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

Sylvia Hurtado, Lucy Arellano, Chelsea Wann, Marcela Cuellar, Cynthia Alvarez, Luz Colin

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

Institutional Context

Historical Legacy of Inclusion/Exclusion

Structural Diversity

Psychological Climate

Behavioral Dimension

(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)
• Differential perceptions and experiences of climate based on racial group membership

• 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

**Experiences of a Hostile Campus Climate (0.631)**
- Had guarded, cautious interactions
  - 0.843
- Had tense, somewhat hostile interactions
  - 0.847
- I have heard faculty express stereotypes about racial/ethnic groups in class
  - 0.554

**Perceptions of a Hostile Campus Climate (0.630)**
- Felt insulted or threatened because of my race/ethnicity
  - 0.750
- I have been singled out because of my race/ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation
  - 0.779
- There is a lot of racial tension on this campus
  - 0.751
## Regression: Explained Variance by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Group</th>
<th>$R^2$ Perceptions</th>
<th>$R^2$ Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American/ Black</td>
<td>.524</td>
<td>.430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/ Alaska Native</td>
<td>.465</td>
<td>.446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American/ Asian (APA)</td>
<td>.453</td>
<td>.428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/a</td>
<td>.451</td>
<td>.397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/ Caucasian</td>
<td>.430</td>
<td>.439</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regression: Student Experiences

- **Demographics**
  - Males are more likely to report experiences of 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 ($b = -0.05$, $p < 0.01$)

- 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 ($p < 0.01$), 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

- Faculty Support
- Sense of Belonging
- Psychological Isolation
-Structural Diversity (% Students of Color)
- Hostile Campus Climate
- Experiences
- Perceptions

+ + + - - + - -
### SEM: Model-Fit Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African American / Black</th>
<th>American Indian/Alaska Native</th>
<th>Asian American / Asian</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$x^2$</td>
<td>1358.321</td>
<td>351.845</td>
<td>1227.726</td>
<td>1285.269</td>
<td>1229.879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFI</td>
<td>0.893</td>
<td>0.873</td>
<td>0.885</td>
<td>0.881</td>
<td>0.895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-NFI</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td>0.891</td>
<td>0.870</td>
<td>0.864</td>
<td>0.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>0.902</td>
<td>0.913</td>
<td>0.895</td>
<td>0.891</td>
<td>0.904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## SEM Findings by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Student of Color</th>
<th>Hostile Campus Climate</th>
<th>Faculty Support</th>
<th>Sense of Belonging</th>
<th>Psychological Isolation</th>
<th>Climate Perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Am. Indian</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hostile Campus Climate**
- Black: -0.47
- Am. Indian: -0.06
- Asian: -0.15
- Latino: -0.11
- White: 0.05
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

Diverse Learning Environments Project
Higher Education Research Institute
University of California, Los Angeles
3005 Moore Hall, Box 951521
Los Angeles, CA 90095

Phone: 310-267-5930
Email: dleproject@gseis.ucla.edu
www.heri.ucla.edu/dle