals like Students of Color have drastically different experiences interacting with and accessing the university, along with its self-proclaimed abundant resources.

The denial of the right to a university is experienced through a lack of resources and institutional support. This includes, but is not limited to, a lack of courses and events tailored

toward the needs of Students of Color and insufficient/ineffective school resources because university staff are not equipped to assist recipients appropriately. In the following sections, I provide various examples that epitomize multiple ways MMAX students do not have a right to their respective university via institutional invisibility and lack of resources, or institutional microaggressions (Yosso et al., 2009), which include: (a) Inconsiderate University Investment Patterns; (b) Inadequate University Services; (c) Unequal Housing Accessibility; and (d) Unfair Treatment by Campus Police.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Spatial Analysis

We are unable to address and eliminate the various ways white supremacy permeates spaces in higher education if we do not have a critical theoretical lens that can help us shed light on the various systemic barriers that impede Students of Color from thriving at their respective universities. To this end, Veléz and Solórzano (2017) employ tenets of critical race theory to suggest that the role of race, racism, and white supremacy must be accounted for as important facets in all educational spaces. In doing so, they propose critical race spatial analysis (CRSA), which is an explanatory framework and methodological approach that "works toward identifying and challenging racism and white supremacy within [geographical and social] spaces as a part of a larger goal of identifying and challenging all forms of subordination" (p. 20). In particular, Veléz and Solórzano insist CRSA in educational research requires the following:

1) foregrounding the color-line, underscoring the relationship between race, racism, memory and space, its intersection with other forms of subordination, and its material impact on the daily lives of Communities of Color;

2) challenging race-neutral representations of space by exposing how racism operates to construct space in ways that limit educational opportunity for Communities of Color;

3) focusing research, curriculum, practice, and activism on mapping the spatial expression of the lived experiences of Communities of Color and constructing a socio- spatial narrative that portrays these experiences as sources of strength;

4) centering a transformative solution by reimagining spatial research and teaching tools that work for racial justice and expands the reach and use of these tools to eliminate subordination in and beyond the academy;

5) utilizing the transdisciplinary knowledge base of Critical Race studies in education as well as visual sociology, critical geography, and radical/tactical cartography to inform praxis; and

6) emphasizing maps and map-making as a point of departure for analyzing the socio-spatial relationship between race and space and refusing to allow maps to speak for themselves. (p. 21)

Unquestionably, CRSA's adherence to critical race theory (CRT) principles makes it a vital instrument to capture the unique, continuously overlooked and intentionally dismissed experiences of those historically marginalized in higher education spaces while simultaneously scrutinizing sociopolitical and institutional structures impacting postsecondary access and success (Ledesma

& Calderón, 2015). Furthermore, the centering of a spatial consciousness framework adds nuance to our telling of everyday life in the oppressive terrain of higher education as it exposes spatial patterns of unjust resource distribution impacting Latinxs (Veléz et al., 2021). Specifically, CRT's role in higher education then becomes "instrumental in providing a voice for students who are otherwise not heard, thus allowing students to provide their own perspectives on their educational experiences" (Teranishi, 2002, as cited in Ledesma & Calderón, 2015, p. 218).

In this process, CRSA points to the disjuncture between theory and praxis. In theory, higher education supposedly strives for inclusivity and welcome-ness. In practice, however, higher education adopts practices, norms, and policies that clearly inhibit the success of Latinxs and other Students of Color (Solórzano et al., 2005). Because of this, this theoretical framework allows me to analyze higher education to identify and prevent unanticipated negative university experiences endured by Students of Color that are marked by ongoing racialized and gendered incidents, which ultimately question their academic merit, cultural knowledge, and physical presence (Yosso et al., 2009). In addition to using my own personal experiences and cultural intuition as a Xicano (Delgado Bernal, 1998), CRSA served a valuable analytical framework that helped me analyze the data to not only shed light on harsh realities of MMAX students at SCU, but also to challenge the racism and white supremacy that infiltrates spaces in higher education. As such, this theoretical frame allowed for an analysis of the MMAX students' descriptions of racial and spatial relations at SCU that revealed spaces of exclusion and marginality.

The Setting and Context

This research draws on data that was collected from a multi-year research study that was conducted at Snow City University (SCU), which is a private historically and predominantly white university in the Northeast.[6] Out of the total undergraduate student population of 15,226 students, 56.9% of SCU's students were white. Latinx/Hispanic students comprised only 9.1% of the entire undergraduate student population. Faculty of Color made up less than 10%; Latinx/Hispanic faculty made up just 2%. In the three-year span of my study, multiple student protests resulted from videos of white students using racial slurs and multiple hate speech written on university property, which ultimately gave rise to major racial turmoil across campus. Unsurprisingly, at university-held hearings, several MMAX students expressed that they have personally experienced and observed both subtle and explicit discrimination on campus. Mostly Students of Color filled these forums to express concerns about the racially hostile campus climate hosted by the university.

Methods

Data Collection

From 2017 to 2020, I conducted a critical collaborative ethnography (Bhattacharya, 2008) at SCU. Critical collaborative ethnography is heavily grounded in and informed by critical ethnography (Madison, 2005). Bhattacharya (2008) defines critical collaborative ethnography as a practice of ethnography that is invested in questioning the boundaries and power relations

between the researcher and researched for the specific purpose of bringing about social action and social change. In this way, research becomes reciprocal and thereafter beneficiary for both parties, so to speak. This collaborative approach also directly challenges the problem of speaking for others (Alcoff, 1991). Critical collaborative ethnography is politically motivated and emphasizes the need to affect social change. It often involves more than a single researcher; that is, the subjects of the study are actively involved. Even when there is only one researcher, he/she/they work in multiple nonacademic settings. In my case, participants were involved to whatever extent they were comfortable from picking their own pseudonyms to editing their responses and providing feedback on data analyses and writing. Lastly, a critical collaborative ethnography links academic scholarship with "real world" experiences and it must focus on researcher positionality and accountability (Alcoff, 1991; Bhattacharya, 2008). I strategically chose to conduct a collaborative research project because it is my priority to not only engage in research that empowers my community and others alike, but also to share my knowledge on how to do so with first-generation underrepresented students. During the data collection process, I mentored numerous participants not only through their community-based research projects, but also through their research grant, graduate school, scholarship, and work applications.

Context and Participants

Through this critical collaborative ethnography, I worked closely with the members of ¡Poder Xicanx![7], a Mexican/Mexican American/Xicanx-based student organization that was recently established by a group of students who wanted to educate the university community about the richness and diversity of the Mexican/Mexican American/Xicanx culture through workshops, screenings, lectures, music, and so on. Thus, I used purposive sampling for this study in that the 20 participants were recruited based upon their affiliations with ¡Poder Xicanx! The participants included 20 Mexican/Mexican American/Xicanx, specifically 7 who identify as males, 11 as females, and 2 as gender-nonconforming. The class standing of these students was diverse: 7 were alumni, as well as 1 fifth-year student, 4 fourth-year students, 4 third-year students, and 4 second-year students. Out of all students, only 1 had transferred from a community college, while everyone else came to this university straight from high school. It is important to note that although 7 participants were alumni at the time of the interview, I had worked with them previously for at least a year.

Throughout the multi-year data collection process (participants observations) and collective experiences (group meetings and get togethers), I familiarized myself with every participant in this study. Students were enrolled in and/or graduated from a variety of majors, including: Economics, Bioengineering, Political Science, Television, Film, & Radio, Philosophy, Communications Design, Education, Geography, Environmental Science, African American Studies, History, Entrepreneurship and Emerging Enterprises, Marketing, English and Textual Studies, Mechanical Engineering, Wildfire Science, Latin American Studies, Spanish, Religion, and Civil Engineering.

Data Sources and Collection Procedures

The participants agreed to share their stories regarding their experiences at a historically, predominantly white university and were subsequently interviewed one-on-one, with each interview lasting 45 minutes to over 2 hours. I conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant via telephone or in person in order to capture their experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The semi-structured interviews included probing questions and focused on racial microaggressions, sense of belonging, and creating space(s) to challenge negativity. I also hosted multiple formal and informal *pláticas* to continue our familial traditions and naturally delve deep into conversations about resisting and navigating hostile academic spaces (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2009). The in-depth interviews and *pláticas* were digitally recorded and transcribed for analysis. Once interviews and *pláticas* were transcribed, I created an initial set of codes by going through the transcripts/notes and coding the major themes from the data, then returning the codes to the participants for member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Interviews were supplemented by various forms of data, including SCU's student-run newspaper articles, student-led public forums on racism, participant observations (attending and participating in organization's meetings), existing research articles and books on racism in higher education, university-sponsored lectures and seminars with esteemed faculty and pedagogues, and my own personal experiences.

Inconsiderate University Investment Patterns

The decisions made by a university revolving around which initiatives and programs to support and to what extent reveal where the university stands politically. For example, in his thought-provoking podcast, "Food Fight," Gladwell (2016) investigates the relationship between the food a university serves in its cafeteria and its commitment to creating educational opportunities for poor underrepresented students. More specifically, Gladwell found an important correlation: the less a university invested in their food options, the more financial aid opportunities it created for poor underrepresented students. Unsurprisingly, universities can create more opportunities for poor underrepresented students if they decide to spend their budget differently. Such actions insinuated the neglect Students of Color have faced at the hand of administrators who are sneaky and complicit with students' differential experiences. These actions manifest themselves as institutional microaggressions, which are microaggressions that result because of the actions or inactions on behalf of the university evidenced in structures, practices, and discourses that endorse a campus racial climate hostile to Students of Color (Yosso et al., 2009, p. 673).

In a span of three years, there were many student teach-ins, rallies, and protests regarding the inconsiderate spending patterns of SCU. A huge topic of discussion was the approval and construction of a multimillion-dollar promenade walkway during a time when several initiatives and programs for underrepresented students were cut financially. For instance, Diana knew the promenade was a terrible idea, yet she was not surprised by it:

> [The promenade] was a horrible idea. Yeah, I mean, just everything about it—six million
> dollars while there're being cuts on other programs for Students of Color, is just . . . It's

just expected, you know? At this point . . .

To Diana, it was not surprising that the university was investing in its infrastructure more so than it was on Students of Color. During her time at SCU, she witnessed various initiatives and programs that specifically supported Students of Color vanish gradually.

Echoing Diana's response, Sway also questioned SCU's priorities. They stated:

The ridiculous amount of money that was invested into [the promenade] just feels insane. Feels like why is that money not going somewhere else? . . . It doesn't feel like the university cares about its students if that's what it invests money on. They're investing money on infrastructure, and infrastructure is not gonna matter to me when I walk away.

Sway points to the mere fact that a nice-looking campus does not guarantee that everyone will have a pleasant experience there. Instead, Sway calls for an investment in things that will matter to them while they are a student on campus.

Similarly, Cesar also expressed his grievances about investing in a multimillion-dollar walkway. He stated:

The promenade is not representative at all. I remember when it was first proposed. Students of Color were outraged, just because they were spending, how much again? . . . $6 million, right? $6 million on a walkway, where that money could've been going to something that the university could've needed, or financial aid could've gotten a boost.

Rather than spending money on a fancy sidewalk, Cesar suggested that the university could have spent its money on something else that is more beneficial, namely in financial aid to help support students. Cesar struggled financially during his time at SCU, so he thinks it is very important to support students not only academically and socially, but also financially through scholarships and grants. Many Students of Color at SCU knew that the administration had cut programs that benefitted Students of Color. It was public knowledge made possible by students who were directly impacted by the cuts. Antonio was part of one of the programs—CREW, a nationally recognized program that had students from various cities. At one point, CREW had over 100 students on SCU campus, mostly Students of Color, but over time, the numbers dwindled. Fortunately, his CREW chapter at SCU did not get cut.

Antonio was adamant that CREW students contributed greatly to the university's campus climate, in and out classrooms. When asked about what it meant that the university was cutting programs and initiatives meant for Students of Color, Antonio stated:

For me, I see it as cutting off leaders that can make a difference, that can actually change the culture here on campus for Students of Color. They're presidents of clubs, they're student marshals . . . They're the opposite of mediocre. These are badass students. And so [the Chancellor] took away . . . his administration took away the Atlanta program and he took away the Los Angeles program.

Antonio admitted that he thinks the program was cut because it was "a threat" to the university and could have changed the campus culture. It did not make sense to him that the program was so successful in supporting Students of Color, and then, all of a sudden, it was cut by SCU's administration. In addition to cutting CREW's funding, the Chancellor's administration also

defunded the Law Racial Justice Initiative, an initiative housed in the SCU Law School that worked to identify and advocate for victims of unsolved racist crimes. Even though it received national attention because of its success and contributions to judicial hearings regarding racial hate crimes, it was cut without any justification. The Law Racial Justice Initiative provided hands-on experience for current law students, especially Students of Color.

Without a doubt, essential resources and services for Students of Color were disappearing or holding onto very little funding. B insisted that the university loved to pretend it cares about its Student of Color, but in reality, does not back it financially. She maintained:

> It just shows you how like the university loves to front on like, oh, diversity, inclusion, send your Students of Color here because money . . . We want all these students to come into this university so [SCU] can get the federal dollars that comes with that, the tuition, scholarship money that comes with all of that but they don't want to do the actual work to make this campus actually inclusive . . . I'm in groups with the office of multicultural affairs and they talk about how they even have to fight some people to assert them existing like on campus.

B knew that SCU says it is supportive to try to ensure that the students are happy, but in reality, she has not seen any serious concrete actions being taken. B's sentiment about the university's lack of financial backing of support services for Students of Color resonated with other participants.

Antonio noticed a similar patterned. For over a couple years, he worked at the Civil Rights Library on campus, and would occasionally hear about the university supporting it, but in reality this was not the case. He recalled:

> The grant that this university just gave the Department of African American Studies to renovate the Civil Rights library wasn't much. I mean, it's there. But in reality, it didn't do much visibly. Ms. Anette, who has supervised the library for years, is constantly fighting for funding and renovations. I think for the most part this university is just paying lip service to the amount of resources that it says it provides students, especially Students of Color.

Antonio's assertion that SCU is constantly "paying lip service" for all its services it says it provides rings true for many of the participants. But as the saying goes, "Actions speak louder than words," and SCU's actions were telling students otherwise. An important element of having the right to the city or a space is the participation in decision-making over the production of such space. In his interpretation of Lefebvre's foundational right to the city work, Butler (2012) insists that inhabitants of a space must have a right to be present in all circuits of decision making, leading to the control and development of the organization of social space to challenge the domination of space exercised by both state planning bureaucracies and capital (p.145). During the time of this study, MMAX students from this project, along with other Students of Color, protested the inconsiderate investment patterns and expressed demands to invest in programs and financial support for historically marginalized Students of Color at university-held hearings. However, such concerns and demands were dismissed and instead SCU's administration established multiple

diversity committees. The dismissal of MMAX students' attempts to be part of the decision-making process at SCU further proves that they do not have the right to their university. While it can be concluded that such negligence of MMAX student input was merely an unfortunate coincidence and nothing else, CRSA allows us to interpret such negligence as a form of violence that perpetuates the subordination of MMAX students at SCU by upholding white supremacy and sustaining its racially hostile campus climate.

Inadequate University Services

Everyone who was interviewed agreed that SCU had services for students, but a majority agreed that the services at SCU do not address their specific needs of Students of Color. It is clear that because of the racialized identities, MMAX students experience the campus differently than their white counterparts. Thus, it is only appropriate that they receive services that address their unique experiences. This was not the case. Alejandra confided that the counseling center at SCU couldn't address her specific needs as a Mexican American student:

> In general, this university does not provide services that address my needs as a Student of Color . . . Looking at the counseling center, for example, the first time I went in to see someone, because I wasn't doing so well, I sat down with a white woman . . . She just looked at me with these big eyes and . . . there was no relating . . . It was like she had never heard a life story like mine before. I was immediately turned off from seeing her again. I didn't go to the counseling center for a year, and then I had a really bad moment in my junior year and . . . I went in and I talked to this wonderful Black woman who worked at the counseling center. She didn't have to be Latinx, she just had to relate.

To Alejandra, it was not so much relating to her specific experience as a Mexican American, but it was more so finding someone who she could confide in because of her marginal status on campus. In this case, a Black woman was able to affirm her existence and experience on campus, whereas Alejandra had not felt affirmed at the counseling center.

> Like Alejandra, Kona didn't have a pleasant experience her first time visiting the counseling center. She shared a traumatic experience while seeking counseling services. While she agreed that SCU has services that help students, she felt SCU was not fully equipped to help Students of Color. Kona recalled:

> I struggled a lot to get myself to go [to counseling], right, and when I finally did get the courage to go, my first experience there was with this white woman and I was trying to explain to her what I was going through and she's like, "I don't . . ." she gave me this really negative tone, she's like, "I really don't get why you're here," and I was just like, "Oh, oh, okay." . . . Eventually, I met a counselor who I did feel worked with me, but I ended up not going in general just because I felt like I never had time to go to counseling. But that was a pretty negative experience.

Even though Kona built the courage to seek help for her struggles, it was not worth it. Rather than receiving help and assurance, Kona experienced a micro-aggression since the counselor didn't see the point of her visit. Her real struggles were met with rudeness and disinterest, which discouraged

her from seeking counseling to the extent she may have needed it. Fortunately for Alejandra and Kona, they eventually found someone who could validate them, but this was not the case for others.

Although they sought out counseling, Luna never felt comfortable enough expressing how they really felt. The racial differences put them in a difficult position to talk about race and cultural related struggled. Luna reflected on their counseling experiences:

> I did utilize the counseling center, but I think my experiences in reflecting were a little bit limited, because one of my counselors was white, so I felt very uncomfortable telling her, "I'm tired of being around all these white people all the time, I'm tired of not seeing my culture around me." So, I felt like I was limited even in the ways I was kind of processing everything that was happening to me.

Although Luna struggled with racial alienation and cultural deprivation, these were not topics they felt comfortable enough sharing with their assigned counselor because she was white. Luna's prior experiences with white people at SCU have discouraged them from openly talking about race and culture even though those play a huge role in their experience as a student.

Eventually, Luna found a Counselor of Color who they were able to confide in. They explained:

> I feel like if this university was using its resources efficiently, there wouldn't be only just one Person of Color who was a counselor, and I was directed to that one, too. I used to have a white one and then they transferred me over to a Counselor of Color because they thought she could help me better. Yeah, and I think it wasn't until I had that counselor that I felt like I was really, really comfortable for once, that I told her how my teachers are being racist and stuff like that and how it would cause me a lot of anxiety in class.

After being connected with a Counselor of Color, Luna was finally able to open up about their experiences dealing with racism at SCU. Further, in their response, Luna alludes to the mere fact that there are not many Counselors of Color at SCU—something other MMAX students noticed as well.

Aurora claimed that even though the university had a few Counselors of Color, there were very few. She stated:

> This university doesn't address our needs. I don't think they provide for our specific experiences. Because if it was provided for me, it would have been a lot easier to arrive to it, and it took so, so, so much for me to even start asking because we had that already in our minds that it's going to be a bunch of white people in those offices . . . And so, that's why I'm like I don't think they're providing that for us. They're not making it easy. Provision is given. They're not giving it to us. You have to work your ass off for it. The school does not do a good job in getting Students of Color anything that we need.

Aurora admits that if SCU really cared about Students of Color, then she would not have to go out of her way to find services or people who can address her specific needs. Instead, she said that Students of Color like herself have to work really hard to find the appropriate resources for their needs.

To be sure, cultural differences between MMAX students and university personnel became a significant barrier in MMAX students seeking out help and feeling like their needs were addressed. Alma insists how even the personnel at the Financial Aid Office will not be able to understand her financial struggles:

> If I go to Financial Aid Office, you know how they have the literacy program? And I tell them about all my problems, I don't think they would be understanding where I'm coming from. My experience is a little bit different because I'm a Xicana. I don't think they would be all knowledgeable of my background.

To Alma, being poor is one thing, but being a poor first-generation Xicana is another. It's a unique experience since there are multiple systems of oppression that intersect to oppress her financially because of her identity (Crenshaw, 1991). Alma felt the Financial Aid Office would not understand why she has to use some of her financial aid money to help her family back home in Chicago. They would not understand why she couldn't use her summers for internships, but instead to help her mom sell tacos.

In theorizing the various ways cities make it difficult for marginalized people to survive, Mitchell and Heynen (2009) argue that having the right to the city or space means that the inhabitants must be guaranteed and provided "the necessary conditions for habitat and inhabiting so that freedom and the kind of socialization that makes us (individual) humans is possible" (p. 616). Because of the essential yet inadequate services provided by SCU such as culturally incompetent counseling or advising, MMAX students are denied the ability to socialize in a way that makes them as human as possible. Their racialized and gendered experiences on campus are rarely recognized and validated by those who are supposed to help them identify goals and potential solutions to problems which cause emotional turmoil. CRSA helps us explain how racism and white supremacy operate to construct space in ways that negatively impact the educational opportunities and experiences of Students of Color. Ultimately, the responses in this article provide an important glimpse of the various ways university services fail to serve its Students of Color, which result in them not being able to maximize their student experience. As such, Students of Color are denied the right to their respective university.

Unequal Housing Accessibility

At SCU sits a neoclassical designed Greek/PanHellenic fraternity house on campus in between a state-of-the-art science building and the main library. This house, and the "disorderly" behavior enacted by its white members outside of it, is invisible to no one because of its hillside location on main campus. Throughout the year, especially before and during school athletic events, white fraternity members play music loudly while loitering in their front lawn drinking alcoholic beverages. Likewise, on the other side of the library about a minute walk from main campus lies a strip of Greek/PanHellenic sorority and fraternity houses (Greek Row), where white Greek members behave similarly not too far from campus.

While these white fraternities and sororities at this predominantly white university are in close proximity to main campus, thus they have relatively easy access to campus resources such

as the library, non-PanHellenic multicultural fraternities and sororities serving mostly Students of Color have unofficial housing about a ten to fifteen minutes away from campus. Unlike like their white Greek counterparts whose houses are just a hop, skip, and a jump from main campus, these multicultural fraternity and sorority houses are located an inconvenient fifteen-minute walk from campus and these students aren't afforded similar campus access-related opportunities as their white counterparts. The recreation facility that the university claims "is only a quick jog away" is not as close as it seems for those who, although are recognized by the university as campus organizations, are housed far from campus. In respects to juxtaposing behavior and taking into consideration white privilege, given their already marginalized and hyper-scrutinized statuses as university students, non-PanHellenic multicultural fraternity and sorority members would think twice before behaving similar to their white counterparts publicly. These concerns begin to challenge the notion of a university, at first glance, seeming to be accessible to every single enrolled student in every way, shape, or form; however, after a nuanced analysis this might not be the case at all.

The inequitable housing situation at SCU did not go unnoticed by the participants in this study. For example, Antonio described a geography class project where he mapped living arrangements based on race.

> My project was about locating racial differences in living arrangements, and the white fraternities, their proximity to campus versus the black and Latino fraternities and sororities. White fraternities, they're closer to campus. I feel like they're more officially recognized by the university. Multicultural organizations, they don't have official houses. They're off campus. So I did a map where I located each of them, and, yeah. There were some [Black and Latino Greek organizations] that didn't even have houses.

While the white fraternities and sororities were located on or near campus, the multicultural fraternities and sororities were located nowhere remotely close to campus resulting in members having to walk at least 15 to 20 minutes before arriving to campus. During the winter, the stroll to campus was prolonged due to weather conditions.

Such stark differences in living arrangements were fortified when you take into consideration differences in sizes of houses between multicultural fraternities and sororities and their white counterparts. Enrique pointed this out clearly:

> I mean materially white fraternities and sororities get the best real estate on campus. All the Frat Row Houses on Nut-tree Avenue, Frat Row Houses on Commie Ave, even just the physical space, there's the height difference. On Nut-tree Avenue, across from the library, they have a whole ass castle. There's a frat that has a whole ass castle, and they can look down at everyone who walks past. Just that physically speaking is, it's a fucking castle. Just among the student body, the white organizations are pretty much the royalty of the student body.

To Enrique, the white fraternity and sorority houses were daunting and excessively huge. The sizes of these houses, along with the university's leniency in policing their disorderly behavior in front of those houses, led to Enrique concluding that the white organizations are the "royalty" of the

SCU's student body.

Further, the differences in living arrangements between Students of Color and white students extended beyond only fraternities and sororities. Diego reflected on his observation about how Students of Color are housed far from campus:

> What's interesting to me is how sometimes, we get pushed to different places like specific apartments right on the edge of South Campus, which are predominantly Black or Students of Color. They sort of push us towards that. It sucks tho because most people take the campus bus from there, and on a bad day, it can take 30, 45 minutes to get to main campus.

Almost every single participant in this study was aware about the housing segregation at SCU. They knew that specific parts of South Campus dorms are mostly People of Color. Initially, it is easy to believe that these living arrangements are coincidental, and that SCU has no role in this matter, but when taking a closer look, one can be convinced that these arrangements are bolstered by SCU.

Several participants assured me that the university housing selection process facilitates housing segregation and alienation (Harwood et al., 2012). For instance, financial aid check reimbursements do not always clear when students need them, so by the time low-income students have the money to put down deposit, very few dorms near main campus are available. This is how low-income students—mostly Students of Color—end up at South Campus dorms, which are far away from campus. In his thoughtful analysis of how landscapes are produced to protect those who are white and wealthy, Mitchell (2017) reminds us that "behind the image and reality of any landscape is a social order—a set of social relations concretised in and given expression through the landscape" (p. 283). To Mitchell, that social order, which is defined by wealth and race, is not a coincidence; rather, it is something that is strategically produced and reproduced by people, specifically people with racial privilege and power. The aforementioned responses by participants provide a good sense of the social order in the landscape at SCU, which is produced by the university's failure to intentionally disrupt housing disparities between white students and MMAX students. CRSA foregrounds the color-line to help us understand the material impact of racism, white supremacy, and classism on the daily lives of Students of Color. Through unequal accessibility to student housing, MMAX students remain at the bottom of the social order and do not have the right to SCU.

Unfair Treatment by Campus Police

SCU has a long-established reputation for racial preferential treatment on behalf of the Department of Student Safety (DSS). This preferential treatment is notable in how student behavior is policed at house parties or bars near campus. Recently, SCU was nationally recognized as a party school, and it was evident to several participants that this designation was specifically for white students. They are the royalty on campus, so they are treated as if they can do whatever they want, wherever they want. Yet, Students of Color are not allowed to behave disorderly in public. It became obvious that DSS was not as lenient with Students of Color as they were with white students. Antonio DJ'd

at house parties, and he made an important observation that elaborated on his geography class project:

> The white parties, just how much they get away with things, just like loud music . . . even with Latinx parties, they shut those down, and then other white frats, they don't. What I found as a part of my project is that white students have cops that patrol their parties. Not patrol their parties, they like protect their parties and . . . The university officially sanctions those parties, whereas Black and Latino fraternities and sororities, they don't get the same privileges.

To Antonio, DSS truly cares about the safety of white students and do whatever it takes to ensure that they can have a fun time safely, even if it means sanctioning their disorderly behavior. Such an observation about sanctioning parties does not come as a surprise when you consider that each year SCU hosts a music festival where students (legal age) are given free alcohol.

> Aurora also noticed a difference in racial preferential treatment at parties:
>
> I stopped going to parties like that my sophomore year, because every time we would go out, we would show up, and then that shit would get shut down in 30 minutes. But the white people are partying on campus, all day, while people are walking to class. Shirtless, playing beer pong outside of their houses on campus, and they're not getting called on. Police aren't coming up and shutting their shit down.

Aurora's frustration in witnessing parties hosted by Students of Color get shut down so quickly resulted in her no longer going to parties. Unlike their white counterparts, Aurora and her friends were unable to socialize, dance, and meet new people at these social gatherings. Further, Aurora pointed out the hypocrisy that is difficult to ignore, which is that white students are allowed to party recklessly in broad daylight on campus, yet their parties are rarely shut down by DSS.

> White students' protection of belligerent behavior was also observed by Martita. She recalled her experiences on weekends passing by M Street, a commercial area filled with bars and restaurants across the street from SCU:
>
> Campus police literally protect white students. *Cada* certain days of the week *se paran en la orilla de* M street, where like they actually block it off, and I believe that they block it off, *la entrada*, to protect drunk white kids who are walking on that street. They know damn fucking well that there's a lot of underage students drinking illegally. Most of those kids going into those bars aren't supposed to be drinking. *Y nomas esta la policia alli, parada, y no les dice nada.*

Again, DSS methodically protects the safety of white students even though some may be drinking illegally. In his work on the geographies of policing and race, Jefferson (2018) argues that unjust racialized policing tactics are further perpetuated through predictive crime mapping and the mental maps that officers construct to rationalize differential territorial practices. At SCU, DSS knows the party history of M street, along with its predictability of white crime, and uses racialized policing tactics to ensure the safety of white students. Specifically, DSS goes out of their way, such as barricading a busy street intersection, to ensure that drunken white students are not hit by cars.

These privileges of being protected as a SCU student may not be extended to MMAX students because they may be questioned as to whether they even attend the university (Smith et al., 2007). Such sentiment was expressed by Diego.

> I don't feel like I have the same privileges around campus police. Even just the white kids who carry beers when they walk around on campus during game days. It's like, "Fuck that, I couldn't do that."

As a Student of Color at SCU, Diego does not feel confident that he could behave disorderly in public and get away with it in ways he has seen white students do so. Undeniably, it appears as if Diego, with others in this study, have to navigate "two separate worlds": one for the white majority and another for Students of Color (Zanolini Morrison, 2010). CRSA urges us to challenge race-neutral practices in all educational spaces, as well as policing practices that uphold white supremacy and racism. The subordinated status of Students of Color is perpetuated by SCU's campus police racialized policing practices that protect white students while scrutinize Students of Color. The policing of behavior, whether disorderly or not, is often used as justification to deny marginalized people the right to the city or a space (Mitchell, 2003). In this instance, having the right to SCU means that MMAX students' behavior is not defined as "disorderly," and thereafter policed as such, simply because they are Students of Color.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this article was to illustrate the various ways MMAX students are denied access to their university, ultimately resulting in them being denied the right to their respective university. A combination of intentionally neglectful university investment patterns, inadequate university services, unequal housing accessibility, and unfair treatment by campus police underscore the mere fact that SCU's campus environment has created hindrances for particular students; specifically, MMAX students as evidenced in this article. Further, although this particular predominantly white university recruits, admits, and matriculates students from underrepresented and marginalized backgrounds, it is obvious that they do not afford them the same experiences and rights to the university as they do to their white counterparts. The way we conceptualize experiences and accessibility for all students at this predominantly white university could be informed tremendously by conversations revolving around these disparities in experiences. There is an additional toll placed on Students of Color in that they are readily exposed to predicaments not experienced by their white counterparts (Yosso et al., 2009; Zanolini Morrison, 2010).

As a dynamic framework in education, CRSA challenges us to view spaces in higher education as complicit in the marginalization of Students of Color rather than as neutral or innocent. In the words of Soja (2010, p. 103, as cited in Vélez et al., 2021), ". . . space is filled with politics and privileges, ideologies and cultural collisions, utopian ideals and dystopian oppression, justice and injustice, oppressive power and the possibility for emancipation." As evidenced in the responses in this article, at SCU, space is absolutely filled with politics and privileges, ultimately prioritizing white students, while MMAX students are left to fend for themselves and navigate a racially hostile campus environment. Thus, the findings in this article

add to the ongoing conversation of how racialized struggles over issues of space impact non-Black People of Color, ultimately urging us to challenge the presumed Black-white racial binary (Guerrero, 2017). Since universities were established for whites and have remained exclusively accessible to them (Wilder, 2014), their interests and needs have remained at the forefront in determining who and how a university will serve its student body. Consequently, a predominantly white university campus becomes a hostile and culturally depriving environment for Students of Color (González, 2002). MMAX students at SCU do not have their basic needs met and they feel as if they are constantly neglected by their university's administration. While they are official matriculated students, their voices and concerns are not taken seriously, and they do not have the same access to their university as their white counterparts.

An important recommendation put forth in this article considers mental health. Although white students do not experience a racially hostile campus environment because of their whiteness, MMAX students, along with other Students of Color, are readily exposed to racially hostile predicaments (Gusa, 2010; Yosso et al., 2009; Zanolini Morrison, 2010). Therefore, the counseling needs of MMAX students differ significantly from those of white students. So, it's very important that MMAX students have access to counselors who have training in anti-racist practices. More times than not, clinicians, therapists, and counselors fail to understand how issues of race influence the therapy process and how racism potentially impacts the delivery of services to Clients of Color (Sue et al., 2007). My research shows that this is how the MMAX students experienced counseling services at SCU. So, trained counselors who can address issues of racism and other systems of oppression is an important recommendation. University services must pay special attention to and address the cultural experiences and needs of students from diverse backgrounds.

In his infamous, often-misinterpreted piece, "Does The Negro Need Separate Schools?," Du Bois (1935) poignantly states that "at Harvard, Yale and Columbia, Negroes are admitted but not welcomed" (p. 329). Unfortunately, in our contemporary educational state—a little over eighty years later—this is still the case. Students of Color and other students with marginalized identities are admitted to both prestigious and non-prestigious predominantly white universities but are not afforded the same rights to and experiences at their respective university as their white counterparts. All of this is in spite of the gradual increase of Students of Color in higher education. And yet this will remain the same if Students of Color are not given an opportunity to dismantle the social order and physical infrastructure of the universities at which they attend.

Fortunately, even if not given structural support, Students of Color find ways to cope and manage a hostile campus environment (Degaldo Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Yosso & Lopez, 2010). For example, Solórzano et al. (2000) found that Students of Color created academic and social "counter-spaces," which they define as "sites where deficit notions of People of Color can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established and maintained" (p. 70) as a response to racial microaggressions and racism on and off campus. Still, in the absence of structural support, the onus is on them—something that is problematic and warrants reconsideration.

Historically, and even more recently, there have been an increasing number of demands

put forth by Students of Color such as establishing cultural centers (Lumpkin, 2021), abolishing campus police (Rich, 2021), hiring diverse faculty (Perez Lopez, 2021), removing statues of problematic historical figures (Anderson, 2020), and so on to create an inclusive university campus environment. Fulfilling these demands will allow for Students of Color to not only co-construct their universities tailored toward their needs and interests, but also play a central role in the re-making of the university. In this process, space is gained and there is an inevitable increase in representation. But, to work toward establishing a culturally inclusive and enhancing campus climate environment (Garcia, 2019), Students of Color must have the right to their university.

Notes

[1] People of Color, Students of Color, and Faculty of Color refer those in often marginalized racial identity groups (e.g., African Americans, Latinxs, Chicanxs, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, Native Americans).

[2] Much of the Hispanic or Latinx educational success has been talked about without fully taking into consideration the significant increase of the Latinx population. Thus, these analyses flaunting the increase in Latinx students, along with other Students of Color, in the realm of post-secondary education (i.e., higher education) minimize major disparities in educational resources, access, and opportunities between Latinxs and their White counterparts (Pérez Huber et al., 2014).

[3] Data gathered from the following website: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cha.asp

[4] Throughout this manuscript, I use Students of Color interchangeably with Mexican/Mexican American/Xicanx (MMAX) students because MMAX students fall under the broader category of Students of Color, and the participants in this study also referred to themselves as Students of Color. While this study focuses exclusively on the experiences of MMAX students, other Students of Color—specifically Black and non-MMAX Latinx students—expressed to me similar concerns throughout the data collection process, but I did not collect those responses for this project.

[5] While Latinx encompasses a wide variety of people from Latin America and the Caribbean, including Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Guatemalans, Colombians, Chileans, and so on, I decided to specifically use Mexican/Mexican American/Xicanx (MMAX) because the participants specifically identified as MMAX, and Latinx is too broad and doesn't consider the unique ethnic-based experiences of being MMAX.

[6] All names in this manuscript are pseudonyms, which participants selected themselves.

[7] Pseudonym for name of organization.

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