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THE INSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE FOR TALENTED LATINO STUDENTS

Sylvia Hurtado

Colleges and universities have witnessed a 48-percent increase in Latino enrollments in the last decade, yet increases in the college-age population mask an actual decline in the Latino college-going rate (Carter and Wilson, 1991; Orfield, 1991). The tremendous leakage in the educational pipeline, coupled with the increasing segregation of this group in America's high schools, suggests that mostly open-access colleges located near a growing Hispanic population may actually face substantial increases of Latino enrollments. Estrada (1988) suggests that significant ethnic restructuring will occur on many of these campuses. At the same time, however, talented Latino students are recruited and may choose to attend some of the most elite and selective campuses in the nation. Therefore, different types of colleges are faced with challenges in confronting the essential problem of attracting and retaining Latino students. An institution's success in these areas may have much to do with Latino student perceptions of the institutional climate.

Scholars have conceded that the social environment of predominantly white institutions remains problematic, even for minorities with strong academic preparation (Skinner and Richardson, 1988). High-achieving Latino high school students that are nationally recruited for college entrance face a myriad of issues in their transition to colleges that remain largely unfamiliar with Latino culture. More specifically, only about 21 percent of a national sample of academic administrators report that their campus provided an "excellent" to "very good" climate for Hispanics in 1989 (El-Khawas, 1989). These facts indicate that both researchers and campus administrators are aware of a need to create a supportive climate for Latino students. The purpose of this study is to understand how high-achieving Latino students perceive the receptivity of their institutions to a Latino presence on campus. It is a multiinstitutional study with the prime objective of identifying areas for institutional improvement to help administrators become more aware of specific climate issues facing talented Latino students at four-year institutions.

Sylvia Hurtado, University of Michigan, 2117 SEB, 610 E. University Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

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CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW

The institutional climate for diversity can be conceptualized as a product of various elements that include the historical, structural, perceptual, and behavioral dimensions of the college environment. Each of these dimensions can affect a student's psychological response to the environment. Many institutions have taken a "multilayered" approach toward studying diversity on campus, yet virtually none have examined the dynamics of all these elements. Perhaps one of the most difficult and sensitive dimensions to assess with genuine honesty is an institution's history of access and exclusion (Thelin, 1985).

A college's historical legacy of exclusion of various ethnic groups can continue to influence current practices that determine the prevailing climate. For example, an institution's selection procedures may have been altered to take into account a student's ethnic background as an important component of creating a diverse learning environment on campus. However, the institutional definition of what constitutes a top candidate for admission could remain unaltered since the time when a college admitted a relatively homogeneous student population. Thus, although Latino students are valued for what they add to the social mix of the campus, student profiles that depart from traditional notions of an "ideal" student are not always highly valued (e.g., students with extensive work/family responsibilities or leadership in ethnic student organizations). In short, an institution's historical legacy influences administrator, faculty, and student views of Latino students and their role in the college community.

This historical dimension constitutes an important context within which the climate for diversity develops and changes over time. Various institutional case studies document the historical context that impacts the climate for diversity and have found that campuses achieve variable degrees of success in creating a supportive climate for minorities (Peterson et al., 1978; Richardson and Skinner, 1991). Although the historical dimension is an important area for institutional self-examination, because of the large number of institutions ($n = 224$), this study precludes the use of such detailed institutional histories. The current study focuses on the structural, perceptual, and behavioral aspects of the college environment that shape the climate for diversity.

The structural properties of the environment are central to shaping social interaction and the individual's attitude within it (Kiecolt, 1988). These structural properties are often assessed through the use of objective measures that are also referred to in social psychology as contextual variables (Kiecolt, 1988) or distal characteristics (Jessor, 1979). In higher education research these properties often refer to institutional characteristics such as size, control, selectivity, and racial composition of the college (Weidman, 1989). Recent research has shown that each of these structural characteristics is significantly related to student perceptions of racial tension on campus (Dey, 1991; Hurtado, 1992).

Of particular interest are those structural characteristics that may be relevant to campus diversity policies. For example, administrators and students often point to affirmative action policies designed to increase the number of minority students and faculty as a primary method of improving the climate for diversity. It is this structural dimension of diversity, translated into numerical representation, that has received the most attention on college campuses since the 1960s.

However, there are competing theories that emerge from the research on the degree of conflict, interaction, and tolerance encountered in environments based on the size of underrepresented groups. Kanter (1977) posits that the proportion of socially and culturally different people in a group is critical in shaping the dynamics of social interaction, with skewed representations resulting in a psychosocial phenomenon called tokenism. Tokenism has negative consequences for minority group members in terms of how underrepresented groups are perceived and interact with others (Kanter 1977). At the same time, increases in the proportional representation of minority groups may pose new problems for campus environments. Blalock (1967) hypothesized that the larger the relative size of the minority group, the more likely that minority individuals will be in conflict with members of the majority.

Studies in higher education have shown that it is not the percentage of minority students but their absolute numbers, or a "critical mass," that served as a significant predictor of racially related protests on campus during the 1970s (Astin et al., 1975). Increases in the absolute numbers of minorities on campus resulted in new demands for institutional change, creating conflict for which campuses were relatively unprepared. Another study suggests that the numbers of minorities are not as important as the size of the campus or the community in which the college is located. Tuch (1987) proposes that community size and location are positively related to racial tolerance among members of a community. In short, urban communities were more racially tolerant than their nonurban counterparts. Given that many institutions have advanced beyond the "critical mass" of minority representation, it would be important to investigate campus climate in relation to the structural effects of Hispanic enrollments and the size of the community in which the college is located.

The perceptual dimension of the climate represents an individual's view of institutional responsiveness to diversity issues. Peterson et al. (1978) used administrator, faculty, and student survey data to explore various indicators of the attitudinal or perceptual climate on campus. These included measures that reflected respondents' views on the *philosophical* role of colleges with regard to minorities; the *ideology* of the institutions, represented by institutional goal commitments to minority concerns; the *intent* of the institution, reflected in support for minority programs; perceptions of actual *behavior* on campus, characterized by racial and interracial activity; and a *psychological* measure of the climate, or measures of the degree of trust and hostility among groups. While

all these indices may be said to reflect different dimensions of a campus's climate for diversity, Peterson et al. reserved the term *institutional racial climate* for describing black-white relations among various constituencies on campus. For example, the student racial climate consisted of two separate dimensions (tension-hostility, and "indifference" or benign coexistence). This multidimensional approach to the perceptual climate provided insights into campus variability with regard to diversity issues.

Student perceptions of the campus climate for diversity vary substantially by ethnic/racial group, reflecting both student background characteristics and actual experiences in variable climates across institutions (Hurtado, 1992). By focusing on Latinos we have the opportunity to examine one particular group that has increased its enrollment on college campuses over the last decade. However, even students within the same ethnic group differ substantially in their views upon college entry due to demographic characteristics (e.g., gender and ethnicity), prior socialization contexts (e.g., social class, size of hometown, etc.), and attitudes or values (e.g., political orientation, self-concept) (Astin, 1971; Gurin and Epps, 1975; Hurtado, 1990). These are important student characteristics to take into account when studying student perceptions. In addition, Latino student views and educational outcomes differ substantially by characteristics that are typically excluded from studies of college students. These include important Latino background characteristics such as nativity or generational status (Ortiz, 1986), Spanish-language use and proficiency (Durán, 1983), ethnic consciousness (García, 1982; Hurtado, 1993), and the level of segregation experienced in peer environments (high school) prior to college entry. These background characteristics play an important role in cultural perspectives that students bring to college and influence their modes of social interaction on campus.

At the same time that these important student background characteristics are influential, research evidence shows that the college environment exerts a strong influence on student perceptions (Astin, 1993; Hurtado, 1992). Despite the proliferation of programs on campuses to meet the demands of increasing minority student enrollments in the 1960s, studies have shown that institutions vary substantially both in their commitment to diversity expressed as institutional priorities and in the amount of racial/ethnic tension on campus (El-Khawas, 1989; Hurtado, 1992; Peterson et al., 1978). Perhaps most importantly, views of a generally supportive climate for student development were associated with perceptions of lower racial tension among all racial/ethnic groups (Hurtado, 1992). Thus, issues pertaining to the general climate at a college may set the stage for enhancing a multicultural environment.

Although substantial attention has been devoted to the perceptual dimension of the climate, this study extends current research to examine the behavioral dimension. Early studies indicate that campuses uniformly tended to ignore the

interpersonal aspects of race relations on campus (Peterson et al., 1978), yet it is this behavioral dimension that has generated recent attention in the national media. Increasingly, campuses have been concerned with reports of racial incidents and the level of social interaction among different racial/ethnic groups on campus (Farrell and Jones, 1988; Loo and Rolison, 1986). Most of the studies that document feelings of discrimination and campus race relations have been based on African-American students (Allen et al., 1989; Nettles, Thoeny, and Gosman, 1986; Peterson et al., 1978). Studies that have compared racial/ethnic groups have found that Latinos are more likely than white students, but somewhat less likely than black students, to report feelings of discrimination on campus (Nettles, 1990). Discrimination reports were also associated with feelings of alienation among Chicano students (Oliver, Rodriguez, and Mickelson, 1985).

In contrast, Chicano and white students who increased their interest in helping to promote racial understanding during college reported a variety of behaviors. These include taking an ethnic studies class, participating in campus protest, discussing racial/ethnic issues, and socializing with students of other racial/ethnic groups (Hurtado, 1990). While some perceive that participation in ethnic student organizations contributes to separatism on campus, others contend that such organizations contribute culturally to a college campus and are a form of social support that allows minority students to feel more integrated with the campus social life (Allen, 1985; Loo and Rolison, 1986; Treviño, 1992). Treviño (1992) found that faculty perceptions of racial conflict on campus has a weak and perhaps indirect relationship to student involvement in ethnic/racial student organizations. Thus, student behaviors that characterize the level of intergroup and intragroup interaction shape an individual's perception of the climate and are affected by other structual and perceptual dimensions of the environment.

The current study examines student background characteristics, college structural characteristics, general climate measures, and student behaviors as determinants of a perceptual measure of the climate characterized by racial/ethnic tension. Behavioral measures that reflect reports of actual discrimination on campus are also included in the analyses. In examining the experiences of Latino students who were identified as having high potential for college success, it is important to keep in mind that these students may have the least amount of trouble in their transition to college. They may also have access to some privileges, such as special scholarships, that may not be available to most Latino students entering college. These privileges lead us to expect that their college experiences will be fairly positive, but may differ according to variations in college climate and students' prior socialization experiences. We may also find that students attending some of the most elite colleges are encountering the most resistance to diversity. If some of the best institutions in the country are

least likely to serve the ablest Latino students, then we will have identified another significant barrier to educational progress.

METHODOLOGY

Data Sources

A national sample of Latino students in two recent cohorts (1989 and 1990) of college entrants was selected from among the top 3,000 Latino PSAT scorers after the junior year in high school. These students, along with top performers on the Prueba de Aptitúd Académica (PAA), were designated semifinalists for the National Hispanic Scholar Awards Program (NHSAP). This program is analogous to other merit recognition programs including the National Merit Scholarship Program and the National Achievement Program for black students. A second group was randomly selected from the semifinalist rosters in each year and was matched by gender within three Latino ethnic categories: Chicano, Puerto Rican, and Latin/Central American. This sampling procedure was designed as part of a larger study on Hispanic scholarship recipients; however, it also provided an excellent opportunity to study the perceptions and college experiences of some of the most talented Latinos emerging from U.S. and Puerto Rican high schools. Not only were these students among the top scorers on standardized tests, over 77 percent earned a high school grade point average of "A" or better and over 65 percent ranked in the top tenth of their high school class.

This study utilized three primary sources of student data. The Student Descriptive Questionnaire (SDQ) and SAT data were obtained on 94 percent of the sample. The SDQ is administered to students on the same day as the SAT and it is designed to obtain information about a student's background, high school preparation, and college preferences. Analyses were limited to cases that had both SAT/SDQ data and responses to a national follow-up survey of Hispanic college students.

The National Survey of Hispanic Students (NSHS) was developed as a comprehensive follow-up survey of college student experiences. The survey was sent to 4,979 student home addresses, reported on semifinalist rosters, in late summer of 1991. A reminder postcard was sent two weeks after the first wave of surveys, and two weeks subsequent, a second survey was sent to nonrespondents' homes. Surveys arrived throughout early Fall of 1991, with an overall student response rate of 49 percent. In addition to the survey data, information about each college the student attended was linked with data from the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data Systems (IPEDS), *The College Handbook* (1992), and institutional data files maintained by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. Such college characteris-

tics as Hispanic enrollment, total undergraduate enrollment (size), population of the college town, tuition costs, and selectivity (average SAT of entering freshmen) were obtained from these institutional data sources.

Sample

The oldest and the youngest cohorts were excluded from the analyses because the former group had already graduated, and the latter group may not have been in college sufficient time to form opinions about all aspects of the campus environment. In addition, only those students who had been matched with each of the sources of data (SDQ, NSHS, institutional data) were selected for analysis. Therefore, 859 sophomores and juniors attending some 224 colleges formed the basis for the analyses in this study of the campus climate. This sample included 386 Chicanos, 198 Puerto Ricans, and 275 Other Latinos (students who categorized themselves as Cuban, Latin or Central American, or other Hispanic).

Analyses

Exploratory factor analyses were conducted as a data reduction technique and to determine the various dimensions of campus climate perceptions among academically successful Latino students. Factor analyses were conducted using the principal axis factoring method and, because these perceptual measures of the environment were thought to be correlated, an oblique rotation method was used in the estimation process. Table A-1 shows the results from the factor analyses. Items that had a factor score of over .35 were used in development of the scales for subsequent analyses. Internal consistencies (alpha) indicated that the five campus climate scales had reliabilities ranging from .61 to .76 (see Table A-1). Five additional scales that were used in subsequent analyses had been developed as part of another study on student perceptions and background characteristics are shown in Table A-2 (Hurtado, 1993).

Initial bivariate analyses were used to examine Latino student views of their college's environment. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to identify the significant determinants of perceptions of racial/ethnic tension and student reports of discrimination on campus. Student background characteristics, college structural characteristics, general college climate measures, and student behaviors were entered in a hierarchical fashion. Previous research is extended by these analyses in two ways: The current study examined the behavioral dimension of diversity as both an outcome and independent measure of student behaviors, and new measures of the college climate were devised to further explore the contexts of the climate for diversity. Table 1 shows the measures and scales representing each of these areas in the regression equation.

TABLE 1. Measures and Scales for Regression Model

Dependent Campus Climate Measures	
Perceptions of racial/ethnic tension	Scale items in Table A-1
Experienced discrimination	Scale items in Table A-1
Student Background Characteristics	
Gender (Female)	Dichotomous: 1 = male; 2 = female
Latino ethnic group	Dichotomous: Chicano, Puerto Rican, Other Latino (excluded category)
Size of hometown	1 = town of less than 2,000 to 7 = urban center over one million
Distance of the college from home	1 = 5 or less to 7 = more than 1,000 miles
SES	Scale items in Table A-2
Percentage of Hispanics in high school	Range: 0 to 99 percent
Latino consciousness	Scale items in Table A-2
First generation in this country	Dichotomous: 1 = parent U.S. born; 2 = both parents foreign born
English is not first language	1 = English to 3 = another language
Goal: help to promote racial understanding	1 = not important to 4 = essential
Academic ability self-rating	Scale items in Table A-2
Perceptions of inequality in society for Hispanics	Scale items in Table A-2
In order to be successful in society, it is important not to emphasize my ethnicity	1 = disagree strongly to 4 = agree strongly
College Structural Characteristics	
Hispanic undergraduate enrollment (structural diversity)	Total Hispanic undergraduate enrollment
Size of college town	1 = not in SMSA to 8 = urban center of 2 million
Size of college	Total undergraduate enrollment
Average SAT of college freshmen	Mean SAT of entering freshmen
College control type (public college)	Dichotomous: 1 = private; 2 = public college
Tuition costs	Tuition expenses (excluding room and board)

General College Climate Measures	
Faculty care about students and the institution	Scale items in Table A-1
Administration is open and inclusive	Scale items in Table A-1
Most students here know very little about Hispanic culture	1 = disagree strongly to 4 = agree strongly
Student Behaviors	
Enrolled in a Latino studies course	Dichotomous: 1 = no; 2 = yes
Discussed racial issues	1 = not at all to 3 = frequently
Dating preferences in college	1 = only Hispanic/minority; 5 = only non-Hispanic white
Informal social preferences in college	1 = only Hispanic/minority; 5 = only non-Hispanic white
Interacted across racial/ethnic groups	Factor items in Table A-1
Participated in Hispanic student clubs or organizations	Dichotomous: 1 = no or none available; 2 = yes

TABLE 2. Survey Items Reflecting the Institutional Climate for Diversity (N = 859)

Survey Item	Percentage of Students
Perceptual Dimension	
Perceptions of Racial/Ethnic Tension on Campus[a]	
Most students here know very little about Hispanic culture	68.4
There is a lot of campus racial conflict here	29.1
There is little trust between minority students groups and campus administrators	25.4
Students of different racial/ethnic origins communicate well with one another	77.4
Many Hispanic students feel like they do not "fit in" on this campus	28.6
Most students at this institution believe that minorities were special admits	42.7
Behavioral Dimension	
Experienced Discrimination on Campus[b]	
Felt excluded from school activities because of your Hispanic background	13.1
Were insulted or threatened by other students because of your Hispanic background	15.3
Heard faculty make inappropriate remarks regarding minorities	17.9
Anglo students here have much more access to faculty support than Hispanic students[a]	15.5
Interacted Across Racial/Ethnic groups on Campus[b]	
Dined with someone from a different racial/ethnic group	71.1
Studied with someone from a different racial/ethnic group	61.8
Had a roommate from a different racial/ethnic group	57.4
Dated someone from a different racial/ethnic group	39.5

Source: 1991 National Survey of Hispanic Students, students entering college in 1989 and 1990.
[a]Students reported they "agree" or "agree strongly" with this statement about their campus.
[b]Students reported they "frequently" interacted.

RESULTS

Table 2 shows results from the 1991 survey that measure Latino student responses regarding the campus climate for diversity. These Latino students report high levels of interaction with students from different racial/ethnic groups. Over three-quarters of the students report that students of different racial/ethnic origins communicate well with one another, and a relatively high percentage report informal interactions such as frequent dining (71 percent) or

studying (62 percent) with someone from a different racial/ethnic group. Although more than half of the students report that they frequently had a roommate from a different racial/ethnic background, students are less likely to have dated across racial/ethnic lines on campus (40 percent). Even though there is a relatively high amount of interaction across racial/ethnic groups, more than one in four Latino students reports there is a lot of campus racial conflict and that there is little trust between minority student groups and administrators on campus.

Although these Latino students have a high potential for college success according to traditional measures of achievement (i.e., test scores and high school grades), about 29 percent reported that many Hispanic students feel like they do not "fit in" on their campus. Perhaps more striking is how these students think they are perceived by other students on campus. Approximately 43 percent report that most students at their institution believe that minorities are special admits. Despite these perceptions, a much smaller percentage of students feel excluded from school activities (13 percent) or face direct insults/threats because of their Hispanic background (15 percent). Approximately 16 percent feel that white students have more access to faculty support, and 18 percent report that they had heard faculty make inappropriate comments regarding minorities. Thus, despite their strong achievement characteristics upon college entry, results indicate that Latinos continue to experience some degree of discrimination on college campuses.

Table 3 shows the results of regressing measures of the climate on student and institutional characteristics. The regression models account for 48 percent of the variance in perceptions of racial/ethnic tension and 33 percent of the variance in reports of discrimination on campus. Key determinants of these climate factors are reported in four general categories: student background characteristics, college characteristics, general college climate measures, and student behaviors during college.

Student Background Characteristics

While the majority of the student background measures have no significant relationship to perceptions of racial/ethnic tension or discrimination on campus, there are a few key aspects that distinguish students who are likely to perceive or report problematic climates. Students who perceive that inequalities for Hispanics in society are generally due to systematic discrimination also tend to report racial/ethnic tension (.23) and experiences of discrimination on campus (.22). Due to the limitations of cross-sectional data, one cannot causally determine whether campus climate influences students' perceptions of inequality in the larger society, or whether it is their view of the external world that influences how they view the campus climate. This result does suggest, however,

TABLE 3. Regression of Dependent Measures on Student and Institutional Characteristics

	Campus Climate Measures			
	Perceptions of Racial/Ethnic Tension		Experienced Discrimination	
	B	*t*	*B*	*t*
Student Background Characteristics				
Demographic				
Gender (Female)	−.01	−.37	−.05	−1.48
Puerto Rican	−.04	−1.24	.00	−.02
Chicano	.07	1.89	.06	1.39
Size of hometown	.00	.04	.01	.47
Prior Socialization Contexts				
SES	−.00	−.22	−.02	−.70
Distance of the college from home	.00	.11	−.05	−1.26
Percentage of Hispanics in high school	−.06	−1.63	.06	1.43
Latino consciousness	−.03	−.88	.04	.89
First generation in this country	.09*	2.37	.02	.44
English is not first language	−.03	−.92	−.01	−.27
Attitudes and Values				
Goal: help to promote racial understanding	.02	.47	.08*	2.08
Academic ability self-rating	−.06*	−2.05	−.04	−1.35
Inequalities in society for Hispanics due to system	.23**	7.50	.22**	6.16
To be successful it is important not to emphasize my ethnicity	−.00	−.07	.02	.61
College Structural Characteristics				
Hispanic undergraduate enrollment (structural diversity)	−.17**	−3.89	−.15**	−3.08
Size of college town	−.11**	−3.68	−.06	−1.70
Size of college	.21**	5.05	.12*	2.49
Average SAT of college freshmen	.10*	2.33	−.00	−.14
College control type (public college)	.00	−.07	−.07	−.98
Tuition costs	.05	.66	−.06	−.77
General College Climate Measures				
Faculty care about students and the institution	−.10**	−2.75	−.14**	−3.44
Administration is open and inclusive	−.26**	−7.79	−.15**	−3.77
Most students here know very little about Hispanic culture	.26**	3.47	.18**	5.26

TABLE 3. *(Continued)*

	Campus Climate Measures			
	Perceptions of Racial/Ethnic Tension		Experienced Discrimination	
	B	*t*	*B*	*t*
Student Behaviors				
Discussed racial issues	.11**	3.48	.15**	4.03
Enrolled in a Latino studies course	.05	1.83	.02	.74
Dating preferences in college (non-Hispanic white)	−.03	−.94	−.08*	−1.99
Informal social preferences in college (non-Hispanic white)	.09*	2.73	.05	1.16
Interacted across racial/ethnic groups	−.05	−1.68	−.03	−.63
Participated in Hispanic student clubs or organizations	.07*	2.30	.05	1.29
R^2	.48		.33	

Note: B represents standardized regression coefficients.
*indicates $p = \leq .05$; **$p = \leq .01$.

that racial/ethnic tension occurring in our educational institutions is often associated with events in the larger society. Latino students who are in the first generation born in this country (.09) and students who rate themselves lower on academic ability (−.06) are also likely to perceive racial/ethnic tension on campus. In addition, students who are strongly committed to the personal goal of helping to promote racial understanding on campus are likely to report having experienced discrimination on campus. This latter finding suggests that Latino students do not retreat when faced directly with discrimination, but may actually turn a negative experience into a goal for social change.

College Structural Characteristics

Measures from various data sources on institutional characteristics show distinct structural differences among the types of institutions where Latino students tend to report a hostile climate. Racial/ethnic tension and experiences of discrimination are more likely to be reported among Latinos at larger campuses (.21 and .12, respectively) and least likely to be reported on campuses with high Hispanic undergraduate enrollments (−.17 and −.15, respectively). Students attending highly selective colleges and colleges located in smaller college towns are more likely to report racial/ethnic tension on campus, which suggests that such college environments may be less open to a Latino presence.

General College Climate

In addition to structural characteristics, measures of student perceptions of the general college climate were obtained to test its association with a hostile climate. Students who perceive that the campus administration is open and inclusive tend to perceive relatively low racial/ethnic tension (−.26) and are less likely to report experiences of discrimination on campus. Similarly, students who perceive that the faculty care about students and the welfare of the institution are significantly less likely to report racial/ethnic tension (−.10) or experiences of discrimination (−14). In contrast, Latinos who report that most students at their college know very little about Hispanic culture tend to report experiences of discrimination (.18) and perceive racial/ethnic tension (.26) on their campus. These findings show the importance of all members of the campus community—students, faculty, and administrators—working together to develop and maintain an open and responsive environment for Latino students.

Student Behaviors

Students engage in a variety of behaviors in college that allow them to deal effectively with hostile environments. Latinos who frequently discuss racial issues are in environments where they perceive high racial/ethnic tension and report many experiences of discrimination on campus. Dating preferences that included mostly non-Hispanic white students are negatively associated with experiences of discrimination, indicating that these students felt included at a very personal level. However, those who socialize with mostly white students as well as students who participate in Hispanic clubs and organizations are likely to perceive racial/ethnic tension on campus, but are not significantly more likely to report discrimination than students reporting other social preferences. Taken together, these findings show that students in different social niches on campus may perceive racial tension but are not more likely to personally experience discrimination. In addition, students who frequently interact across racial/ethnic groups are not significantly more likely to perceive tension or experience hostility. It may be that each social group constitutes a form of support that reinforces group boundaries but also serves to shield individuals from exposure to discrimination. Further study is needed in the area of informal and formal interaction, both across and within ethnic groups, in order to further understand the behavioral dimensions that construct the campus climate.

DISCUSSION

The Experiences of Talented Latino Students

This examination of the institutional climate for talented Latino students presents an important set of findings that may help institutions target programming

that will improve the climate for diversity. The majority of Latino students in this study (68 percent) feel that students at their institution know very little about Hispanic culture, a factor that is significantly associated with Latino student perceptions of racial/ethnic tension and reports of discrimination on campus. Despite these cultural differences, Latino students report frequent informal social interaction (dining, studying, rooming) with students from other racial/ethnic groups. Thus, it appears that Latinos are able to find general social acceptance on campus among other students who have had very little contact with their culture prior to coming to college. This informal interaction constitutes an education in itself for promoting an understanding of group differences among students. However, campuses can implement more formal educational activities, such as cultural events and speakers, to increase the level of familiarity with Hispanic culture on campus.

At the same time that these students report frequent informal social interaction, it is important to note that Latino students may not find acceptance on more intimate levels, and still face some degree of stereotyping and discrimination on campus. Although Latinos who date mostly white students are least likely to report discrimination on campus, a much smaller proportion are likely to engage in this form of social interaction across racial/ethnic groups than other types of activities. Latinos also tend to report slightly higher racial conflict on their campuses than was reported nationally (29 versus 25 percent; see Hurtado, 1992, for national figures). Despite their strong achievement orientations upon entry into college, more than one-quarter report that many Hispanics feel like they do not "fit in," and more than one-third think that most students believe minorities are "special admits." Higher college selectivity is also associated with perceptions of racial/ethnic tension on campus. These findings strongly suggest that there are elements of institutional culture, perhaps associated with its historical legacy of exclusion, that continue to resist a Latino presence on campus.

A small proportion of Latinos also experienced insults or threats from other students (15 percent) or heard faculty make inappropriate remarks about minorities (18 percent). Despite accusations of "political correctness" and resistance from free speech advocates, many campuses over the last few years have sought to eliminate these overt incidents of harassment through campus policies aimed at creating a more civil community. Promoting civility and tolerance among students and creating a sensitive faculty remains one of the greatest challenges that institutions face today.

Determinants of a Hostile Climate

What are the important student background characteristics that make students more aware or sensitive to a hostile climate? Latino students who believe that Hispanics face social inequalities due to systematic discrimination tend to per-

ceive racial tension and report discrimination on their campus. Furthermore, those with a strong interest in promoting racial understanding are also likely to report having experienced discrimination on campus. As stated earlier, it is not clear whether their views of the external environment influenced their responses, or whether their campus experiences influence their values and views of society at large. Longitudinal research in the future may help tease out these causal relationships and determine how Latino student attitudes and values are shaped. There is less causal ambiguity when it comes to other student characteristics, however. Students who report they are in the first generation of family members to be born in the U.S. and students with lower academic self-ratings (measured on the SDQ) are likely to perceive racial tension on campus. It may be that these groups are generally more vulnerable and less secure about their place in college. Although there is considerable heterogeneity among the Latino student population, these were the only background characteristics that distinguished students who perceived racial tension or experienced discrimination on campus. The college's structural characteristics and other dimensions of the environment played an influential role in how students experienced the institutional climate for diversity.

Much of these findings replicate and extend previous research on the racial climates conducted on several racial/ethnic groups (Hurtado, 1992; Tuch, 1987). For example, this work confirms that large campuses are struggling with racial/ethnic tension and reports of discrimination (Hurtado, 1992). At the same time, however, Latino students attending college in small towns were more likely to perceive racial tension. Given that Latino populations are concentrated in large urban centers, it may be that these smaller communities are less tolerant of ethnic diversity and contribute to perceptions of tension on campus. This is consistent with what Tuch (1987) has found regarding community size and racial tolerance. Contrary to what Blalock (1967) hypothesized, however, larger Hispanic enrollments on campuses were associated with perceptions of low racial/ethnic tension and are less likely to be associated with reports of discrimination. This indicates that increasing the diversity of an institution can lead to better institutional climates for Latinos. Campuses that continue structural diversity policies in the form of aggressive recruitment strategies may improve their climates in the future.

Increasing the numbers of Latino students, however, cannot be the only answer to improving diversity on campus. Perhaps the most important finding of this study has to do with the general climate on campus. Low racial tension and fewer experiences of discrimination are associated with campuses where Latinos perceive campus administrators were open and responsive to student concerns. In addition, campuses where students perceive that faculty care about student development and the welfare of the institution are characterized by low hostility as measured by both the perceptual and behavioral measures. This

finding indicates that the actions and attitudes conveyed by faculty and administrators play an important role in setting a general tone on campus that makes students feel valued. Campuses may consider redirecting funds toward programming that increases student and faculty contact, increases student input in campus decision making, and fosters a hospitable administrative environment.

What role does intragroup and intergroup student interaction play in constructing the climate for diversity? Students who socialize with mostly non-Hispanic white students, members of Hispanic clubs and organizations, and students who frequently discuss racial issues perceive their campus to be more racially tense. It may be that these behaviors are adaptive strategies used by students to cope with inhospitable climates. It may also be a matter of perspective, as some may view these actions as creating additional conflict on campus. In this case, we will not know whether such behaviors create tension or are reactions to tense racial climates until we are able to separate these behaviors and perceptions temporally. Clearly much more research needs to be conducted to determine the extent to which student behaviors contribute to the construction of the institutional climate for diversity.

Implications for Institutional Research

Recent data released on college graduation rates suggest that Hispanic graduation rates are consistently below those of white students on the majority of college campuses (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 1992). While many institutional studies focus on the educational outcomes (academic performance and retention) of different racial/ethnic groups on campuses, this work suggests that understanding Latino student experiences is the first step in developing successful intervention strategies that may eventually improve student outcomes. The first step in this policy-making process is to conduct research on our respective campuses to understand the dimensions of the problems that students face. This may prevent more serious problems that plague our campuses, including racial tension and low graduation rates. Institutional research that includes a careful examination of an institution's history, and the structural, perceptual, and behavioral dimensions of the college environment, is encouraged on individual campuses. This type of climate research may function much like preventive medicine, identifying problems and proposing successful interventions in a timely fashion.

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TABLE A-1. Factor Analysis: Campus Climate Factors

Factors and Survey Items	Factor Loading	Internal Consistency (Alpha)
Experienced Discrimination/Exclusion		.61
Felt excluded from school activities because of your Hispanic background[a]	.62	
Were insulted or threatened by other students because of your Hispanic background[a]	.61	
Heard faculty make inappropriate remarks regarding minorities[a]	.40	
Anglo students here have much more access to faculty support than Hispanic students[b]	.35	
Perceptions of Campus Racial/Ethnic Tension		.73
There is a lot of campus racial conflict here[b]		

TABLE A-1. (*Continued*)

Factors and Survey Items	Factor Loading	Internal Consistency (Alpha)
There is little trust between minority student groups and campus administrators[b]	.58	
Students of different racial/ethnic origins communicate well with one another (reversed for analyses)[b]	−.50	
Many Hispanic students feel like they do not "fit in" on this campus[b]	.39	
Most students at this institution believe that minorities were special admits[b]	.39	
Interacted Across Racial/Ethnic Groups[c]		.68
Dined with someone from a different racial/ethnic group[a]	−.81	
Studied with someone from a different racial/ethnic group[a]	−.66	
Had a roommate from a different racial/ethnic group[a]	−.53	
Dated someone from a different racial/ethnic group[a]	−.50	
Faculty Care About Students and the Institution		.70
Faculty here are interested in students' personal problems[b]	.76	
Faculty here are strongly interested in the academic problems of undergraduates[b]	.58	
There are many opportunities for faculty and students to socialize with one another[b]	.49	
Faculty are committed to the welfare of this institution[b]	.46	
Most faculty here are sensitive to the issues of minorities[b]	.45	
Administration is Open and Inclusive[c]		.76
Administrators consider student concerns when making policy[b]	−.69	
Administrators consider faculty when making policy[b]	−.49	
Campus administrators care little about what happens to students[b]	.47	

Note: [a] Three-point scale: from "not at all" = 1 to "frequently" = 3.
[b] Four-point scale: from "disagree strongly" = 1 to "agree strongly" = 4.
[c] Oblique rotation reverses the sign of the factor in the estimation process. As the factor name implies, all were positively scaled for subsequent analyses.

TABLE A-2. Additional Scales and Survey Items

Latino Consciousness: Alpha Reliability .79
Participating in programs to help the Hispanic community[a]
Maintaining Hispanic cultural traditions[a]
I am uncomfortable participating in programs or organizations that are primarily for Hispanics (reversed)[b]

Inequality in Society for Hispanics Due to System: Alpha Reliability .71
Discrimination against Hispanics is still a major problem in obtaining good jobs[b]
Any student, regardless of race, has the same opportunities to do well after graduating from college (reversed)[b]
A hostile climate at colleges and universities is largely responsible for creating barriers to Hispanic student success[b]
When faced with two equally qualified candidates, one Hispanic and one Anglo, employers are less likely to choose the Hispanic[b]
If Hispanics do not achieve success in school, they have only themselves to blame (reversed)[b]

Activism/Social Change Orientation: Alpha Reliability .58
Personal goal: Influencing the political structure[a]
Personal goal: Influencing social values[a]
The best way to make things better for Hispanics is through political pressure and social action[b]
There are times when students should violate college rules or policies in order to fight discrimination[b]
Rather than "rocking the boat," Hispanics should focus on individual achievement[b]

Socioeconomic Status: Alpha reliability .78
Parental income[c]
Level of mother's education[d]
Level of father's education[d]

Ability Self-Rating: Alpha Reliability .62
Mathematical ability[e]
Scientific ability[e]
Writing ability[e]

Note: Factors developed through exploratory procedures in Hurtado (1993).
[a]Four-point scale: 1 = "not important" to 4 = "essential."
[b]Four-point scale: 1 = "disagree strongly" to 4 = agree strongly."
[c]Seven-point scale: 1 = "$1,000 to 14,999" to 7 = "over $95,000."
[d]Nine-point scale: 1 = "grammar school or less" to 9 = "graduate/professional degree."
[e]Four-point scale: 1 = "below average" to 4 = "highest 10%."