Preface

American higher education in recent years has become the locus of high profile debate about race-conscious social policy. This focus is fueled by the ever-increasing stakes associated with advanced degrees, a broad public recognition of demographic changes, and a general sense that these goods -- whether in public or private institutions -- need to be distributed in a fair and just manner. Not far below the surface of the policy debates lies a complex tangle of ideologies, histories, and blame that often interferes with rational analysis of the issues. Despite these complexities, many social scientists and educators believe that empirical research on the significance of race in American society can make an important contribution to this highly politicized and emotionally charged arena of public policy.

With these issues in mind, a project initiated by the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity at Stanford University, was launched in the Summer of 1997 to inform public policy by examining a broad array of the social science literature that addresses the intersection of race and higher education. For this project, a panel of race relations and diversity experts from across the country was convened to discuss and explore the knowledge base on race and inter-group relations in colleges and universities.

The panel members include Walter Allen, James Banks (ex officio), Shirley Brice-Heath, Willis Hawley, Sylvia Hurtado, James Jones (Co-Chair), Yolanda T. Moses, Daryl Smith, Claude Steele, William Taylor, Ewart Thomas, William Trent, Kenji Hakuta (Co-Chair and Principal Investigator), Mitchell Chang (Executive Director), Daria Witt-Sandis (Associate Director), and Clara Shin (Legal Analyst). Through a series of meetings that became progressively sharpened, we deliberated over the cumulative knowledge of the social sciences. In the course of our deliberations, we discovered that the research related to race-conscious social policy is substantial and consistent. Scientists like to spend much of their time scrutinizing each other's theories and methodologies, something that they are trained do very well. But when one takes several steps back from these local skirmishes and examines the entirety of the work with the benefit of distance and synthesis, considerable agreement and consensus can be found.

After the panel reached this consensus, we then proceeded to consider how existing empirical findings can best inform public policy. We are not naïve about the nature of public policy, but as responsible researchers, we are aware of our social obligation to state in as clear a manner as possible what we *do* know. Given our academic strengths, we decided to compile a research volume as a means to achieve our objectives. At the initial stages of putting this volume together, the expertise of panel members was called upon to determine the topics for each of the chapters and to

recommend experts in the field who should be commissioned to write a chapter. Panelists then consulted with the writers on the outlines and drafts of each of the chapters. These collaborative efforts over the course of a year and a half have resulted in this volume, Compelling Interest: Examining the Evidence on Racial Dynamics in Colleges and Universities.

The conclusions from this work can be simply stated:

- there is clear evidence of continuing inequities in educational opportunity along racial categories;
- test-based definitions of merit are incomplete;
- race is a major social psychological factor that structures American consciousness and social behaviors; and
- racially diversified environments, when properly utilized, lead to quantitative gains as well as qualitative gains (otherwise unattainable in homogeneous environments) in educational outcomes for all parties.

The major policy implications deriving from these conclusions are equally clear:

- interventions that specifically address past and current effects of racial discrimination are still needed to achieve equality of opportunity for all.
- university admissions must operate under an inclusive definition of merit that takes into account the relative
- intellectual and civic contributions an applicant will make to the university and the broader community, and that accurately addresses the detrimental effects of social and environmental factors on the test performance of racial and ethnic groups who continue to be targets of discrimination.
- in order to be truly equitable and effective, admissions and campus diversity policies should not only consider the individual, but also reflect the salience and negative consequences of race in American society. For example, recognizing group membership as well as individual merit in the selection process will enhance perceptions of fairness and reduce ambiguity about the extent to which selection was deserved.
- colleges and universities that seek to realize the benefits of diversity for all members of the university community and of the broader society must maximize and integrate all dimensions of diversity, including student, faculty, and administrative composition, a more inclusive curriculum, and structured and continuing dialogue across racial and ethnic lines.

We hope that the research presented in this book serve to increase the sophistication with which society addresses the key issues of fairness, merit, and benefits of diversity as they pertain to higher education.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The chapters in this book are organized to address the three major prongs of the diversity debate in higher education: fairness, merit, and benefits of diversity. We address these issues in the following way:

Fairness

Affirmative action policies are often criticized as being unfair because they give advantages to *individuals* based on *group* membership. Fairness arguments are examined through both empirical and theoretical evidence of persisting inequalities in opportunity and access for different racial groups. In an effort to dispel the common notion that only colorblindness will achieve true equality, the chapters also look at the extent to which racism in various forms is still prevalent among individuals and institutions in the United States, and at how race-conscious policies address racial disparities more effectively than race-neutral ones.

Merit

In order to enhance our discussion of fairness, this book explores the need for a broader definition of merit that moves beyond using only students' test scores and grades as indicators of their capacity for academic success, to looking at broader qualities of leadership, perseverance, and citizenship. Limitations of current measures of merit are analyzed and explained, and a more inclusive definition of merit is presented.

Benefits.

Another aspect of the diversity debate that has been less examined than issues of fairness is an identification of the benefits of diversity programs in higher education. This book pulls together tangible, empirical evidence on the benefits that diversity (in all its multiple forms and dimensions) brings to the individual, the institution and the broader society.

We also address certain commonly accepted misconceptions about racial dynamics in higher education. In the broader society, these misconceptions create powerful attitudinal barriers to embracing the benefits and fairness arguments of the diversity debate, and prevent acceptance of a more inclusive and accurate definition of merit. Despite their lack of substantiation, these popular misconceptions have formed the basis for policies that address racial dynamics in the universities and in the broader society. The topics for each of the chapters were chosen and developed with these misconceptions in mind. Accordingly, each chapter of this volume will be discussed below in relation to the misconception that it addresses.

Misconception 1

Past inequalities in access and opportunities that racial and ethnic minority groups have suffered have been sufficiently addressed and no longer require attention.

William Trent, Professor of Education at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, in his chapter titled "Justice, Equality of Educational Opportunity, and Affirmative Action," places affirmative action policies in an historical context by examining past and current inequities in access and opportunities for different racial and ethnic groups. Using a social indicators approach and the metaphor of the education pipeline, the chapter examines this evidence in the areas of K-12 schooling, employment, and access to higher education. The evidence presented by Trent pointedly addresses the fact that race is and always has been one of the most important and salient markers of opportunity. Therefore, to disregard race or to develop a colorblind approach to societal interpretation is to disregard the reality that race plays an important role in determining social distinctions. The social psychological theories of fairness put forth in a subsequent chapter (by Shana Levin) build upon the documentation described in this chapter.

Using recent empirical findings, Trent clarifies the persisting importance of attending to present racial inequalities in access and opportunities. He argues that low-income and minority children in the United States have significantly poorer access to quality schooling experiences. As history has demonstrated, aggressive anti-discrimination and desegregation policies alone cannot create equal opportunity for all racial and ethnic groups. Although there are many poor white and Asian students, Trent contends that children who live and attend schools in *concentrated* pockets of poverty are almost exclusively Black, Hispanic, and Native American. Schools that are populated by almost exclusively low-income children tend to have fewer resources, less-prepared teachers, fewer college-preparation courses, and other conditions that negatively affect student learning than do schools populated by students with a diversity of income levels. Evidently, those students who attend desegregated schools do not necessary fair better. Recent studies have demonstrated that ability grouping and tracking practices result in the disproportionate (and often inappropriate) placement of racial and ethnic minority students in the lowest groups. These long-standing practices have had a significantly negative effect on these students' opportunity to learn.

According to Trent, interventions at the national, state, and campus levels that address under-representation and success of minority groups in higher education have made some progress on improving access and retention of minority students, but much remains to be done. Contrary to popular perception, interventions such as Head Start, the TRIO programs, and campus-based support service programs for low-income and minority students, are neither massive nor ubiquitous. Therefore, it is unrealistic to rely on these programs alone to remedy the racial and ethnic inequalities in access and opportunity that persist in this country. Trent adds that whites as a group have historically been afforded many privileges, ranging from explicit affirmative action to informal networks, through which many opportunities are gained. These often unacknowledged privileges, many of which persist today, have resulted in great disadvantages to many minority groups. Given the evidence reviewed, Trent concludes that group membership characteristics, particularly race, continue to determine an individual's experiences and

access to opportunities in many ways that have important consequences for academic performance.

Misconception 2
Merit can be defined by test scores.

Linda Wightman, Professor of Education at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, in her chapter titled "Standardized Testing and Equal Access: A Tutorial," looks at the history of standardized test use and the evolution of tests as the principal screening device in determining admission to higher education. According to Wightman, arguments against affirmative action and other race-conscious policies that are intended to diversify university campuses, are often predicated on the common public notion that there are ways of measuring merit that are fairly precise and scientific, and that departure from using these tests inevitably results in unfair discrimination against someone who is more deserving. Wightman contends that the tests are far from being infallible and comprehensive measures of merit. While these tests are shown to be statistically sound, policies based on such a narrow definition of merit inevitably exclude students whose qualifications are not consonant with this definition. These policies also create a more homogeneous student body who will be unable to profit from the knowledge and perspectives that a diversity of experiences and backgrounds affords.

Wightman carefully supports her claims by citing key pieces of evidence and by noting relevant fallacies about standardized tests. For example, she shows that the correlation of standardized test scores with first year college grades is at best modest, and argues that the factors which determine merit and capacity for success—a mixture of ability, talent, and motivation—are not measured by standardized tests. Although flagrant item bias and insensitivity problems of individual test questions have mostly been eradicated in the past decade, Wightman demonstrates that differential predictive validity of tests exists among different racial and ethnic groups. The differences in the performance of black and white test takers are a magnitude of approximately one standard deviation in each of the admission testing programs. According to her, much of this significant difference in performance can be attributed to environmental and societal factors that neither reflect an individual's level of achievement nor his/her capacity to achieve if given the opportunity. While the cause of this differential predictive validity between racial groups is unknown, its well documented existence puts in question the sensibility of uniformly considering the test scores of all applicants.

Wightman argues that the misuse of test scores for purposes beyond which they have been validated have had a systematic adverse impact on minority applicants to higher education. Data from various studies suggest that basing admissions decisions entirely on test scores and grade point averages would substantially reduce the proportion of admitted applicants from select minority groups. More importantly, most minority students who would have been denied admission (if decisions were based solely on numerical indicators) succeeded when they were given an opportunity to participate.

Misconception 3
Fairness is best achieved through race-neutral policy.

The chapter, "Social Psychological Evidence on Race and Racism," by Shana Levin, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Claremont McKenna College, leads to one of the central tenets of this volume, namely that racism (whether intentional or not) exists and has always existed in this country on an individual, institutional, and societal level. Therefore, proxies for race continually fail to address current disparities that were historically created by race and racial practices. According to Levin, the two sides of the "fairness" debate can be characterized in terms of the "individual perspective" and the "group perspective." The individual perspective proposes that all individuals, regardless of race, should be judged on the same established criteria of competence, which are considered objective. According to the group perspective, however, using the same standards to judge individuals from majority and minority groups is unfair because differences in power prevent the two groups from having equal opportunity. Levin critiques these two perspectives by drawing largely from the social psychology literature.

The evidence presented in this chapter supports Justice Blackmun's opinion in the 1979 Bakke case: "In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way…In order to treat persons equally, we must treat them differently" (Regents of the University of California vs. Bakke 1978, p. 2806-2808). Despite the decline of blatant racism and most whites' ostensible acceptance of racial equality and integration, Levin submits a substantial body of evidence demonstrating that subtle and unconscious racial biases still persist with grave consequences for intergroup relations. Moreover, research consistently demonstrates that race influences social perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in ways that disadvantage members of minority groups. Levin shows that evidence of institutional racism has been found in several different domains, including the criminal justice system, banking industry (e.g. housing loans), employment sector, educational system, and the media. Among other things, this body of empirical evidence suggest that racial inequalities are not reducible to class inequalities; disparities in racial outcomes persist even when differences in socioeconomic standing are taken into account.

Thus, given present racial circumstances and the existing inequalities in educational access and opportunity (as documented in Trent's chapter), Levin concludes that "colorblindness" will most likely preserve the racial status quo rather than improve it. The negative effects on minorities that are manifested through subtle and unconscious racial biases, Levin contends, cannot be eradicated by mere race-neutral policies. Instead, race-conscious policies such as affirmative action are needed to bring about true equal opportunity.

Misconception 4
Diversity programs benefit only students of color.

In the chapter entitled, "The Educational Benefits of Diversity: Evidence from Multiple Sectors," Jeff Milem, Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Maryland, addresses the statement put forth by Justice Powell in the Bakke decision, namely that a race-conscious policy is justified if it serves a "compelling goal." Milem examines a broad literature base on diversity to address Powell's legal opinion. The framework for Milem's discussion centers on examining the benefits of diversity at the levels of the individual, the institution, and society. Not only does Milem's examination support Powell's opinion, but he also illustrates how research from a variety of disciplines

and perspectives that document the value of diversity can be used to enhance educational policy and practice in institutions of higher education.

Milem cites numerous empirical findings to highlight the benefits that a diverse student body brings to the entire university community and to the community beyond the university walls. For example, he cites studies which have shown that cross-racial interaction increases students' acceptance of people from other cultures, their participation in community service activities and in other areas of civic participation, retention rates, overall satisfaction with college, intellectual and social self concepts, and their commitment to the goal of racial understanding. Moreover, the greater representation of women and people of color in the faculty ranks has been shown to directly and indirectly shape the organizational climates of the institutions in which these faculty members are working. According to Milem, women faculty and faculty of color are more likely to use student-centered approaches and active learning methods in the classroom, to include the perspectives of racial and ethnic minorities in the curriculum, and to be more actively engaged in conducting research on issues of race and gender. Such student-oriented university climates, more than almost any other environmental variable, have been found to produce more positive student outcomes.

The benefits of diversity have also been documented in other educational settings. The literature on the effects of school desegregation in grades K-12 cited by Milem shows that participation in integrated school settings at a young age has a lasting impact that leads to later desegregation in college, social settings and careers. Among white adults who attended desegregated schools, desegregation has been found to reduce racial stereotyping and diminish fears of hostile interactions in interracial settings. Conversely, segregated schooling has been found to perpetuate itself among both whites and blacks in college and the work environment.

The positive effects of diversity extend beyond education. Research done on diversity in the employment sector shows that effective utilization of diversity (gender, race, and age) enhances organizational performance by 1) attracting and attaining the best available talent, 2) strengthening marketing efforts, 3) bolstering creativity and innovation, 4) improving problem solving capacity, and 5) enhancing organizational flexibility. This and other evidence, Milem adds, also indicates that diverse work teams promote creativity and innovation because of the great variation that exists in attitudes, beliefs, and cognitive functioning among people of different races, genders and ages. Milem maintains that there is also extensive evidence that points to the fact that minority physicians of all subspecialties are significantly more likely than non-minority physicians to practice in under-served areas and to treat Medicaid patients. The increase in the number of minority physicians that occurred with the advent of affirmative action programs in medical schools has, therefore, substantially improved minority populations' access to health care.

The documented benefits of diversity raise serious concerns about the broader purpose of higher education. The more traditional view of the role of the university is to enable participants to preserve, transmit and discover knowledge. If this knowledge is considered to be static and absolute, then diversity among the students to whom it is transmitted is unimportant. However, if the goal of transmitting this knowledge is perceived to be the creation and relevance of new knowledge, then diversity takes on new significance. In determining their diversity policies, both universities and the communities into which they send their students, must grapple with the following questions: To what extent can students receive a meaningful education that prepares them to participate in an

increasingly diverse society if the student body and faculty are not diverse? To what extent will universities be able to address the issues that are central to diverse societies if they do not have adequate representation of that diversity?

Conclusion

Policy discussions about diversity and race-conscious practices are typically clouded by misconceptions that are not substantiated by empirical evidence but are instead politically and emotionally driven. Although the evidence in this area is still emerging, there are many lessons to be learned from social science research that have powerful implications for diversity policies in higher education. The review of the research in this volume, conducted and deliberated by expert scholars, leads to the following compelling conclusions: (1) there is clear evidence of continuing inequities in educational opportunity along racial categories; (2) test-based definitions of merit are incomplete; (3) race is a major social psychological factor in the American consciousness behaviors; and (4) racially diversified environments, when properly utilized, lead to quantitative as well as qualitative (otherwise unattainable in homogeneous environments) improvements in educational outcomes for all parties.

Several major policy implications corresponding to these conclusions are also offered in this volume. First, interventions that specifically address past and current effects of racial discrimination are still needed to achieve equality of opportunity for all. Second, university admissions must operate under an inclusive definition of merit that takes into account the relative intellectual and civic contributions an applicant will make to the university and the broader community, and that accurately reflects the detrimental effects of social and environmental factors on the test performance of racial and ethnic groups who continue to be targets of discrimination. Third, in order to be truly equitable and effective, admissions and campus diversity policies should not only consider the individual, but also reflect the salience and negative consequences of race in American society. For example, recognizing group membership as well as individual merit in the selection process will enhance perceptions of fairness and reduce ambiguity about the extent to which selection was deserved. Lastly, colleges and universities that seek to realize the benefits of diversity for all members of the university community and of the broader society must maximize and integrate all dimensions of diversity, including student, faculty, and administrative composition, a more inclusive curriculum, and structured and continuing dialogue across racial and ethnic lines, to name a few.

Although we are generally optimistic about the potential for higher education to play a central role in improving the racial circumstances in this country, we also believe that many colleges and universities do not maximize the educational opportunities before them. For example, many institutions fail to provide undergraduates with the critical experiences necessary to discuss constructively and to critically understand their racial experiences and perceptions. Moreover, the academy has generally been surprisingly silent in the court battles and national dialogues regarding affirmative action that are taking place across the country. This volume makes a compelling argument for why institutions of higher learning need to focus on issues of racial dynamics, to establish a blueprint for research on what we still need to know, and to suggest techniques and tools for institutions to maximize the opportunities that diversity presents. Clearly, the energy and work required to bring about widespread educational benefits not only have a high rate of return, but are necessary for truly creating equal opportunity and for effectively educating students to live in the 21st century.