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Enhancing Campus Climates for Racial/Ethnic Diversity: Educational Policy and Practice

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Probably few policy areas of higher education have received more recent attention than the issue of race on campus. Evidence appears in policies and programs related to college admissions, financial aid, affirmative action, discrimination and harassment, and desegregation. Yet, at the same time, probably no area of campus life has been so devoid of policy initiatives as the racial climate at individual institutions. Until recently, there has been no common framework for understanding the campus racial climate in a way that helps develop policies and practices that can be used to enhance the campus climate.

We pose four possible explanations for this phenomenon. First, higher education leaders and higher education institutions have taken the *laissez-*

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faire approach that people will (should) work things out interactively and that it is wrong to intervene too closely in student interactions (Horowitz, 1987). The second explanation involves ambiguity in the role that colleges and universities perform as agents of socialization. Administrators and faculty recognize that students bring with them to college a sense of identity and purpose shaped by their parents, their communities, their religions, etc., and that these influences are critically important to students' growth and development. The quandary lies in just how much of a resocializing agent higher education institutions wish to be. Higher education has not decided whether it should merely reflect our society or whether it should try to consciously shape the society. Third, while research findings document the important role that faculty serve as the "designated socializing agents" in higher education (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969, p. 227), policy initiatives that address faculty attitudes and behaviors have been implemented only with great hesitation and caution. Until now, it seems that only the most problematic discriminatory behaviors of faculty have been addressed. Finally, the situation has been exacerbated by neglect. A rich history of research on issues that affect the campus racial climate has existed for some time. However, this research has not always been valued by the higher education community. A study analyzing the major paradigms used in manuscripts published in "major" higher education journals found that fewer than 2% used paradigms that addressed issues of race from a critical perspective with the goal of producing meaningful change (Milam, 1989).

Attorneys, policy-makers, and institutional leaders across the country are searching for research evidence that demonstrates the benefits of diversity and documents persistent discrimination and inequality in higher education. Perhaps at no other time in our history have higher education scholars had the opportunity to provide evidence of the educational outcomes of diversity in a way that puts the benefits of diversity at the center of the educational enterprise. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how research on issues related to campus racial climate can be used to enhance educational policy and practice. Both classic and contemporary research can inform national policy and debates surrounding affirmative action and other policies to create diverse learning environments (Hurtado, Milem,

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Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, in press). What is needed are vehicles that translate higher education research into thoughtful policies incorporating the goal of educating diverse students. While such vehicles, or "translation documents," can be written in any number of higher education policy arenas, this paper focuses on the critical need for sustaining progress in educating diverse students.

We conducted an extensive multidisciplinary analysis of the research literature on the sources and outcomes of campus racial climate and developed a framework for understanding and describing the campus climate. It is our hope that policy-makers, institutional leaders, and scholars of higher education will find this framework useful as they seek to create comfortable, diverse environments for learning and socializing that facilitate the intellectual and social development of all students.

A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING CAMPUS CLIMATE

Considerable research on various racial/ethnic students in higher education addresses an array of cognitive and affective outcomes and group differences in educational attainments (Durán, 1983; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Sedlacek, 1987). While these earlier research syntheses represent scholarly work on the achievement of various racial/ethnic groups, they contain almost no specific references to the institutional climate's potential influence on diversity. Some literature refers to the climate as important but "intangible." Recently, both qualitative and quantitative researchers have provided greater definition for this "intangible" quality by examining how students, faculty, and administrators perceive the institutional climate for racial/ethnic diversity, their experiences with campus diversity, and their own attitudes and interactions with different racial/ethnic groups. Multi-institutional studies have also shown, using a variety of measures, that the climate for diversity varies substantially from one institutional context to another (El-Khawas, 1989; Gilliard, 1996; Hurtado, 1992; Peterson, Blackburn, Gamson, Arce, Davenport, & Mingle, 1978).

This manuscript provides a framework for understanding four dimensions of the campus climate and a conceptual handle for understanding elements of the environment that were once thought too complex to comprehend. This framework was first introduced in a study of the climate for Latino students (Hurtado, 1994) and further developed in a synthesis of research done for practitioners (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, in press). It makes concrete observations of institutions and individuals. It also defines areas where research has been conducted and, more importantly, where practical or programmatic solutions can be targeted.

Most institutions, when considering diversity on campus, tend to focus on increasing the numbers of racial/ethnic students. While this area of in-

stitutional effort is important, the four-part framework underscores other elements that require also attention, defining key areas upon which to focus diversity efforts. The studies we reviewed contain specific references to these various dimensions of the climate, describe the climate's impact on students from different racial/ethnic groups, and capture the experiences or unique perspectives of racial/ethnic groups that have historically been underrepresented in higher education.

Central to the conceptualization of a campus climate for diversity is the concept that students are educated in distinct racial contexts. These contexts in higher education are shaped by external and internal (institutional) forces. We represent the external components of climate as two domains: (a) the impact of governmental policy, programs, and initiatives and (b) the impact of sociohistorical forces on campus racial climate. Examples of the first include financial aid policies and programs, state and federal policy on affirmative action, court decisions on the desegregation of higher education, and the manner in which states provide for institutional differentiation within their state system of higher education. Sociohistoric forces influencing the climate for diversity on campus are events or issues in the larger society, nearly always originating outside the campus, that influence how people view racial diversity in society. They stimulate discussion or other activity within the campus. Obviously, these two domains influence each other. Tierney (1997) points out, "No policy can be isolated from the social arena in which it is enacted" (p. 177). While research literature documents the effect of governmental policy, programs, and initiatives (particularly in financial aid), there are fewer studies of the influence of sociohistorical forces on the campus racial climate.

The institutional context contains four dimensions resulting from educational programs and practices. They include an institution's historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of various racial/ethnic groups, its structural diversity in terms of numerical representation of various racial/ethnic groups, the psychological climate of perceptions and attitudes between and among groups, and the behavioral climate dimension, characterized by intergroup relations on campus. We conceive the institutional climate as a product of these various elements.

It is important to note that these dimensions are connected, not discrete. For example, the historical vestiges of segregation have an impact on an institution's ability to improve its racial/ethnic student enrollments, and the underrepresentation of specific groups contributes to stereotypical attitudes among individuals within the learning and work environment that affect the psychological and behavioral climate. In short, while some institutions are now trying to take a "multi-layered" approach toward assessing diversity on their campuses and are developing programs to address the

climate on campus, very few recognize the importance of the dynamics of these interrelated elements of the climate.

THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT HISTORICAL LEGACY OF INCLUSION OR EXCLUSION

In many ways, the historical vestiges of segregated schools and colleges continue to affect the climate for racial/ethnic diversity on college campuses. The best example is resistance to desegregation in communities and specific campus settings, the maintenance of old campus policies at predominantly White institutions that best serve a homogeneous population, and attitudes and behaviors that prevent interaction across race and ethnicity. Because they are embedded in the culture of a historically segregated environment, many campuses sustain long-standing, often unrecognized, benefits for particular student groups (Duster, 1993).

Desegregation policies in schools and colleges were designed to alter their racial/ethnic composition, improve educational opportunity, and ultimately, change the environments of our educational institutions. Research on the outcomes of desegregation suggests that individuals who attend desegregated schools and colleges accept desegregation as adults in other educational settings, occupations, and social situations. Moreover, White adults who attended desegregated schools have fewer racial stereotypes and less fear of hostile reactions in interracial settings (Braddock, 1980, 1985; Braddock, Crain, & McPartland, 1984; Braddock & Dawkins, 1981; Braddock & McPartland, 1982, 1989; Green, 1982; Scott & McPartland, 1982).

While some campuses have a history of admitting and graduating students of color since their founding days, most predominantly White institutions (PWIs) have a history of limited access and exclusion (Thelin, 1985). A college's historical legacy of exclusion can determine the prevailing climate and influence current practices (Hurtado, 1992). Various institutional case studies document the impact of the historical context on the climate for diversity and on attempts to create a supportive climate for students of color (Peterson et al., 1978; Richardson & Skinner, 1991). Researchers found that success in creating supportive campus environments often depends on an institution's initial response to the entrance of students of color. Among important factors were the institutional philosophy of education for students of color, commitment to affirmative action, institutional intent for minority-specific programs, and attention to the psychological climate and intergroup relations on campus (Peterson et al., 1978). Higher education has had a long history of resistance to desegregation. The need for legal pressures and extended litigation to require institutions to accept their obligation to serve equitably a more diverse group of students has conveyed

not only the message of institutional resistance but, in some cases, outright hostility toward people of diverse backgrounds.

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and American Indian colleges (AICs) have historic commitments to serve populations previously excluded from higher education. These students continue to face seemingly intractable problems at PWIs. In recent years, due to dramatic changes in Latino enrollment, Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) have also begun to emphasize their commitment to educating Latino students. Today, as before, HBCUs, AICs, and HSIs not only represent alternative choices for students but also include attention to the cultural and academic development of these students and their communities as part of their mission.

Research that has examined differences in outcomes for African American students who have attended HBCUs as compared to students who have attended PWIs suggest that HBCUs provide more social and psychological support, higher levels of satisfaction and sense of community, and a greater likelihood that students will persist and complete their degrees (Allen, 1992; Allen, Epps, & Haniff, 1991; R. Davis, 1991; Jackson & Swan, 1991; Pascarella, Smart, Ethington, & Nettles, 1987). Recent findings from the National Study of Student Learning indicate that HBCUs also provide educational environments that support their students' intellectual development (Pascarella, Whitt, Nora, Edison, Hagedorn, Terenzini, 1996).

However, most racially and ethnically diverse students are educated in predominantly White environments (Carter & Wilson, 1993); therefore, PWIs's responses to desegregation are key in defining the campus racial climate. A positive response requires a clear definition of desegregation and strategic planning by the institution (Stewart, 1991). Further, the goals of desegregation plans must be precisely articulated with the objective of increasing overall representation of the historically excluded group.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Colleges and universities cannot change their past histories of exclusion nor should they deny that they exist. However, they can take steps to insure that diversity becomes a central value of their educational enterprise. Campus leaders should not assume that members of their community (particularly incoming students) know these histories, nor should they assume that teaching about these histories will lead to dissatisfaction. By being clear about an institution's past history of exclusion and the detrimental impact that this history has had on the campus, colleges and universities may garner broader support for their efforts to become more diverse through affirmative action programs and other programs and services designed to improve the climate for diversity. Moreover, acknowledging a past history of exclusion implies an institutional willingness to actively shed its exclu-

sionary past. Such efforts may be even more effective if they are coupled with a clearly articulated vision for a more inclusive future.

In assessing the influence of the campus's history, leaders must consider whether "embedded benefits" may still exist on their campus. Institutions with a history of exclusion are likely to have evolved in ways that disproportionately benefit some group. For example, at many PWIs, fraternities and sororities have been a part of campus life much longer than people of color. Predominantly White fraternities and sororities frequently have houses that provide members with a place to meet or to live that are centrally located on campus or directly adjacent to the campus while the Greek system is deeply involved in daily campus activities, politics, socials, etc. In contrast, African American fraternities and sororities at these institutions seldom have been able to accumulate similar benefits for their members. The likelihood of finding the same quality of houses in equally convenient locations is quite low. In fact, students in these organizations may struggle to find places that they can meet on or near some campuses. Research shows that these organizations are critically important to the students who join them, but African American fraternities and sororities frequently seem less central than their White counterparts in daily campus activities, politics, and socials. As campus leaders thoughtfully consider their histories of exclusion, they are likely to find many more examples.

The success of legislation and litigation regarding desegregation in higher education has been mixed at best (Williams, 1988). In the prevailing climate, the federal government is taking a somewhat passive role and deferring to states. Even where the willingness to pursue desegregation exists, the capacity for most states to regulate their colleges and universities (particularly their flagship institutions) has been limited (Williams, 1988). Hence, efforts to maintain a commitment to desegregation and equality of opportunity in higher education are most likely to succeed at the campus level with provisions for support at the state level. Desegregating predominantly White institutions is particularly important in states and communities where high-school segregation has continued; as a result, college may be the first chance for many students to encounter and interact with someone of different race or ethnicity.

According to the Southern Education Foundation (1995), HBCUs and PWIs are the result of "purposeful, state-imposed segregation," hence "no set of institutions has any more right than another to survive. The burden of desegregation should not fall exclusively or disproportionately on HBCUs" (p. xix). To require this effort would be unfair and unwise. E. B. Davis (1993) explains: "Institutions that retain a specifically black identity will not easily be able to reach the level of integration which reflects the population. They are being challenged to change their very character, while historically White

schools are being asked only to broaden access" (p. 523). HBCUs serve an essential role in the higher education system by providing educational environments that facilitate positive social, psychological, and intellectual outcomes for students who attend them. Hence, they must be maintained. Moreover, PWIs can learn much from HBCUs, AICs, and HSIs about enhancing their environments to insure the success of students of color on campus.

STRUCTURAL DIVERSITY AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENTS

Given recent assaults on affirmative action in states like California and judicial rulings like that in *Hopwood*, it is critically important to understand how changes in the enrollment of racial/ethnic students (or the lack thereof) transform into educational benefits for students. Research supports the concept that increasing the structural diversity of an institution is an important initial step toward improving the climate. First, environments with highly skewed distributions of students shape the dynamics of social interaction (Kanter, 1977). Campuses with high proportions of White students provide limited opportunities for interaction across race/ethnicity barriers and limit student learning experiences with socially and culturally diverse groups (Hurtado, Dey, & Treviño, 1994). Second, in environments that lack diverse populations, underrepresented groups are viewed as tokens. Tokenism contributes to the heightened visibility of the underrepresented group, exaggeration of group differences, and the distortion of images to fit existing stereotypes (Kanter, 1977). The sheer fact that racial and ethnic students remain minorities in majority White environments contributes to their social stigma (Steele, 1992) and can produce minority status stress (Prillerman, Myers, & Smedley, 1989; Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993). Third, an institution's stance on increasing the representation of diverse racial/ethnic groups communicates whether maintaining a multicultural environment is a high institutional priority. For example, African American, Chicano, and White students tended to report that commitment to diversity was a high institutional priority on campuses with relatively high percentages of African American and Latino students (Hurtado, 1990).

Loo and Rolison (1986) conclude that sufficient racial/ethnic enrollments can give potential recruits the impression that the campus is hospitable: "No matter how outstanding the academic institution, ethnic minority students can feel alienated if their ethnic representation on campus is small" (p. 72). However, increasing the numbers of students of color on campus is not free from problems. The racial/ethnic restructuring of student enrollments can trigger conflict and resistance among groups. It can also create a need for institutional changes more substantial than first envisioned. Resulting changes affect both the academic and social life of the institution,

resulting in, for example, the development of ethnic studies programs, diverse student organizations, specific academic support programs, and multicultural programming (Muñoz, 1989; Peterson et al., 1978; Treviño, 1992).

Increases in diverse student enrollment, however, have also become problematic for the White majority and racial/ethnic minority groups. Race relations theorists hypothesize that the larger the relative size of the minority group, the more likely it is that there will be minority/majority conflict over limited resources (Blalock, 1967). On campuses where Asian American enrollments have increased substantially, Asian American students have reported more personal experiences of discrimination than any other group (Asian Pacific, 1990). White students tend to perceive racial tension on predominantly White campuses with relatively high African American enrollments (Hurtado, 1992). However, results from this study also show that, when students feel that they are valued and that faculty and administrators are devoted to their development, they are less likely to report racial/ethnic tension on campus. This finding suggests that campuses can minimize racial tension and competition among groups by creating more "student-centered" environments.

Chang (1996) found that maximizing cross-racial interaction and encouraging ongoing discussions about race are educational practices that benefit all students. However, when minority enrollments increased without implementing these activities, students of color reported less overall satisfaction with their college experience (Chang, 1996). Thus, increasing only the structural diversity of an institution without considering the influence of each of the other dimensions of the campus racial climate is likely to produce problems for students at these institutions.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Clearly, one important step toward improving the campus climate for diversity is to increase the representation of people of color on campus. Hence, institutional and government policy must insure that access to college is available to all members of our society. Admissions practices and financial aid policies are two areas in which changes can be made that will have prompt, positive effects.

Some critics have suggested that college and graduate/professional admissions policies and practices place too much emphasis on standardized test scores and not enough on evidence of previous achievement such as high school or college grade point averages and a student's drive to achieve (Frierson, 1991; Guanier, 1997). Guanier (1997) has suggested that college and graduate/professional school admission committees decide on a minimum acceptable score, then hold a lottery to draw the entering class from the pool of candidates meeting that criterion. Students who offer qualities

considered valuable to the institution would have their names entered more than once to increase the likelihood that they would be selected. "These could be students who have overcome adversity, who have particular skills and credentials, who have outstanding academic records, or who have special and worthy career aspirations" (Guanier, 1997, p. 60).

Another approach to college admissions can be found in a proposal offered in response to the *Bakke* decision (Astin, 1985; Astin, Fuller, & Green, 1978). The authors reported that standardized tests presented a significant obstacle for students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds and that the negative impact of these tests increases dramatically as the selection ratio (number of applicants compared to the number of students admitted) increases at institutions. They suggested the use of a "disadvantage index" derived from parental income, father's educational level, and mother's educational level. This index assumes that affluent parents are more likely to provide their children with greater access to educational opportunities and are more likely to live in communities where local schools are better funded and have more educational resources.

Neither proposal is likely to provide a single best answer about reforming the college admissions process to insure that diverse people are appropriately represented. Indeed, in the case of the disadvantage index, critics might argue that class is an insufficient proxy for race (Tierney, 1997). However, in discussing the relative merits of such approaches, a discussion might begin on how college admissions policies and programs can be reformed to insure appropriate levels of structural diversity.

Without a doubt, state and federal financial aid policies have increased the diversity of college enrollments. Researchers of student financial aid have found that financial aid generally does what it was designed to do: It increases access to higher education by increasing the probability that students will attend college (St. John 1991a; Stampen & Fenske, 1988). While all forms of aid are positively associated with the decision to attend college when *all* students are considered, not all forms of aid are equally effective for students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. Aid packages with loans are less consistently significant in facilitating access for minority applicants than for White applicants (St. John, 1991a), and Black, Latino, and American Indian students borrow considerably less than White or Asian students (Stampen, 1985).

Maintaining appropriate forms of financial aid at the state, federal, and institutional levels is critical in increasing the diversity of student enrollments. However, federal funding has not kept pace with increases in tuition in recent years (Orfield, 1992). Recent federal policies related to financial aid still disadvantage poor families from various racial/ethnic groups, thus reducing equity and college access for them (Olivas, 1986; Orfield, 1992).

The expanded availability of and extended eligibility for loan dollars (and the decreased availability of grant and work study funds) has increased access for students from middle-income families while restricting access for students from low-income backgrounds. A key component of any long-term *and* short-term response to these trends should involve substantial increases in federal student grant funding, rather than an increased emphasis on loans (Astin, 1982; St. John, 1991b). Moreover, additional investment in financial aid programs makes good fiscal sense. Funding federal financial aid programs provides a substantial return on investment of public funds (St. John & Masten, 1990).

Recent research on the impact of financial aid provides an example of how external factors (governmental policy, programs, and initiatives) influence the campus climate for diversity. Campuses must find ways to counteract the negative consequences of changes in financial aid programs for students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. If schools are sincere in their effort to attract more diverse students, they should change institutional aid policies so that they offer as much aid as possible in grants. Moreover, institutional leaders should work with state and federal policy-makers for appropriate levels of funding for financial aid and put this money into the aid programs that are most helpful to students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds—i.e., grants and work study programs.

Campus leaders and policy-makers should not expect to substantively improve the campus racial climate by increasing only the structural diversity of institutions. In fact, problems are likely to arise without improvements in other aspects of campus climate. Increased structural diversity will likely fail in achieving its goals unless accompanied by efforts to make institutions more “student-centered” in approaches to teaching and learning (Hurtado, 1992) and by regular and on-going opportunities for students to communicate and interact cross-racially (Chang, 1996).

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF CLIMATE AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENTS

The psychological dimension of the campus racial climate involves individuals’ views of group relations, institutional responses to diversity, perceptions of discrimination or racial conflict, and attitudes toward those from other racial/ethnic backgrounds than one’s own. It is important to note that more recent studies show that racially and ethnically diverse administrators, students, and faculty tend to view the campus climate differently. Thus, an individual’s position and power within the organization and his or her status as “insider” or “outsider” strongly influence attitudes (Collins, 1986). In other words, who you are and where you are positioned in an

institution will affect how you experience and view the institution. For example, Loo and Rolison (1986) found that 68 percent of White students thought their university was generally supportive of minority students; only 28 percent of the African American and Chicano students expressed the same opinion. Cabrera and Nora (1994) found that students of color were more sensitive to different forms of prejudice and discrimination; White students were less likely to perceive nuances. Variations within ethnic groups also occur, depending on the student's background and sense of ethnic identity. For example, one study found that American Indian students who closely held to American Indian values were likely to report more negative racial encounters in college than other students (Huffman, 1991). These perceptual differences of the college experience are significant, for perception is both a product of the environment and potential determinant of future interactions and outcomes (Astin, 1968; Tierney, 1987). As past and contemporary research reveals, these differing perceptions and experiences have real consequences for individuals.

General student perceptions of discrimination have a significant and negative effect on African American students' grades (Nettles, 1988; Prillerman et al., 1989; Smedley et al., 1993). First-year students who felt that they were singled out or treated differently in the classroom reported a higher sense of alienation at the end of their freshman year (Cabrera & Nora, 1994). While significant for all racial/ethnic groups, this form of discrimination was particularly detrimental to African Americans. A longitudinal study of highly talented Latino students found that perceptions of racial tension between groups on campus in the first year had a consistently negative effect on academic and psychological adjustment in subsequent college years (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996). The study also found that while reports of overt instances of personal harassment/discrimination did not significantly affect academic and personal-emotional adjustment, they diminished Latino students' feelings of attachment to the institution. Another study of freshman minority students found that perceptions of discrimination affected their academic and social experiences but not their persistence in college (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). It may be that, although academically confident students of color continue to feel marginalized, they learn how to deal with discrimination (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1985).

However, even students of color who persist through graduation may feel high levels of alienation: one study found less satisfaction and more social alienation among African American and Asian American students who stayed at the institution as compared to those who left the university, presumably for better environments (Bennett & Okinaka, 1990). Introducing ways for students to report and seek redress for negative experiences is important, but campuses must also be aware that many psychological aspects of the college climate go unreported. A study of California State insti-

tutions revealed that Asian Pacific Americans often do not use formal grievance procedures when they experience discrimination or harassment (Asian Pacific, 1994). Native American students confirmed that perceptions of racial hostility were strongly associated with feelings of isolation, but the effect on their attitudes toward college or grade point average was not decisively significant (Lin, LaCounte, & Eder, 1988).

In a multi-campus study, Gilliard (1996) found that the most significant climate measure for Black students was their perceptions of racial discrimination by college administrators. She also found that White students' sense of belonging was negatively affected by a poor racial climate but was positively tied to having non-White friends and to perceptions that the campus accepted and respected African American students. Similarly, Nora and Cabrera (1996) found that White students' persistence in college was both directly and indirectly affected by perceptions of discrimination. These studies show that White students are also affected by the climate for racial/ethnic diversity.

Research on the impact of peer groups and other reference groups is helpful in understanding another important aspect of the psychological dimension of climate on campus. Peer groups influence students' attitudes and behavior through the norms that they communicate to their members. While faculty play an important role in the educational development of students, most researchers believe that student peer groups are principally responsible for socialization (Chickering, 1969; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969). This finding does not minimize the role of faculty; rather, it suggests that their normative influence will be amplified or attenuated by the interactions students have with their peers. While peer groups clearly have the greatest impact in the undergraduate socialization process, recent research on the impact of college on students' racial attitudes, cultural awareness/acceptance, and social/political attitudes suggests that faculty may have a larger, more important role than traditionally believed (Hurtado, 1990, 1992; Milem, 1992, 1994, 1998).

Implications for Policy and Practice

Institutional leaders can significantly strengthen the psychological climate on their campuses by purposefully becoming deliberate agents of socialization. They can begin by designing and implementing systematic and comprehensive educational programs to help all members of the campus community to identify and confront the stereotypes and myths that people have about those who are different from them. While much of what is known about the development and reduction of prejudice and bias comes from the research of college and university faculty, many businesses and organizations in the private sector have shown a greater willingness to apply these findings in the hope of strengthening their organizational effectiveness. If

these activities provide opportunities for cross-racial interaction, the magnitude of difference in perceptions of the racial climate between White students and students of color on campus is likely to be dramatically reduced (Pascarella et al., 1996).

Because perceptions of discrimination have consequences for all students, institutions should do all that they can to insure that students perceive the institutional climate as fair and just. Hence, institutions must have clearly stated policies and procedures to help the campus community confront and resolve incidents of harassment and discrimination. These policies and procedures should include formal processes for resolving conflicts or disputes that involve representatives from all members of the campus community (students, faculty, staff).

As we discussed earlier, there will almost certainly be significant differences in perceptions of the climate based on the experience and position of the person being asked. Campus leaders should insure that the perspectives of all members of the campus community be considered in decision-making processes. Hence, institutions must implement regular and on-going assessments of the campus climate for diversity.

Research findings clearly document the important role of ethnic student organizations and other student support services for students of color on predominantly White campuses. Hence, campuses must insure that these services and organizations have enough staff, funding, and resources to serve students successfully.

An emerging body of research on mentoring suggests that academe poorly socializes graduate students of color into the culture of academic departments. Students of color who pursue research on issues relevant to their cultural/ethnic background frequently report difficulty in finding faculty who encourage and support their work. This faculty indifference probably influences negatively student perceptions of the climate of the institution and may have a detrimental effect on their graduate student experience (Nealy, 1996; Turner & Thompson, 1993; Willie, Grady, & Hope, 1991). Institutional leaders can address these concerns by providing formal mentoring programs where students are matched with faculty who will support them and their work as emerging scholars.

The research in social psychology and higher education has suggested for some time that peer groups are critical in students' educational experience. However, institutions of higher education have not done all that they can to incorporate these groups into the formal educational process. Rather than leaving cross-racial interactions among students to chance, educators should make peer groups a deliberate and positive part of the educational process in colleges and universities.

Recent research also suggests that faculty serve a more important role in influencing students' attitudes and values than had been previously thought.

It is time to shift the debate from whether faculty can (or should) be “objective” to how to give faculty support and guidance in becoming aware of their biases and the effect of these biases on their students.

THE BEHAVIORAL DIMENSION OF CLIMATE AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENTS

The behavioral dimension of the institutional climate consists of (a) actual reports of general social interaction, (b) interaction between and among individuals from different racial/ethnic backgrounds, and (c) the nature of intergroup relations on campus. Student involvement plays a central role in undergraduates' successful educational experience; it enhances cognitive and affective student outcomes (Astin 1988, 1991, 1993; Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, Andreas, Lyons, Strange, Krehbiel, & MacKay, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) and retention (Tinto 1987, 1993). “Involving colleges” foster high expectations for student performance, minimize status distinctions, and have an unwavering commitment to multiculturalism (Kuh et al., 1991).

The prevailing contemporary view is that campus race relations are poor, social interaction is low, and students from different racial/ethnic groups are segregating themselves from other groups (Altbach & Lomotey, 1991; Bunzel, 1992). To be sure, incidents of overt racism and harassment occurred with greater frequency at the end of the 1980s and received much press coverage (Farrell & Jones, 1988). However, several research studies based on students' interactions and relations on campus paint a different picture. White students interpreted ethnic group clustering as racial segregation, while minority students viewed this behavior as cultural support within a larger unsupportive environment (Loo & Rolison, 1986). Chicano, Asian American, and African American students reported widespread and frequent interaction across race/ethnicity in various informal situations (i.e., dining, roommates, dating, socializing), but White students were least likely to report any of these activities as interracial (Hurtado, Dey, & Treviño, 1994). Although African Americans and Asian Americans reported more frequent racial/ethnic harassment (32% and 30% respectively), such experiences did not significantly diminish interaction across race/ethnicity for these groups.

The absence of interracial contact clearly influences students' views toward others, support for campus initiatives, and educational outcomes. White students who had the least social interaction with someone of a different background were less likely to hold positive attitudes toward multiculturalism on campus (Globetti, Globetti, Brown, & Smith, 1993). Conversely, White students who had socialized with someone of another race, had discussed racial/ethnic issues with other students, or had attended racial/cultural awareness workshops were more likely to value the goal of

promoting racial understanding (Milem, 1992, 1994, 1998). Another study revealed that socializing across race and discussing racial/ethnic issues have a positive effect on students' retention, overall satisfaction with college, intellectual self-concept, and social self-concept (Chang, 1996). After studying the complex dynamics of interaction on the U.C. Berkeley campus, where dramatic changes in racial/ethnic enrollments have occurred, Duster (1993) suggested continued support for strong ethnic identities and affiliations as well as institutional encouragement for multiracial contacts.

Although some suggest that racial/ethnic student organizations and minority programs contribute to campus segregation, a series of studies refutes this perspective. These studies have empirically demonstrated that students join racial/student organizations because they are identity enhancing and that such increased identity comfort may lead to a greater interest in both cultural and cross-cultural activities (Treviño, 1992; Mitchell & Dell, 1992). Treviño (1992) found that members of racial/ethnic student organizations were more likely to participate in racial/cultural awareness workshops. Students in such organizations also report more frequent informal interactions across race/ethnicity (Hurtado, Dey, & Treviño, 1994). In addition, Gilliard (1996) found that participation in racially focused cultural activities and support programs (e.g., Black Student Union, minority peer support services) was correlated with African Americans' higher social involvement, informal social interactions with faculty, and higher use of general support services.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Research on the behavioral dimension of racial climate suggests a wide range of beneficial practices for students. While institutions cannot change their pasts, they can clearly articulate to all members of the community the expectation that interracial dialogue and interaction are highly valued on campus. They should try to provide students with opportunities for cross-racial interaction whenever possible—both in and out of the classroom. This interaction should be structured so that it will be positive for participants. The contact should be regular, on-going, and viewed as equal in status by all participants. Finally, the contact should occur in an environment characterized by cooperation and not competition (Allport, 1954).

Faculty can facilitate positive interaction in the classroom by insuring that racial/ethnic diversity is part of the course content. Moreover, faculty can promote interaction across racial/ethnic groups and student achievement. Cooperative learning activities, inside and outside of the classroom, increase interaction across race/ethnicity and lead to intergroup friendships (Slavin, 1985). When students work cooperatively on course content, they learn more about one another as well as about the specific content areas. Faculty members should also consider how to modify their classroom prac-

tices to reduce competition in the classroom. Finally, given the important role of faculty contact (in and out of the classroom), institutions should provide abundant opportunities for all faculty-student contact in and out of the classroom. Given the academic reward structure at many institutions, institutional leaders may need to provide incentives to encourage faculty to engage students in this way.

Cross-race interactions can be also enhanced by the programs and activities of multicultural centers. These centers frequently house the ethnic student organizations that are critical to the educational success of the students they represent. Given the importance of these organizations in affirming a sense of identity for students and in their role of encouraging students to become involved in other aspects of campus life, campus leaders should vigorously support these organizations for all students, communicating their importance as essential educational resources. Such an approach should help overcome the problem that, while multicultural centers are frequently the center of activity and support for students of color, White students are less likely to be involved in these centers' programs and activities.

Finally, research in race relations indicates that increased structural diversity is usually accompanied by increased levels of conflict. However, conflict should not be viewed as a destabilizing force in higher education institutions. Parker Palmer (1987) suggests that conflict is an essential component of meaningful communities, which he defines "as a capacity for relatedness within individuals—relatedness not only to people but to events in history, to nature, to world of ideas, and yes, to things of the spirit" (p. 24). In communities that are not perceived as supportive, conflict is likely viewed as a threat to be avoided. Hence, it is essential that institutions provide ways for members of the campus community to successfully understand and resolve conflict. Then conflict can become a stimulus for creativity and community-building. Dialogue groups can provide both a structure and process for addressing the intergroup dynamics of multiculturalism within the learning environment. Activities for the learning process include the opportunity to break down barriers, challenge the ignorance inside and outside oneself, create new insights, forge new connections and identities, and finally, build coalitions to work toward a common goal (Zúñiga & Nagda, 1992). The issue of group conflict and social attitudes surrounding communities of difference addressed in dialogue groups are "not easily resolvable as long as the lack of adequate structures and processes for intergroup interactions in the college community maintains the invisible, but psychologically real walls that separate different groups" (Zúñiga and Nagda, 1992, p. 251).

FROM RESEARCH TO POLICY AND PRACTICE: STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING CAMPUS DIVERSITY

Recent research on the campus climate for diversity has enabled campuses to better understand institutions and their impact on students, student responses to climate issues, and relationships that develop among diverse students and faculty. While many institutions are still contending with issues of diversifying their campus enrollments, more campuses need information to help them address the psychological and behavioral dimensions of the climate. At national higher education conferences, more individuals are talking about improving the climate and are sharing practices that work. The empirical evidence and policy recommendations provided here will help institutional administrators and program planners use a wealth of research, about both specific institutions and national samples of students and institutions. In addition, many institutions are undertaking assessments of their climate for diversity to understand better their own institutional contexts. While a wealth of knowledge is now available and institutions are better informed as they begin self-examinations, designing an action plan that will significantly improve the quality of experiences for undergraduates is perhaps the next important challenge in the process.

Campuses are complex social systems defined by the relationships between the people, bureaucratic procedures, structural arrangements, institutional goals and values, traditions, and larger socio-historical environments. Therefore, any effort to redesign campuses with the goal of improving the climate for racial and cultural diversity must be comprehensive and long term. Institutions change slowly. It is the nature of a stable system of higher education. Therefore, the success of efforts to achieve institutional change will rely on leadership, firm commitment, adequate resources, collaboration, monitoring, and long-range planning.

Institutional change can be implemented at several levels. Most important is the structural level. An institution should increase at all levels the number of previously excluded and underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities (i.e., students, faculty, staff, administrators). Ideally minorities should be represented on the campus in proportionate numbers. While efforts to increase the representation of minorities on campus and to remove barriers to their participation are crucial, these steps alone are not sufficient to achieve the goal of improving the climate for diversity.

Beyond the observable make-up of the students and faculty are the attitudinal and behavioral characteristics of how particular groups of individuals "feel" about and relate to one another. How does the campus "feel" to minority individuals (e.g., Do they feel welcome? Do they sense hostility? Do they feel valued?). How does the campus respond to racially and culturally different groups (e.g., Does the campus strive to change to incorporate these

students or does the campus communicate that adaptation is the job of only the minority students? Does the campus genuinely value diversity?).

In short, two sets of issues are important when considering the success of efforts to improve the campus racial climate: (a) How diverse does the campus look in its representation of different cultural groups? and (b) To what extent do campus operations demonstrate that racial and ethnic diversity is an essential value?

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