

ABSTRACT

This project will explore the attendant benefits and constraints of incorporating social science research into legal resolution – and more narrowly, of incorporating “contact literature” on intergroup relations in higher education into affirmative action litigation. While highlighting the basic incompatibilities that alienate legal from scientific truth, I also hope to demonstrate the unique contributions of social science as an added “frame” in legal proceedings. Social science research has the ability to challenge the law’s selective and dichotomized treatment of social processes. With attention to the local texture of diversity on college campuses, I will examine not *whether* diversity improves intergroup relations among students of different races, but *under what conditions*. Despite legal assumption, diversity alone is not a guaranteed source of educational benefits; those benefits must be nurtured through the support of institutional efforts, student engagement, and a sustained attention to the narrative of race in the United States.

Deepening the Defense for Diversity:
Affirmative Action, Social Science, and the Quest for a Compelling Interest

by

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