

# The Climate for Diversity: Studying Student Perceptions and Experiences in the First Year of College

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Association for Institutional Research

June 2, 2009

Atlanta, GA

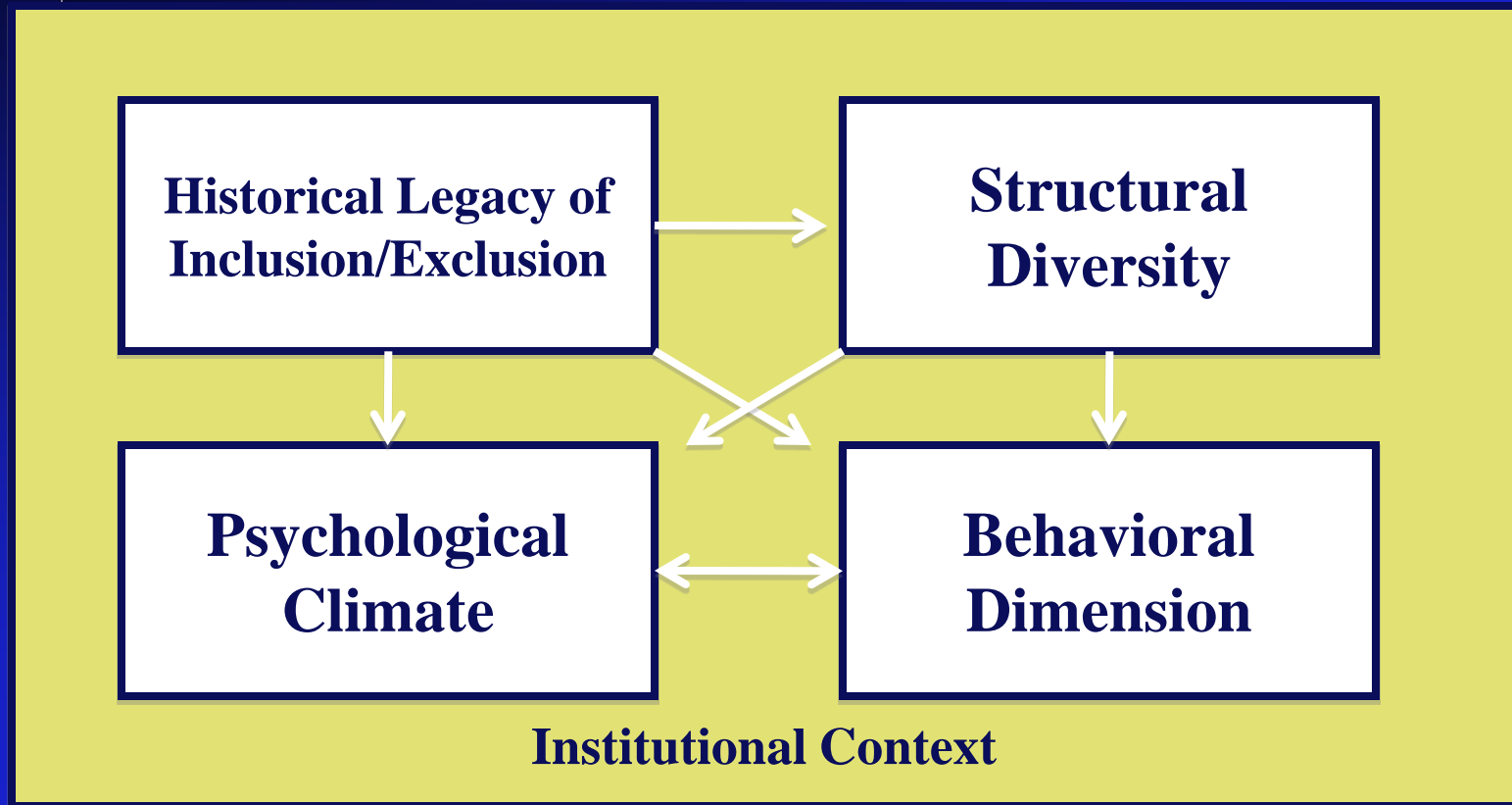
# Purpose

- Project: Diverse Learning Environments: Assessing and Creating Conditions for Student Success
- Climate remains central to students' experiences and educational outcomes
- Goal: Extend climate research, link with practices, and learn next steps for extending assessment in this area

# Campus Racial Climate

Government/Policy Context

Sociohistorical Context



(Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999)

# Literature

- Campus climate effects on student learning outcomes
  - Academic and social self-concept
  - College satisfaction
  - Social and Academic Integration
  - Students' intellectual, social, and civic development
  - Retention, and degree completion

(Chang, 1999; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Berger & Milem, 1999; Rhee, 2008; Locks, Hurtado, Bowman & Oseguera, 2008; Chang, Astin & Kim, 2004; Musesus, et al., 2008)

# Literature Continued

- **Differential perceptions and experiences of climate based on racial group membership** (Cabrera & Nora, 1994; Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella & Hagedorn, 1999; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1996; Johnson, et al., 2007; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Smedley, et al., 1993)
- **Intergroup relations, theories of privilege and oppression** (Harro, 2000; Tatum, 1997; Young, 2000; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Adams, et al., 2000; Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000)

# Research Questions

- 1) How do students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds perceive the campus climate for diversity in the first year of college?
- 2) What factors influence a student's experience of a hostile racial climate in the first year?

# Method

- Data
  - 2004 CIRP Freshman Survey
  - 2005 CIRP Your First College Year Survey
- Sample
  - African American/ Black:  $n = 2,836$
  - American Indian/ Alaska Native:  $n = 593$
  - Asian American/ Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (APA):  $n = 2,221$
  - Latino/a:  $n = 2,399$
  - White/ Caucasian random sample:  $n = 2,500$
- Blocked Multiple Linear Regression
- Structural Equation Modeling

# Dependent Variables

## Reliability & Factor Loadings

<b>Experiences of a Hostile Campus Climate</b>	<b>(.631)</b>
Had guarded, cautious interactions	.843
Had tense, somewhat hostile interactions	.847
I have heard faculty express stereotypes about racial/ethnic groups in class	.554
<b>Perceptions of a Hostile Campus Climate</b>	<b>(.630)</b>
Felt insulted or threatened because of my race/ethnicity	.750
I have been singled out because of my race/ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation	.779
There is a lot of racial tension on this campus	.751



# Regression: Explained Variance by Race

Racial Group	R <sup>2</sup> Perceptions	R <sup>2</sup> Experiences
African American/ Black	.524	.430
American Indian/ Alaska Native	.465	.446
Asian American/ Asian (APA)	.453	.428
Latino/a	.451	.397
White/ Caucasian	.430	.439

# Regression: Student Experiences

- Demographics
  - Males are more likely to report experiences a hostile campus climate ( $p < .001$ ), with the exception of American Indians
  - Socioeconomic status is not significantly related to reporting experiences of a hostile climate
- Pre-College Characteristics
  - Having the goal of promoting racial understanding is positively correlated with reporting experiences of a hostile climate (Students of Color  $p < .01$ , White  $p < .05$ ), but is not significant in the final model

# Regression: Student Experiences

- Institutional Characteristics
  - APA students who attend private institutions are more likely to report experiencing a hostile climate  
( $b = .06, p < .01$ )
- College Experiences
  - Studying with other students for Latino, APA, and White students is significantly related to reporting hostile experiences  
(Latino & APA  $p < .05$ , White  $p < .01$ )
  - Regardless of participation in remedial, honors, first year seminar, and academic support programs for racial minority students, there is no difference in reporting hostile experiences

# Regression: Student Experiences

- Perceptions of College Environment
  - For all racial groups, perceptions of a hostile climate is positively related to reporting hostile experiences
    - African American/ Black:  $b = .57, p < .001$
    - American Indian:  $b = .59, p < .001$
    - APA:  $b = .58, p < .001$
    - Latino/a:  $b = .56, p < .001$
    - White:  $b = .57, p < .001$
  - The more psychologically isolated students feel, the more hostile experiences they report, with the exception of American Indians
    - African American/ Black:  $b = .06, p < .001$
    - American Indian:  $b = .07$ , not sig.
    - APA:  $b = .09, p < .001$
    - Latino/a:  $b = .06, p < .01$
    - White:  $b = .06, p < .01$

# Regression: Student Perceptions

- Demographics
  - Socioeconomic status is not significant
  - Contrary to the experiences, there are no gender differences in perceptions of a hostile climate
  - APAs with a lower HS GPA perceive a more hostile climate ( $b = -.05, p < .01$ )
- Pre-College Characteristics
  - Having the goal of promoting racial understanding is predictive of perceiving a hostile campus climate for all groups in the final model ( $p < .01$ ), except APAs

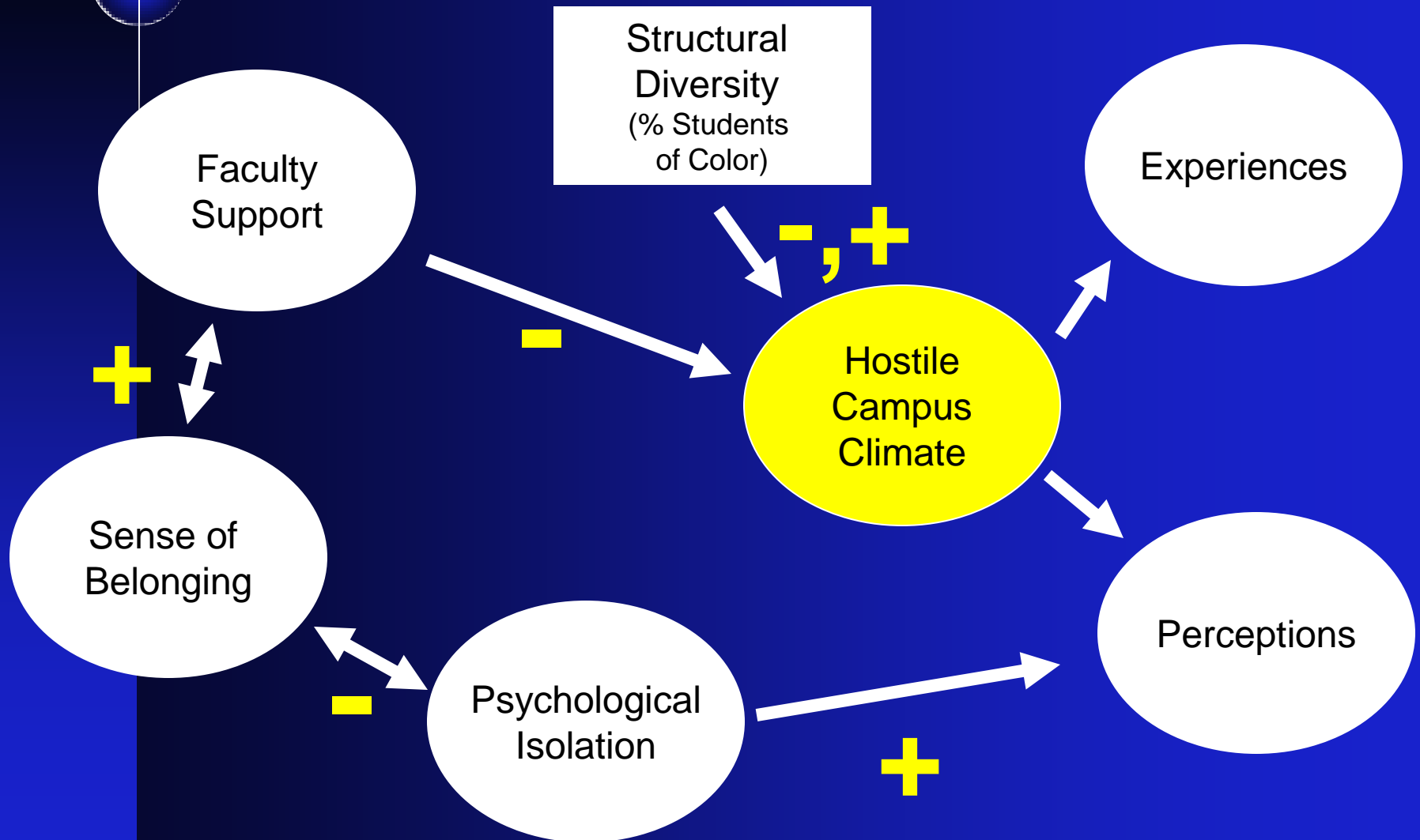
# Regression: Student Perceptions

- Institutional Characteristics
  - The higher the percentage of Students of Color, Black, Latino, and APA students perceive a less hostile climate ( $p < .001$ )
- College Experiences
  - Students who felt their family responsibilities interfered with their academics were more likely to perceive a hostile campus climate (Black, Latino, APA,  $p < .01$ )
  - APA and Black students who participated in an academic program for racial minority students are more likely to perceive a more hostile climate

# Regression: Student Perceptions

- Perceptions of College Environment
  - For all racial groups, experiences of a hostile climate are positively predictive of perceptions
  - The lower the sense of belonging, the more Students of Color perceive a hostile climate (Blacks and Latinos  $p < .001$ ; APAs and American Indians  $p < .01$ )
  - The more psychologically isolated students feel, the more hostile they perceive the climate to be ( $p < .001$  for all groups except American Indians)

# Structural Equation Model

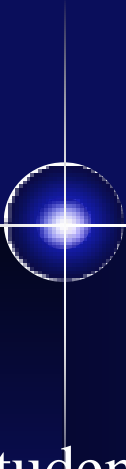




# SEM: Model-Fit Results

	<b>African American / Black</b>	<b>American Indian/ Alaska Native</b>	<b>Asian American / Asian</b>	<b>Latino</b>	<b>White</b>
$\chi^2$	1358.321	351.845	1227.726	1285.269	1229.879
df	123	123	123	123	123
NFI	0.893	0.873	0.885	0.881	0.895
Non-NFI	0.878	0.891	0.870	0.864	0.881
CFI	0.902	0.913	0.895	0.891	0.904
RMSEA	0.062	0.057	0.064	0.064	0.061

# SEM Findings by Race



	<b>Black</b>	<b>Am. Indian</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Latino</b>	<b>White</b>
% Student of Color →	<b>-0.47</b>	<b>-0.06</b>	<b>-0.15</b>	<b>-0.11</b>	<b>0.05</b>
Hostile Campus Climate					

# Discussion/Implications

- Separate group analyses identified some unique effects for specific groups
- Increasing student diversity improves the climate on campus for Students of Color, but White students may experience a more hostile climate as they become less of a majority – improve intergroup relations
- Faculty support, and sense of belonging are key to the development of an inclusive environment

# Discussion/Implications

- More work is needed to tease out the distinctions between behaviors and perceptions
- Both perceptions and experiences contribute to a hostile climate on campus—a higher order factor
- In other words, behaviors and perceptions are two distinct components, however they are inextricably linked

# Contact Information



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