Isolated, Intimidated and Bullied on University Campus: The Students' Experience and Recommendations

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Abstract

Exclusionary behaviors, including offensive and hostile behaviors (such as bullying and harassment), are a common problem in universities worldwide. However, student perspectives regarding their experience with exclusion on campus, the cause and impact of such experience, as well as potential solutions are not well understood. We collected and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data in a campus-wide student survey at a U.S. predominantly white university to understand student perspectives. Among 2511 survey respondents (response rate: 29%), almost one in five students (19%) experienced isolation, intimidation, or harassment in the recent 12 months. Students of color experienced more exclusion than white students (26% among students of color and 15% among whites, X^2=37.8, p<0.01). Students who identified with non-binary (e.g., transgender) or other gender identities were more likely to experience exclusion than male/female (47% vs. 18%, X^2=21.4, p<0.01). A range of bases for exclusionary behaviors was identified, including race, political views, physical characteristics, age, and socioeconomic status. Although very few students reported these incidents they experienced to the campus authorities, such experience had a significant negative impact on the student's perception of their life on campus and of the campus climate. The student-suggested action areas included policy enforcement, campus governance, diversity recruitment, cultural competence training, multi-cultural activities, as well as continuous assessment and open dialogues. **Conclusion:** In a 2018 university student survey, we identified a high prevalence (19%) of exclusionary behaviors with some gender and racial differences, the causes and impact, as well as action areas to address the issue.

Keywords: Exclusionary Behaviors, University, Cultural Competence, Campus Climate, Mixed Method

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Introduction

Exclusionary behaviors, including offensive and hostile behaviors (such as bullying and harassment), are a common problem on university campus worldwide (Cismaru & Cismaru, 2018; Universities UK Taskforce, 2016). For example, by one estimate in 2004, nearly one million college students are the victims of racially motivated harassment each year in the U.S. (Willoughby, 2004). Exclusionary misconducts may affect the victims significantly, who may feel isolated (e.g., shunned or ignored), intimidated, traumatized, even suicidal (Brank, Hoetger, & Hazen, 2012; Cowie & Myers, 2014; National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2014; Universities UK Taskforce, 2016). The bases of exclusionary behaviors may include race, sexual or gender orientation, religion, or other diversity dimensions and personal characteristics, disability, political views, and socioeconomic status (Bilias-Lolis, Gelber, Rispoli, Bray, & Maykel, 2017; Carabajal, Marshall, & Atchison, 2017; Cowie, Myers, & Aziz, 2017; Iverson, 2007; Rivers, Duncan, & Besag, 2007; Russell, Sinclair, Poteat, & Koenig, 2012; Zulfiqar, Nadeem, & Pervaiz, 2018). University students' experience with these behaviors has been studied before, often via questionnaire surveys or (focus group) interviews. This research aims to take a multi-modal approach to understanding student experience and perspectives of exclusionary behaviors, via collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data in a student survey at a U.S. university.

Materials and Methods

As part of an institutional initiative to improve student experience at a predominantly white university, a campus-wide student questionnaire survey collected student perspectives on a range of topics, including exclusionary behaviors. This study took a mixed method approach to analyze the survey findings related to student experience with exclusionary behaviors and their recommendations on how to address the issue. The study protocol was reviewed and approved by this university's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Site and Sample

This study was conducted in a predominantly white university, in terms of both the faculty/staff and student populations. Among the 1506 faculty and staff members in the university, 78% identify as white, and 69% white in the student body. A total of 2511 responses to a campus-wide student survey (female: 68%, ages of 20 – 22: 50%, white alone, not Hispanic or Latino: 68%) were included in this analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

During the Spring semester 2018, all enrolled students in the university (N=8770, including 7874 undergraduate students and 896 graduate students) were invited to complete a web-based anonymous questionnaire survey on a range of topics of their campus life. Student demographic information was collected, along with their campus experience and perspectives often via Likert-scaled questions. Moreover, the survey collected students' qualitative comments in an open-ended question soliciting action recommendations to address the issues they identified. The university records regarding student demographics, faculty and staff demographics, as well as

exclusionary incident reports were collected for this study from the university's Office of Institutional Research, the university's Police Department, and the Clery Compliance Coordinator at the university. The survey instrument is available on request and discussions on other issues such as sexual harassment are included in a separate report (Shah & Gu, 2020).

Data Analysis Methods

All responses to the student survey that completed at least one question on their experience or perceptions are included in the analysis, i.e., excluding those providing only demographic information. Student information on race and Hispanic origin was reported using the U.S. Census Bureau standards (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Based on student-reported experience with exclusionary behaviors within past 12 months, the prevalence rate was calculated and presented in percentage. The distributions of students according to their experience and perceptions were also presented in percentages. The students also identified the perpetrator groups of exclusionary misconducts, the base of exclusionary behaviors, and their reaction to the incident. The percentage calculations when reporting these aspects used the total number of the survey participants who have experienced exclusionary behavior as the denominator.

Chi-square tests were performed to examine the relevance of gender and race factors to personal experience with exclusionary behaviors on campus; these demographic factors were also tested in relation to the experience impact and reaction. Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney tests were performed to examine the exclusionary misconduct's impact on student perceptions of campus life. The Microsoft Excel application and SAS package were used in the quantitative data analysis (at <0.05 significance level).

We undertook thematic analysis of the qualitative student comments. Constant comparison was applied not only to compare between student perspectives but also to triangulate with the findings from the quantitative survey data and university records (on student demographics, faculty & staff demographics, and incident reports). Data saturation was achieved in this analysis. The key themes that emerged in the data were reported in the next section.

Results

Participant Characteristics

A total of 2511 survey responses (response rate: 29%) were included in this analysis. The majority of the survey participants were female (68%), half of them within the age of 20 – 22 (50%), and the majority identified themselves as 'white alone, not Hispanic or Latino' (68%). The survey also collected information on sexual orientation (with 13% participants identifying with LGBTQIA), veteran status (3%), first language (English: 91%), and disabilities (2% identifying with physical disability, 5% with learning disability, 6% with psychological disability, and 1% with sensory disability). The lack of racial and linguistic diversity among the survey participants, mirrors the university student population as a whole (e.g., white: 69%). The distribution pattern of the survey participants in terms of other characteristics (such as race, age, living arrangement status, and year of study) appears comparable to that of the university's student body, suggesting that the survey respondents are a

representative sample of the University student population.

Prevalence of Exclusionary Misconducts on Campus

According to the survey data, 465 (19%) students personally experienced exclusionary behavior (such as being shunned or ignored), or behaviors that were intimidating, offensive, or hostile (including bullying and harassing) at the university in the past year. Race appeared relevant to this prevalence as significantly less students who identified with 'white alone' had personal experience with exclusionary behaviors than students of color (15% among white and 26% among other racial groups, X^2=37.8, p<0.01). Similarly, some gender differences were observed, with a significantly higher prevalence among the students who identified with non-binary (e.g., transgender) or other gender identities than those of mainstream gender identities (47% among non-binary/other genders and 18% among male/female, X^2=21.4, p<0.01), as shown in Table 1. Between female and male students, there was no statistically significant difference in terms of prevalence (p=0.33).

Gender	Had personal experience with exclusionary behaviors in past 12 months?		
	Yes (N, %)	No (N, %)	Total (N, %)
Female	317 19%	1394 81%	1711 100%
Male	127 17%	625 83%	752 100%
Non-binary or Other	18 47%	20 53%	38 100%
Total *	**465 19%**	**2046 81%**	**2511 100%**

Table 1. Student experience with exclusionary behaviors on campus by gender
* Ten students (including three reporting exclusionary behavior experience) did not answer the gender question, hence are only included in the last row.

Among the 465 students who reported personal experience with exclusionary misconducts on campus in the past year, 446 students also made observation on the frequency of such behaviors. A total of 200 students (45%) observed three or more times of this type of conduct, 153 (34%) observed twice, and 93 (21%) observed one such conduct. There was no statistical significant difference among gender or racial groups in terms of this frequency (p>0.05).

The Perpetrators and Bases of Exclusionary Behaviors

The survey asked the students who experienced exclusionary misconducts (N=465) about the perpetrators and the bases for such conducts. Table 2 reported on the perpetrators of exclusionary behaviors, identifying that most of these behaviors were conducted by fellow students. The student beliefs on the base of such behavior were summarized in Table 3.

Perpetrators of the exclusionary behavior	N	%
Fellow student	388	83%
Faculty/instructor of a class you were enrolled in	85	18%
Staff member	30	7%
Other faculty member	26	6%

Perpetrators of the exclusionary behavior	N	%
Administrator (e.g., Chair, Dean, Director, etc.)	22	5%
Supervisor (including internship supervisor and past preceptor)	15	3%
Member/administrator of student organizations (e.g., club, sorority, and student veteran organization)	4	1%
Stranger	1	0.2%

Table 2. The perpetrators of exclusionary behaviors

Base of Exclusion	N	%
Race	159	34%
Country of origin	45	10%
Ancestry	36	8%
International status	16	3%
Political views	102	22%
Religious/spiritual views	59	13%
Participation in an organization/team	52	11%
Physical characteristics	85	18%
Age	65	14%
Gender identity	60	13%
Sexual orientation	48	10%
Gender expression	42	9%
Sexism	2	0.4%
Socioeconomic status	61	13%
Position (staff, faculty, student)	51	11%
Psychological condition	36	8%
Medical condition	34	7%
Learning disability	28	6%
Physical disability	14	3%
English language proficiency/accent	29	6%
Pregnancy	16	3%
Marital Status (e.g., single, married, partnered)	14	3%
Parental status (e.g., having children)	13	3%
Other (e.g., personality, popularity, etc.)	10	2%
The nature of perpetrators being abusive	8	2%

Table 3. Student beliefs on the bases for exclusionary behaviors

There was no statistically significant difference between female and male students in terms of their beliefs regarding the bases for exclusionary behaviors ($p > 0.05$). On the other hand, the students who identified with non-binary/other gender identities were more likely to name gender identity/gender expression, sexism, and sexual orientation related issues as a base for exclusionary behaviors than female/male students (78% among those with non-binary/other gender identities vs. 18% among female/male, $X^2 = 38.1$, $p < 0.01$). In terms of racial differences, white students were less likely, than students of color, to name race, ancestry, country of origin, and international status as a base for exclusionary behaviors (19% white vs. 67% among students of color, $X^2 = 107.8$, $p < 0.01$), were less likely to name English language proficiency/ accent as a

base for exclusionary behaviors (3% vs. 11%, X^2=11.3, p<0.01), and less likely to name pregnancy as a base for exclusionary behaviors (1% vs. 7%, X^2=10.1, p<0.01); but white students were more likely to name medical conditions (including psychological conditions) and disabilities (physical and learning disabilities) issues as a base for exclusionary behaviors (20% vs. 13%, X^2=4.2, p=0.04).

Student Reaction to Exclusionary Behaviors

When asked how they reacted to the experience, the students identified a range of emotional and other reactions to exclusionary behaviors, as shown in Table 4. There were some statistically significant gender differences in terms of their reactions. For example, female students were more likely to feel embarrassed than male students (35% female as compared to 20% male, X^2=10.0, p<0.01), to feel angry (43% vs. 32%, X^2=4.0, p=0.04), to feel worried about grade (16% vs. 8%, X^2=5.5, p=0.02), to confront the harasser later (7% vs. 1%, X^2=7.4, p<0.01), and to tell a friend about the incident (39% vs. 24%, X^2=9.0, p<0.01) or tell a family member (28% vs. 13%, X^2=10.8, p<0.01). The students who identified with non-binary/other gender identities were more likely to feel responsible for the incident than female/male students (33% among those with non-binary/other gender identities vs. 10% among female/male, X^2=9.5, p<0.01), to feel afraid (28% vs. 10%, X^2=5.3, p=0.02), to confront the harasser later (22% vs. 5%, X^2=8.6, p<0.01), to tell their instructor/supervisor/preceptor about the incident (28% vs. 7%, X^2=9.5, p<0.01), and to seek information online (17% vs. 4%, X^2=6.9, p<0.01). There were no statistically significant differences between white students and students of color in most reactions except that more white students tended to confront the harasser later (8% white vs. 3% among students of color, X^2=5.5, p=0.02).

Reaction to the exclusionary behavior	N	%
I was angry	186	40%
I felt embarrassed	148	32%
I felt worried about my grade	67	14%
I worried about how this would affect my future career	58	13%
I felt somehow responsible	52	11%
I was afraid	52	11%
I ignored it	131	28%
I avoided the harasser	82	18%
I left the situation immediately	62	13%
I did nothing	57	12%
I confronted the harasser at the time	54	12%

Reaction to the exclusionary behavior	N	%
It didn't affect me at the time	35	8%
I confronted the harasser later	28	6%
I told a friend	163	35%
I told a family member	113	24%
I told my instructor/supervisor/preceptor	38	8%
I didn't report it for fear that my complaint would not be taken seriously	35	8%
I did report it but I did not feel the complaint was taken seriously	31	7%
I reported it to a [University Name] employee/official	29	6%
I contacted a local law enforcement official	7	2%
I sought support from a staff person/administrator/faculty member	42	9%
I sought support from a campus resource (e.g., The Office of Students Rights)	26	6%
I sought support from a spiritual or religious advisor	11	2%
I didn't know who to go to	39	8%
I sought information online	21	5%
Other	6	1%

Table 4. Student reactions to the exclusionary behavior

As shown in Table 4, very few students reported the incidents they experienced to the campus authorities (either the police or university offices), which was confirmed in the university records. The survey also asked about student satisfaction with the resolution if they have ever reported exclusionary incidents they experienced on campus. Among all 272 students who answered this question, only 17% reported satisfaction (including 7% very satisfied with the resolution and 10% somewhat satisfied) with the rest reporting neutral feeling (56%) or dissatisfaction (12% somewhat dissatisfied and 15% very dissatisfied) with the resolution. There were no statistically significant gender or racial differences in terms of how satisfied the students were with the resolution once they reported the incident (p>0.05).

Impact of Experiencing Exclusionary Behaviors on Campus

Among all the students who reported having experienced exclusionary behaviors in the past 12 months (N=465), 121 students (26%) reported that such behavior interfered with their ability to work or learn, and 342 (74%) reported no interference. Female students were more likely to feel the experience interfering with their work/learning than male students (29% female as compared to 17% male, X^2=6.1, p=0.01). There was no statistical significant difference among white students and students of color in terms of this impact (p=0.22).

The students who experienced exclusionary behaviors on campus in the recent 12 months perceived their life on campus and the campus climate with less positivity than those who did not have such experience, as shown in Figure 1. These students, who were isolated, intimidated, or bullied, felt more out of place and disconnected (Z=15.4, p<0.01), less happy and less satisfied with campus life (Z=-11.5, p<0.01), and less comfortable in both the academic program (Z=-12.6, p<0.01) and residential

program (Z=-8.3, p<0.01). They perceived the campus climate as less diverse (Z=-7.6, p<0.01) and less inclusive (Z=-6.7, p<0.01). They tended to assess their fellow students in the university as less understanding of other cultures (Z=-9.2, p<0.01) and less well educated about different cultures (Z=-7.5, p<0.01), the faculty less understanding of other cultures (Z=-7.9, p<0.01) and less well educated about different cultures (Z=-7.5, p<0.01), and the staff less understanding of other cultures as well (Z=-7.6, p<0.01). They tended to believe that the university had not given students sufficient information regarding physical, psychological, or sensory disability (Z=-7.3, p<0.01). They were more likely to believe that people from different race, ethnic, language, or international, or disability backgrounds felt uncomfortable at the university (Z=4.7, p<0.01). And they held more biases regarding academic grades achieved between students of color and white students (Z=-5.9, p<0.01), as well as between students with different language backgrounds and local students (Z=-4.7, p<0.01).

Action Recommendations on How to Address the Exclusionary Misconduct Issue

A total of 493 (20%) survey participants commented on the open-ended question that solicited action suggestions for improving the campus climate. Among these responses, some did not observe any problems and stated that no actions were needed. Nonetheless, majority of the comments provided specific suggestions that provided a triangulation dimension to the quantitative data. Analysis on all the action recommendations to address the exclusionary misconduct problem identified six key areas for action, as:

To enforce anti-exclusionary misconduct rules

A number of students suggested focusing on education and enforcement of inclusion policies (including anti-exclusionary behavior rules) on campus. For example, a student stated, "students at orientation need better programs to understand that diversity and inclusion is part of our goal and if they do not adjust or behave discriminatory, they will face consequences". Another student related,
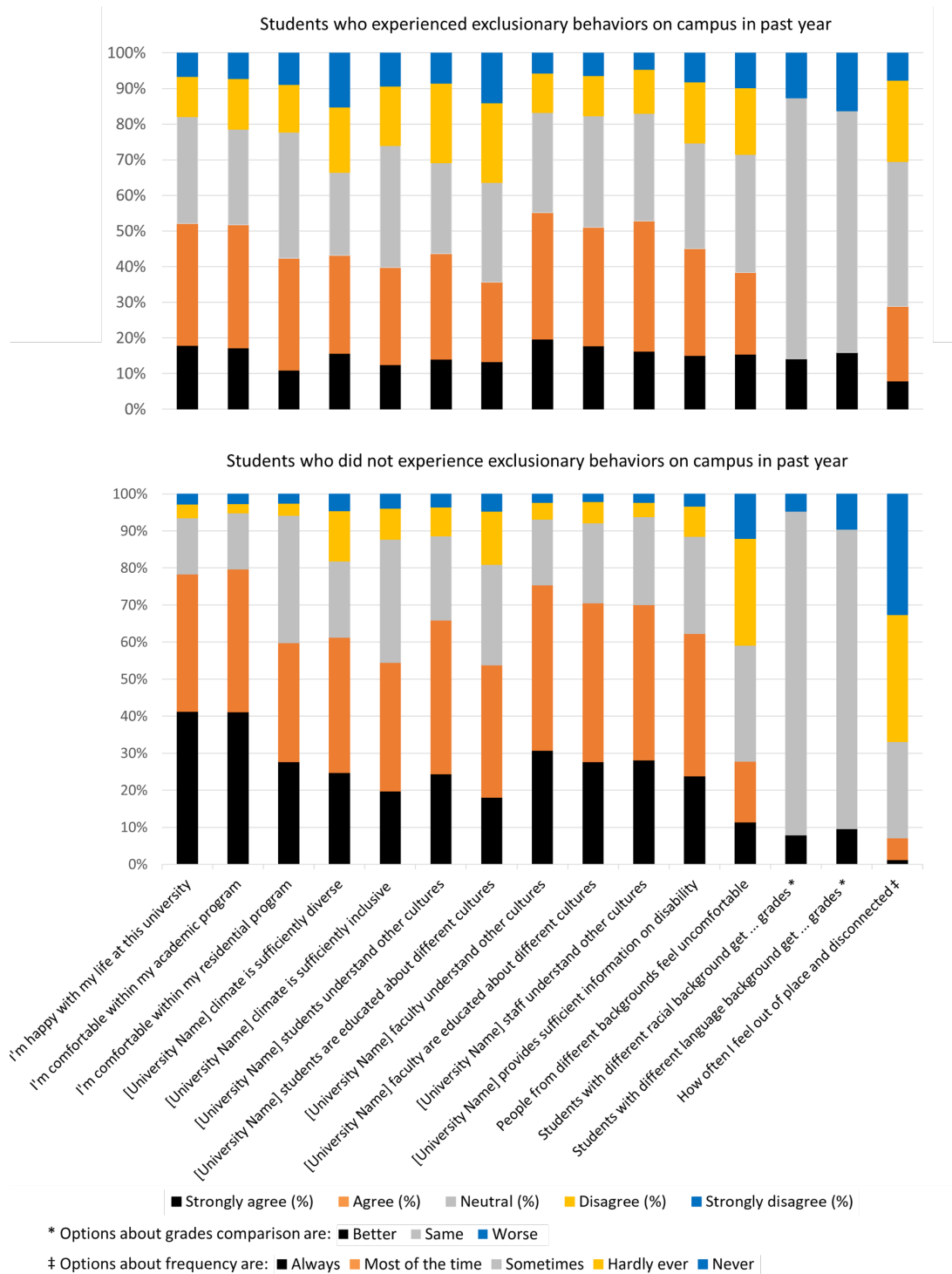
Figure 1. Student perception of campus life grouped by exclusionary behavior experience

I believe [University Name] should make people aware that exclusive behavior and bullying is not acceptable. The [University Name] community needs to be made aware of the potential consequences for each party for such actions. Many people wouldn't know about the antibullying and inclusion policies unless they went online and specifically searched for and read them.

In terms of how to improve the rule enforcement process, a student stated, "Some students are still caught bullying those different than themselves. Cameras that catch this action should identify those students and take action, or make it easier for students to reach those who can handle the situation." Changes were requested by several students to handle exclusionary misconduct complaints more effectively. This request appeared urgent considering the majority of the victims chose not to report the incident according to both the quantitative data (with only 7% victims reporting to university officials and 2% reporting to police) and qualitative comments. And there was a very low level of satisfaction (17%) with the resolution after reporting to authority. A student suggested, "Just address student complaints and diversity issues as they arise. Don't try to hide it in any way or disregard any remarks. Full transparency and support behind your students wants/needs/complaints". Another student related, "Show the students that this matter is to be taken seriously and these actions have consequences. No one reports it because people will not take it seriously."

To enhance campus governance

Related to the above inclusion policy enforcement recommendation, comments that requested better monitoring and governance of campus life also emerged. One student suggested, "Residential life for freshmen should be more monitored, possibly have two RAs per floor so that there's almost always someone there to help." Another requested, "Stop sororities from being rude". Although a few students identified student clubs as potential organizers for cultural events to promote openness and inclusiveness, student clubs were also mentioned by some students in a different light. One student suggested, "look into greek life. [They are] not nearly as inclusive as they pretend to be". Another observed "hate groups disguised by religion and political beliefs are allowed to table on campus". A student suggested, "Disband any antisemitic organizations that may be forming on campus".

Better campus governance in terms of proactive support for (potential) victims of misconducts such as exclusionary behaviors was also mentioned. A student recommended to "explore options to protect people of ALL political views." Another suggested to "provide support groups for understanding and welcoming diverse groups in our community." Electronic information and communication technologies may help improve the accessibility of victim support services and increase the reach to the student population. As one student suggested, "open an anonymous online chat room to talk to someone when facing a problem."

To recruit and retain more diverse students, faculty, and staff

Many students observed the lack of diverse population on campus. As related by a student, "I believe that if I saw more professors and faculty of different ethnic backgrounds the sense of feeling out of place wouldn't be so present." Active recruitment, of both students and faculty/staff, among diverse populations was repeated suggested by the survey participants. The mentioned diversity dimensions included various racial/ethnic, LGBTQ, disability, political, cultural, and religious backgrounds. A student stated, I have never known any experience regarding my race with professors and staff. All my issues come from the students. I do not think any dramatic change will occur with their thinking unless more diverse students begin

coming to [University Name].

The students also called for "more women and minority professors" and "more diversity in the police force."

Cultural competence training

A number of students identified the need for cultural competence training to promote tolerance and to educate students, faculty, administrators and staff on topics such as "different cultures", "global competency and civics", "race, ethnicity, and diversity", "minority differences", "disabilities", "mental health issues", and "fluidity of gender". One student suggested, "Educate everyone about race and inclusion and how to interact with people other than their race instead of ostracizing others." Several students mentioned the benefit from a range of courses already offered on campus, such as "disability and dignity" and "Latinos and health". Many students further suggested that the university should make cultural competence training mandatory. A student explained,

I believe there should be more mandatory classes to learn about diversity and different cultures. There are, in my opinion, and [an] abundant amount of students who refuse to learn and remain close-minded. Being that this institution is primarily white, there hasn't been that culture shock moment some students need. Which leads to the white supremacist ads being posted around and making the rest of the student body who are PoC [people of color], feel uneasy. I see we have cultural seminars and sometimes speak about current events in writing classes but in my experience there aren't any mandatory classes to discuss cultures and xenophobia to actually break into the wall of close-minded students.

To host more multi-cultural events and activities

In addition to curricular training to develop cultural competence, suggestions on multi-cultural events and activities such as "an international night" and "a cultural awareness week" also emerged. Students showed strong interest and enthusiasm towards a variety of formats and elements, including presentations, displays, group sessions, (information) meetings, food, music, dance, and club activities. One student suggested,

Host some kind of 'melting pot' event where we can celebrate and experience the diverse cultures represented here at [University Name]. Sort of like a 'Heritage Day' where we have food, dance, etc. from all the cultures in a social mixer-like setting.

Another student related, "I think having a night at the campus center about diversity (maybe different foods, music, or traditions) would be fun. Some people may be nervous to talk to someone different but food brings people together :)". Suggested topics for these multi-cultural events went beyond race and ethnicity, as students commented, "I would like to see more political activities such as marches for gun control, LGBTQ rights, Black Lives Matter" "Maybe hold more campus wide events which encourage interaction between students with disabilities and/or students of different backgrounds".

To continue assessing the campus climate and to facilitate open dialogues

Several students expressed their appreciation for this survey that aimed to collect student perspectives on campus issues such as exclusionary misconducts. Students also pointed out the need to continue assessing these issues, and to have open and honest dialogues regarding the issues. For example, a student related, "Making the commitment to assess climate on an ongoing basis will in itself be an important institutional action that demonstrates a strong interest in improving climate." Another suggested, "Collect more data and have discussion with students who are from different cultures." A student provided an idea:

Have a suggestion box where students from disability, different cultures, and different ethnic backgrounds submit ideas, and the large majority becomes implemented into the [University Name] structure, and then slowly work on the other ideas that were less common.

On the other hand, a few students warned that over-emphasizing "political correctness" and alienating specific groups could cause harm. One student pointed out, "Honestly, sometimes as a white, Christian, heterosexual person, I feel people judge me and assume many things." This suggested that it is critical to the success of any institutional inclusion strategy to demonstrate respect for all students and to recognize "hate speech against 'white, local heterosexual students'". Another student explained,

There is no doubt that there is major reform needed to better the quality of life and opportunity of people from different races, sexual preferences, gender identities and disabilities, both at [University Name] and in this country. However, most of the classroom and campus discussions I have seen are done in a way that seems to alienate those who are not part of those groups (particularly straight, white males), as if we are part of the problem.

Campus wide dialogues ought to have clear objectives to improve all students' experience, and ought to be facilitated and moderated. The goal should be, as envisioned by a student, "all feel comfortable, safe and welcome to contribute towards moving towards inclusion and equality together!"

Discussion

In a student survey in a predominantly white university, a high prevalence rate of exclusionary behaviors was identified, with 19% students having personal experience with such misconducts (e.g., shunning, ignoring, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile behaviors such as bullying and harassment) on campus in recent 12 months. This experience had a significant and negative impact on the student's perception of their life on campus and the campus climate. To address this exclusionary misconduct issue, students suggested a range of action areas, including inclusion policy enforcement, campus governance, diversity recruitment, cultural competence training, multi-cultural activities, as well as continuous assessment and open dialogues.

Literature has identified many systemic issues associated with exclusionary behaviors in schools such as racism and homophobia (Cowie et al., 2017; Larochette, Murphy,

& Craig, 2010; McNamee, Lloyd, & Schubotz, 2008; Rivers et al., 2007). These issues were also reflected in our survey data, for instance, more students of color experienced exclusionary misconducts than white students did, and more students who identified with non-binary/other gender identities experienced exclusion than female and male students did. The racial differences in the prevalence rate and student experience have been highlighted in literature (Rankin & Reason, 2005); and the gender differences have been observed before as well (Vaccaro, 2010). In our study, we further identified racial and gender differences in student beliefs regarding the base of exclusionary behaviors, their reaction to such misconduct, and the impact of the misconduct. Students of color were more likely, than white students, to name race as a base for exclusion, which is consistent to literature findings (King & Ford, 2003; Shelley et al., 2017). The racial and gender differences in student experience with exclusionary behaviors suggest that effective strategies targeting the problem need to develop customized and targeted intervention to meet the needs of all students, including the vulnerable groups. For instance, voluntary LGBT training programs such as Safe Zone, Safe Space, or Ally Program have been offered to faculty and staff in some schools, and were recommended for training both faculty/staff and students to increase cultural sensitivity towards the LGBT community (Jacobson, Matson, Mathews, Parkhill, & Scartabello, 2017).

The survey participants identified the majority of exclusionary misconduct perpetrators as fellow students, including those in student organizations. They also observed a variety of bases for such behavior, including race, political views, physical characteristics, age, and socioeconomic status. Accordingly, development of an effective strategy to address the exclusionary behaviors on campus ought to target these identified areas, e.g., via culture competence training to address these topics, active recruitment to increase diversity in faculty/staff and students, and campus governance including monitoring and inclusion policy enforcement. These areas also emerged in the student-recommended actions in this study as well as in literature. For instance, literature recorded the association between social fraternities and campus crimes, including ethnic/racial hate crimes (Bausell, Bausell, & Siegel, 1991; Van Dyke & Tester, 2014), highlighting the need for improving campus governance, e.g., better surveillance and management of campus activities including student organizations. Literature also suggested active recruitment of minority students since the schools that were most successful in diversity recruitment reported fewer race-related exclusionary behaviors on campus such as hate crimes (Stotzer & Hossellman, 2012).

Consistent with the data in literature (Cismaru & Cismaru, 2018), this study identified a low reporting rate of exclusionary misconducts among the victims. We also identified a low level of satisfaction with any resolutions after reporting the incident to authority. This indicated an urgent need to improve student experience with the reporting process and with the complaint processing agencies. This may be a key step to enable inclusion policy enforcement, and the inclusion policy itself should include a roadmap for the exclusionary misconduct incident reporting and reviewing processes. To improve student satisfaction, transparency during the complaint handling process is crucial according to the student comments in this study. The student-proposed online tool for victim support could potentially be extended for the incident reporting purpose and for disseminating the investigation progress reports as well. Furthermore, improvement in inclusion policy enforcement on campus should

not only focus on the incident reporting process and the disciplinary action process, but also should address the policy training needs of students as well as faculty/staff (Universities UK Taskforce, 2016). Teacher training should be mandated as it is a common element in effective school-based anti-bullying programs (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009). The training should clarify the behavioral expectations for the individual, and should explain the roles of various offices and the available resources on campus that are relevant to exclusionary misconduct issues. Descriptions of the resources and procedures, e.g., in the form of a flow chart, to clarify the pathway to address misconduct issues, should be visible and reiterated to students at regular intervals. The policy training should aim for all students, faculty and staff to (1) be vigilant of (exclusionary) misconduct issues, (2) to know the immediate point of contact that is designated for each type of problem, (3) to be aware of the resources and support available on campus, and (4) to feel confident and able to report incidents when they occur.

Study Limitations

There were a few limitations of this study. For example, the convenience sampling of one predominantly white U.S. university indicated that the findings might not represent other higher education institutes in the country or institutes in other countries. Furthermore, the study survey was designed to address a range of issues beyond exclusionary behaviors, hence was not as extensive on this topic as other more focused surveys. However, the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data regarding exclusionary misconduct in this study highlighted several interesting findings on the topic and increased the robustness of this analysis. Future research may increase sample size and include multiple institutes to improve generalizability, as well as focus on the issues regarding isolation, intimidation, and harassment to further understand the misconduct frequency, severity, and predictors. Another potential limitation of this study was related to the method of self-report in the student questionnaire survey, which also depended on self-selection. However, the multi-modal data sources, the data saturation, and constant comparison method in this study provided multiple dimensions to the data and enhanced the study rigor. Future (large-scaled) longitudinal research may also take such mixed-method approach to data collection and analysis of multiple data sources. Another potential limitation was related to the limited number of factors included in the survey. Future research may explore the relevance of other factors to exclusionary behavior experiences, such as socioeconomic factors and exposure to diversity off campus.

Conclusion

Almost one in five students personally experienced exclusionary behaviors on a university campus within 12 months. Experiencing such misconducts had a significant negative impact on the student's perception of their life on campus and of the campus climate. To address the exclusionary behavior problem, students suggested several action areas, including inclusion policy enforcement, campus governance, diversity recruitment, cultural competence training, multi-cultural activities, as well as continuous assessment and open dialogues. There is an urgent need to improve university students' experience on campus by addressing all these areas.

Acknowledgements

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