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Climates for Ethnic and Racial Diversity: Latina/o Sorority and Fraternity Member Perspectives

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Abstract

This qualitative critical narrative inquiry explored how members of Latina/o sororities and fraternities perceived campus climates for racial and ethnic diversity at predominantly White institutions. Using the multi-contextual model for diverse learning environments, findings point to the significance of participants' recognition of a misalignment between the espoused and enacted commitment to equity, inclusion, and diversity in relation to how they perceived the campus climate for racial/ethnic diversity. Implications for research and practice are discussed.

Research established ties between college student sense of belonging and students' overall college experience as well as outcomes such as persistence (Banda & Flowers, 2017; Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Strayhorn, 2012). Studies have also shown the extent to which college students believe a sense of belonging within their institution is influenced by campus climates for racial and ethnic diversity, yet findings of this work have pointed to disparities in the ways Students of Color

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experience campus climates and develop a sense of belonging when compared to their White peers (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Kilgo, Linley, & Bennett, 2018; Strayhorn, 2013; Tachine, Cabrera, & Yellow Bird, 2017; Wells & Horn, 2015).

Campus climate entails “the current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the institution and its members” (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999, p. iii). Hurtado et al. (1999) further detailed that campus climate for racial and ethnic diversity “is linked with a historical legacy of exclusion at the institution, its structural diversity, and behaviors on campus that include interactions inside and outside the classroom” (p. iii). In short, campus climates for racial and ethnic diversity go beyond compositional diversity in terms of the demographic makeup of the institution (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005).

In addition to disparities in ways Students of Color experience campus climates, research has also shown that a heightened sense of cultural awareness and/or engagement in diverse interactions or diversity-focused experiences may result in a stronger awareness of racialized experiences on campus (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Nuñez, 2009). Considering the unique ways that Students of Color experience campus environments and develop a sense of belonging, research focused on the experiences of particular groups in relation to campus climates is needed to better understand ways we can serve students and cultivate equitable and just environments. This study contributes to this conversation by examining the perceptions of campus climate as expressed by students involved in one form of a diversity focused experience—membership in Latina/o¹ sororities and fraternities. The following question guided this study: How do student members of Latina/o sororities and fraternities perceive campus climates for racial and ethnic diversity?

Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework

To provide context for this study, this section first addresses the meaning of campus climate by introducing the theoretical framework, the

¹ Latina/o is used in reference to fraternities and sororities whose membership has historically excluded non-binary or gender nonconforming individuals. Latina/o/x is used otherwise as a gender inclusive term.

multicontextual model for diverse learning environments (MMDLE; Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012). Following a description of the MMDLE are highlights from the literature on campus climates, including ways students differ in how they perceive and experience climates. The section concludes by discussing ways Latina/o sororities and fraternities serve as counterspaces that affirm students' racial and ethnic identities.

Extensive research has argued the benefits of a culturally diverse campus community (see Bowman, 2010; Denson & Chang, 2009), and as a result, many colleges and universities strive to increase the enrollment of Students of Color. Yet attention to compositional diversity alone neglects other aspects that contribute to campus climates (Milem et al., 2005). Milem et al. (2005) argued:

When the focus is solely or primarily on compositional diversity, we have a tendency to focus on diversity as an end in itself, rather than as an educational process that—when properly implemented — has the potential to enhance many important educational outcomes. (p. 16)

The theoretical framework guiding this study, the MMDLE (Hurtado et al., 2012), is attentive to elements beyond compositional diversity that shape campus climates. Within the MMDLE, Hurtado et al. (2012) intentionally centered students' multiple social identities in the model and accounted for students' "spheres of interaction" (p. 47) within curricular and cocurricular settings, with direct attention to instructor and staff social identities. Spheres of interactions were influenced by five dimensions within the institutional context that defined the climate for diversity: the historical, organizational, compositional, psychological, and behavioral dimensions (Hurtado et al., 2012).

The historical dimension referred to "historical legacies of inclusion and exclusion" (Hurtado et al., 2012, p. 43). The organizational dimension entailed structural components including "diversity in the curriculum, tenure processes, organizational decision-making processes, budget allocations, and institutional policies" (p. 45). The compositional dimension referred to demographic diversity within the campus population, while the behavioral dimension accounted for interactions with diverse others. Finally, the psychological dimension reflected ways the climate

is perceived. All of these institutional contextual pieces are influenced by macrosystems including socio-historical, policy, and community contexts and external commitments.

In addition to Hurtado et al.'s (2012) MMDLE, other scholarship has expanded our understanding of ways college students perceive and experience campus climates (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Museus, 2007). Harper and Hurtado (2007) offered an insightful contribution to the literature, identifying nine themes in campus racial climates, several of which underscored differences in how students experience climate such as "White student overestimation of minority student satisfaction" (p. 18). Other themes pointed to ways students perceived the campus racial climate, such as the prevalence of racial segregation and the avoidance of discussions regarding race. This work also underscored the institution's role in shaping the climate as participants across racial identities reported a misalignment between the diversity values that the institution espoused and those values that were actually enacted by the institution. The distinction between espoused and enacted diversity values was also mirrored in Museus's (2007) qualitative study where participants were skeptical of institutional diversity efforts noting that structural diversity was "overemphasized" (p. 36) while lacking inclusion of diverse student populations.

Importantly, the scholarship on campus climates showed that while campus climate affects the experiences of all college students, there are disparities among the ways particular student groups experience climates and interactions across difference (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Kilgo et al., 2018; Museus, 2007; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). For instance, Rankin and Reason (2005) found that, when compared to their White peers, Students of Color more often described the climate "as 'racist,' 'hostile,' and 'disrespectful'" (p. 52). Furthermore, a greater number of Students of Color also reported experiencing harassment on campus and more often did not believe their institution addressed racism (Rankin & Reason, 2005). Museus and Truong (2009) found that Asian American college students from predominantly White high schools reported more positive perspectives of the climate, were less likely to emphasize the prevalence of racism or discrimination, and less likely to report that racial stereotypes affected their experience when compared to Asian American students from high schools predominantly comprised of racially minoritized students. Results from

this study pointed to the possibility that students from predominantly White schools may not be as aware of or may be used to microaggressive behaviors compared to students from more racially diverse institutions, reinforcing the notion that students' exposure to diversity may cause them to be more aware of racialized incidents.

Scholarship documented important ways counterspaces, such as culturally based organizations serve Students of Color, particularly within predominantly White institutions (Delgado-Guerrero, Cherniack, & Gloria, 2014; Guardia & Evans, 2008; Luedke, 2018; Orta, Murguia, & Cruz, 2019; Solórzano et al., 2000). Latina/o sororities and fraternities are a form of culturally based organizations that bridge characteristics of fraternity and sorority life (FSL) together with Latina/o culture (Muñoz & Guardia, 2009). These organizations serve as a "catalyst for promoting Latino and Latina student success and cultural awareness" (Muñoz & Guardia, 2009, p. 104). Studies focused on Latina/o/x student organizations broadly have shown ways these spaces serve to cultivate forms of social and cultural capital (Luedke, 2018), which has been also been reflected within the literature focused on Latina/o and other culturally based sororities and fraternities (Delgado-Guerrero et al., 2014; Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Guardia & Evans, 2008; Orta et al., 2019).

Scholars have also documented ways Latina/o sororities and fraternities serve as spaces that embrace students' racial and ethnic identities as they navigate hostile climates for racial/ethnic diversity (Arellano, 2018; Delgado-Guerrero et al., 2014; Garcia, 2019a; Guardia & Evans, 2008; Orta et al., 2019). This dynamic is reflected in findings around students' motivation to join Latina/o sororities and fraternities, which often stem from experiencing culture shock on predominantly White campuses as well as facing racism and marginalization within these environments (Arellano, 2018; Orta et al., 2019). In addition, studies have also showed that members of culturally based sororities and fraternities experience hostile climates within the greater FSL community (Garcia, 2019b; Guardia & Evans, 2008).

Methodology

Studies have found college students with a heightened sense of cultural awareness and/or engagement in diversity focused experiences, such

as involvement in culturally based organizations, reported to possess a stronger awareness of racialized experiences on college campuses (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Nuñez, 2009). This research builds from these findings by exploring how students engaged in one form of diversity focused experience, membership in Latina/o sororities and fraternities, experience campus climate at predominantly White institutions.

This work was part of a larger qualitative study focused on the role of involvement in Latina/o sororities and fraternities in how Latina/o college students developed and made meaning of their sense of belonging within PWIs (Garcia, 2017). The current study used a critical narrative inquiry approach to explore participants' perspectives of the campus climate using Hurtado et al.'s (2012) MMDLE.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) explained that "humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives" (p. 2). Accordingly, examining these stories are a way to examine individuals' lived experiences. Furthermore, I adopted narrative inquiry using a critical approach. Critical research examines how human life is affected by "systems of inequity such as classism, racism, and sexism" (Lather, 1992, p. 87). Rather than offer a description of reality, critical researchers strive to dig deeper and "raise critical consciousness" of the role of society in shaping that reality (Carspecken, 2012, p. 44).

Data Collection

Participants were recruited from two large, public, four-year PWIs located in different midwestern U.S. states. The institutions were selected based on these shared characteristics and their parallels in undergraduate enrollment demographics. Both institutions enrolled approximately 5% Latina/o/x undergraduate students while White students comprised approximately 75% of Clearview University's and 71% of Plains University's population.

I sought out participants from Plains and Clearview that were current undergraduate students and members of a Latina/o sorority or fraternity. I began recruitment by contacting organizational officers from one fraternity and one sorority from Clearview and Plains. Clearview only had one fraternity member indicate interest in participating, but I wanted a stronger representation of fraternity men. Because there was

Table 1 Participant Demographics

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Semesters in University</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Major</i>
Plains University					
Christina	Kappa Beta	3	19	Mexican	Apparel Design
Davina	Kappa Beta	3	19	Mexican	Civil Engineering
Nine	Kappa Beta	7	21	Latina	Psychology
Paloma	Kappa Beta	3	19	Mexican	Kinesiology & Health
Delta	Nu Sigma	7	25	Hispanic/Latino	Mechanical Engineering
Romeo	Nu Sigma	5	20	Hispanic	Civil Engineering
Fernando	Omega Iota	5	20	Hispanic	Mechanical Engineering
Hector	Omega Iota	3	19	Mexican-American	Computer Engineering
Juan	Omega Iota	7	21	Mexican-American	Environmental Science
Clearview University					
Karla	Pi Delta	3	19	Mexican	Biochemistry
Lori	Pi Delta	5	20	Hispanic	Nutrition & Exercise Science
Participant01	Pi Delta	7	21	Latina	Human Development & Family Science
Omi	Pi Delta	5	20	Mexican-American	Elementary & Special Education
Luis	Zeta Alpha	7	21	Latino	Latin American/Global Studies

not another Latino fraternity at the institution, I reached out to another Latino fraternity at Plains and recruited three additional members. In the end, participants included eight women and six men from five different Latina/o sororities and fraternities. All participants selected their pseudonyms and organization pseudonyms were assigned by the researcher. See Table 1 for further participant demographic information.

Data were collected through a series of three individual interviews with each of the 14 participants ranging in length from an estimated 35 minutes to an hour and 10 minutes. The first interview focused on participant experiences as they began at their university and became involved in their sorority or fraternity. It explored the extent to which participants felt a sense of belonging within the institution as a whole, within the organization, and ways the two influenced one another.

The second and third interview used photo elicitation (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004). Participants were directed to collect photos of spaces they experienced a sense of belonging within and spaces they did not, within and outside of the campus community. All participants opted to e-mail me digital photos, and I pulled up the photos on a laptop for discussion

during our interview. In our discussion, we explored what it was about those spaces that influenced students' sense of belonging. Places students identified as lacking a sense of belonging within were particularly of focus for this study as they were often indicative of racial climate tensions. Photo elicitation was used to spur conversation during the interviews, to assist participants in reflection, and as an approach to "communicate dimensions of their lives" (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004, p. 1512). Participants also responded to a demographic survey to further explore the participants' identities, pre-college experiences, and college experiences that were influential in their lives.

Data Analysis

Polkinghorne (1995) discussed two different approaches in narrative inquiry—paradigmatic-type and narrative-type. I used the paradigmatic-type approach by first collecting stories from participants and then drawing themes from across participants' experiences (Polkinghorne, 1995). I conducted first cycle coding of the data by reviewing interview transcripts and constructing preliminary jottings and analytic memos (Saldaña, 2016). As I analyzed participants' storied accounts of their experiences, I was particularly attentive to time and place (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I then constructed narrative documents for each participant loosely based on chronology but primarily organized thematically by experience (i.e., transitioning to college, joining campus organizations, experiences with campus climate, among other events). I conducted line by line coding of participant narratives using a combination of initial and emotion coding approaches (Saldaña, 2016) while considering ways aspects of the MMDLE (Hurtado et al., 2012) came to light in participant experiences. Initial coding resulted in broad categorizations of student experiences such as "peer interactions," "racialized experiences," "experiences with racism," and "perspectives on institutional responses to climate incidents." Emotion coding is best used in studies "that explore intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 125). This approach was particularly useful as I considered how participants experienced campus climates by way of their emotional responses. Some in vivo emotion codes that emerged included "uncomfortable," "not included," and "frustrated." I then looked across participants' experiences with campus climates for

racial and ethnic diversity and engaged in second cycle coding by grouping codes and naming the code categories. I continued to refine themes through axial coding (Saldaña, 2016).

Trustworthiness

I used multiple approaches to ensure the trustworthiness of this work. For one, I engaged in multiple rounds of interviews with participants to establish a sense of trustworthiness with my participants. I also enacted member checking by sending participants their narrative documents for their review. Four participants responded with clarifying details or their approval of the narratives as they were written, the other participants did not respond.

Furthermore, I exercised reflexivity of my positionality throughout the research process (Maxwell, 2013). Positionality underscores important implications for selecting a methodology, carrying out analysis, and writing up results. As articulated by Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2014), remaining aware of my positionality did not only entail considerations of what I wrote, but also what I excluded from the report and ultimate findings. I engaged in recurring reflections on my multiracial identity as a White and Latina woman who was also a member of a National Panhellenic Council sorority, particularly in relation to my insider-outsider perspective (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). I shared these aspects of my identity and collegiate experience with my participants. As a Latina, there were ways that I could connect with my participants through shared cultural experiences, but there were also ways we often differed. Based on my phenotype, most people do not recognize me as a Latina. While I have experienced racial microaggressions when individuals discover this aspect of my identity, I have not experienced overt discrimination or racism based on my physical appearance. Likewise, although I am a member of a sorority, I was not part of a Latina-based organization. There are important distinctions in my experience when compared to my participants. I remained aware that these aspects of my experience and identity contributed to my subjectivity as a researcher but also contributed to the experiential knowledge that served as a resource when conducting this research.

Findings

Participants discussed their perspectives of the campus climate at Plains University and Clearview University in light of many aspects of the MMDLE (Hurtado et al., 2012). While a lack of compositional diversity, particularly in terms of racial and ethnic diversity, played an influential role in shaping participants' perspectives of the climate, participants' recognition of a misalignment between the organizational and behavioral dimensions often played a more prominent role in their reflections. As part of the organizational dimension, participants recognized that institutions espoused commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion through mission statements and other institutional documents and communications. When the actual behaviors of the institution or campus community did not align with these espoused values, it often negatively influenced participants' views of the campus climate. The following sections address three primary ways students discussed the gap between the espoused and enacted commitment to equity, inclusion, and diversity in relation to how they perceived the campus climate for racial and ethnic diversity: failure of campus community to enact espoused institutional commitments, disingenuous or delayed enactment of institutionally espoused commitments, and only enacting institutionally espoused commitments through particular campus communities.

Failure of Campus Community to Enact Espoused Institutional Commitments

Participants often described a misalignment between the organizational and behavioral dimensions in that institutions espoused particular values, yet the campus community did not seem to mirror these values in their behaviors. Davina described, "As a whole like the university itself ... that's one of their missions. They want diversity and everything, but when you go down to look at the students, that's where it's like some students don't have that open mind." To Davina, the institution's espoused support of diversity on campus showed that the university was committed to positive climate for diversity, but this was not how she perceived the enacted commitment by the students.

Lack of Interactions across Difference. Participants often discussed the tension between the institution's espoused commitment to a positive campus climate for diversity while much of the campus community failed to enact this by interacting with one another across difference. Romeo explained that students at Plains had a tendency to "stick to people you know who are like you. So really mixing crowds is not something you see very often here." This lack of interactions across difference was also evident through attendance at diversity-focused events, which participants had first-hand experience with given their sorority and fraternity involvement. Christina explained that at Plains cultural events, "it's always just People of Color attending usually. And you'll probably see like maybe a good handful [of] ... White students or faculty members." She further reflected:

Part of me feels really happy because that's my community on campus and I know that it exists ... But on the other hand it is not good when they want to try to have serious dialogue...that makes me a little bit angry because [White students] should be there because we want to have change and I wish they were there kind of as allies to be part of the conversation.

Other participants shared similar sentiments. Delta explained that with "multicultural events, it's always a one-sided conversation." He detailed:

The majority of the attendees at the Puerto Rican Culture event were Latino. And when it comes down to Indian events at Plains, most attendees are Indian. Same for LGBT events—the majority are LGBT students ... even though it's open to the public, the majority that always shows are people that can personally relate to the experience.

Some of the participants also reflected on challenges they faced while attempting to interact with their White peers. For instance, even though Paloma wanted to meet other students, she expressed reluctance to talk to White students in her class because "I felt really awkward talking to them ... Because I guess it's like we're in the same class, but that's it. There's not other connections." Whereas with other Latina/o/xs or Students of Color:

I know I'm multicultural too or I'm Latina too so it's already like a connection, I know we could talk about a lot of different things and know we already have that common interest or common experience or something like that that we could talk about. Whereas with other people they probably don't understand some of the things, or what I say or what I'm accustomed to is strange to them.

Similarly, Fernando explained that when he was part of his residence hall governing board, he did not feel like an important part of the group because "I was like the only Hispanic so I was, I would try to talk to them, but I just don't feel the connection. We just don't talk about the same things."

Racialized Events that Affected Campus Climate. In addition to a lack of interactions across difference, participants also reflected on ways administrative actions and the behaviors of members of the campus community misaligned with institutionally espoused values through racialized incidents. Notably, as discussed in the MMDLE (Hurtado et al., 2012), the particular sociohistorical context in which these data were collected indeed affected the institutional context and defined which events were most salient in participants' experiences—namely those tied to the 2016 presidential election.

At Plains University, then presidential candidate Donald Trump was invited to visit the campus. Given the disparaging remarks Trump made regarding Mexican immigrants such as calling them "rapists," for Plains students, welcoming him to campus signified that the institution supported his beliefs and was a strong indication of the misalignment between the institution's espoused and enacted values. Paloma described that this visit was the only occasion where she ever experienced any overt discriminatory or racial incidents. Paloma explained that she joined a group of students, including many People of Color, to silently protest Trump's visit to campus, particularly emphasizing the negative things he had said against the Latina/o/x population. While the students were standing silently with their signs of protest:

Family members, older people, people within the Plains community, people within the [other school's] community and stuff

like that. They were just saying like go back home to where you came from, this and that. Whatever Donald Trump was saying they basically supported it. So you know how Donald Trump says all Mexicans are criminals, rapists, this and that. They supported that.

Paloma further described that “people were spitting at the protestors” and thought, “it was just appalling to see so many people be so racist.” The protest opened her eyes to something she had never really experienced before. It also changed Paloma’s perspectives day to day on campus at Plains and “when I started noticing a lot of the prejudices that people had and the stereotypes that people had and stuff like that and saw how it was affecting my friends who actually looked Latino.” Paloma thought, “it was kind of really sad to see how during orientation and stuff they say ‘oh we’re the Plains family, we’re very strong and very united,’ and then things like this happen.”

Similarly, Hector thought it was “tough to say” whether the campus community at Plains was accepting of individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds after the emergence of White supremacy posters around the campus. Hector explained, “I feel that [since] the posters for White supremacy have been around campus there is a lot of fear.” It made it difficult to feel as though the campus was accepting when there were “students around who are still I don’t know, like with Trump are still trying to spread that White supremacy around the campus.” Knowing that there were individuals on campus that promoted White supremacy made it difficult for Hector to see the greater campus community as inclusive of Students of Color. For Hector, the historical dimension shaped the behavioral dimension, which largely contributed to his views of the campus climate.

Disingenuous or Delayed Enaction of Institutionally Espoused Commitments

Participants also described ways their institution espoused commitments to equity and inclusion but enacted them too late or in disingenuous ways. For instance, although Delta thought the university espoused beliefs that diversity and inclusion were important, he was skeptical as to whether this was more for looks than as a commitment to the cause.

He explained:

As a whole an institution tries to draw in as many students as possible because it looks good. They promote diversity. But at the same time once you're there ... sometimes I wonder if some of the involvement I am reached out about is just when diversity needs to be showcased.

Using Students of Color as part of a diversity show for the institution was an example of how participants perceived the disingenuous enactment of a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion and underscored a problematic aspect of the behavioral dimension of these campus climates.

Misrepresentation of Compositional Diversity. Other participants also voiced concerns that their respective universities were misleading in terms of compositional diversity by the ways they represented Students of Color in promotional materials, which pointed to problematic tokenizing behaviors (Kanter, 1977). Juan said that the university was trying to diversify their website and "include more pictures of People of Color on their website." This caused him to "feel like they're kind of misleading it, oh we're a super great community, super diverse. I mean there's a little diversity, but like it's not what they represent on the website." Similarly Participant01 thought this was also true of things like the school website and other University promotional items, which were essentially a form of false advertising. She described:

I think it's kind of funny because when it comes to pictures or certain pamphlets or brochures, there's always minorities in it ... I think it's just like to show that we're diverse and as a statistic to be like oh we're a pretty diverse campus when we're not.

Luis believed that as a whole, Clearview was accepting of individuals from racially diverse backgrounds, yet like other participants he thought:

There are moments when I don't feel like that. Like when it comes to what the university tries to portray ... realizing oh yeah they're using the same Hispanic, the same Black student

in all their promotional materials because they lack that. And then seeing oh well the number is actually really low because I believe out of 25,000 students that we have at the university, it's only 1,500 Latino students. So it's just the percentage is really low and then for that it's like well why isn't the university doing anything? Like it claims that it's diverse and it preaches diversity here, diversity that, when in reality there's not much racial diversity ... there is diversity in the university when it comes to the amount of majors that there are, the different clubs that are out there and the colleges that are represented. In that sense there is diversity, but when it comes to racial, ethnic, social minority like there's no diversity or there's not that much diversity as the university portrays.

Luis wanted to see that the institution was taking steps to enact their commitment to a diversified student body rather than seeing Students of Color tokenized in public communications materials.

Institutional Responses to Events Affecting Campus Climate. When incidents occurred on campus, whether the incident was attributed to the university administration, students, or even U.S. society as a whole, institutional responses had the power to reaffirm a commitment to equity and diversity and positively affect students' views of the climate or the reverse. For instance, Luis reflected the day after the presidential election a lot of students on campus were feeling uneasy about how Trump's election would affect their lives. An office based in the Multicultural Affairs Center opened an event to "provide support to students ... to process their feelings and emotions." Luis "was happy" that they had the discussion the day after the election and that there were "a lot of staff like coming up to me like if I needed anything to definitely let them know and that they were there for me." Luis thought the election was difficult, but it did not affect the way he saw the campus and believed it was "welcoming" and that it was "trying to be more inclusive."

When football players at Clearview took a knee while the National Anthem played at a game, Participant01 appreciated the quick response by higher level administration in support of the players noting:

I'm proud to be a [Clearview University student] because of what they did. Because the fact that it was, yeah they have that right to speak up against the issues that are going on and just using their platform to talk about it whereas yeah as students we can all talk about it, but sometimes we're not listened to.

Participant01 was proud to be part of an institution that used their point of privilege to stand in support of their students and reaffirm their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In other situations when the institution did not enact the espoused commitment to inclusion and diversity initially, it was difficult for students to view responses after the event as adequate measures to repair the damage or as genuine attempts to do so. Nine explained that after Donald Trump's visit to Plains University during his campaign, "a student group formed and started demanding" actions from the University president. In response, they held a forum with top administrators that featured a panel of a diverse group of students. The discussion brought up issues such as "White privilege," which Nine did not think was:

Something Plains' campus has really thought about before. And even our president, he was like oh I'm, like I'm colorblind I don't see what other people's race is. And we're just like, everyone in the room was just like oh no you did not just say that. And then at the end he was like I didn't realize that this is what Students of Color go through, I didn't realize it was such a big problem because it was never talked about before.

In response, some actions were taken to address diversity and inclusion on campus including the appointment of a Chief Diversity Officer. Although Nine thought these were good steps, since these climate issues happened on campus, Nine has not "felt comfortable and I know lots of people haven't felt comfortable on campus." Fernando believed the measures the institution took were "just a band-aid to cover up a bigger issue that's going on with this campus." Fernando asserted that because the university president supported Trump's visit to campus, "many students lost respect for him." As a result, following the appearance of White supremacist posters on campus, Fernando explained that when the president sent out a message condemning these acts, "many other students

were taking it as a joke like they don't view him as anybody anymore." The university president lost legitimacy because of his failure to enact values to diversity and inclusion, which affected how students perceived the greater campus climate.

Davina explained that there were several other incidents that influenced her perspective of the campus climate. She described:

Another incident that happened last Saturday, a friend was out with her friends until 1 in the morning or 2 in the morning at a pizza place and while they were waiting in line to get pizza some individuals started chanting "build a wall, build a wall" towards them. Thankfully she said it was just this particular group of people and nobody else in the line started chanting along with them.

Davina noted that the president of Plains had just sent an e-mail to the campus community addressing the incidents that had occurred, yet, "it took over a year for the university to take a stand with us and say you're home." While she was happy to see the president finally addressed these issues, it seemed that it should have been done a long time ago.

Only Enacting Institutionally Espoused Commitments Through Particular Campus Communities

Participants also voiced that when initiatives that supported diversity on campus were enacted, they were done by particular departments or campus offices which they saw as distinct from stemming from the greater university. This was illuminated in Fernando's perspective that the university did not celebrate racial or cultural diversity on campus but instead assisted with providing funding for cultural programs. He argued that "the only reason those numbers [Students of Color persistence] are maintained is because of organizations that are supportive of multicultural students. But not the school itself." Similarly, in Omi's experience, the only ways Clearview University celebrated racial and ethnic diversity on campus was through initiatives sponsored by the multicultural center and another diversity focused program. While Omi understood why these particular departments hosted these events, she also thought:

It would be nice more from the rest of the university because it's like that's not because that's a small area. You're comparing it to the whole campus and you have one little building that is the only area and it would be nice to see other buildings or the university as a whole like people that are higher up actually try to come and support.

Half of the participants described ways they sought out particular "safe" spaces on campus where they believed their identities were valued. Notably these spaces were often places with greater compositional diversity, particularly in terms of ethnic and racial diversity. Omi, for instance, described the multicultural center on campus as:

More symbolic to us Hispanics because it's not just us but pretty much any race that's not White you will see at the Multicultural Center. I think that's just a safe quarter for us to go and do our homework. Where everybody else is usually studying outside and in the Union, usually what I have seen is predominantly White. So I think that's more of why I go to the Multicultural Center because it's not predominantly White.

Hector noted that due to the increased tensions on campus from the election it was important for him to be around "my multicultural community—multicultural student affairs office, the student support services building, services program." He asserted that these places were "set up kind of like a safe place we can go." Likewise, Christina considered multicultural events on campus as places of belonging because "that space becomes ... like a safe space in a way." While having these spaces was crucial in participants' experiences, these culturally affirming spaces should be available in addition to an affirming campus climate, not to serve as a substitute for negative climates for diversity.

Discussion

These findings shared ways that participants described the campus climate at their predominantly White universities. Viewed through the MMDLE (Hurtado et al., 2012), participants' primarily reflected on a

lack of compositional diversity and disparities between the espoused institutional commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion—part of the organizational dimension—and ways those commitments were enacted through the behavioral dimension. Participants' recognition of a misalignment between what institutions say and what they do is not a new concept within higher education research (see Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Museus, 2007); these findings serve to further contextualize how these differences manifested through members of the campus community and the greater institution.

Although the participants noted the institutions emphasized an inclusive and diverse campus community, the students often discussed their perceptions of a lack of interactions across difference within the campus communities. This lack of enactment of inclusivity and diversity values by members of the campus community was mirrored in Harper and Hurtado's (2007) findings regarding patterns of racial segregation within the campus community and students' tendencies to avoid race-centered conversations. While research has established a connection between negative diversity interactions and students' perceptions of the climate and psychological well-being (Kilgo et al., 2018; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Solórzano et al., 2000), this finding also demonstrates that a lack of interactions across difference can negatively influence students' perceptions of the climate.

Findings also pointed to troubling ways the institutions failed to enact commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Importantly, participants' reflections reinforced the importance of institutional responses to climate incidents. While research focused on institutional response is emerging (see Cole & Harper, 2017), more work is needed to unpack the use of language and its effect on campus climate. Furthermore, participants identified ways the institutions misrepresented compositional diversity, which aligned with the experiences of participants in Museus's (2007) study who also described institutional overemphasis of structural diversity despite lacking a diverse student body. This misrepresentation of the racialized realities of the campus caused students to question institutional motives in how they enacted commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Delta for one questioned whether students were being used "when diversity needs to be showcased," underscoring the notion of tokenizing Students of Color (Kanter, 1977). As Kanter (1977) described, individuals from marginalized populations often serve

as tokens and “are in the position of representing their ascribed category to the group, whether they choose to do so or not” (p. 968). This was exemplified as students were tokenized in promotional materials to help the institutions to appear more racially diverse than they were.

Importantly, despite any negative experiences the participants had within the campus environment, their fraternities and sororities served as spaces in which they felt safe and they belonged. The support provided by these organizations aligned with findings within other studies focused on Latina/o/x student organizations and sorority and fraternities specifically (Delgado- Guerrero et al., 2014; Guardia & Evans, 2008; Luedke, 2018; Muñoz & Guardia, 2009; Orta et al., 2019).

Implications for Practice

Participants’ stories emphasized that it is not enough for campus communities to simply say they are committed to these values, they must also demonstrate their commitments through actions. These findings have a number of implications for practice and future research. To begin, campus normative behaviors of avoiding interactions across difference were problematic. Studies found that compositional diversity alone is not enough to garner the benefits of diverse campus communities (Denson & Chang, 2009; Hurtado et al., 2012; Milem et al., 2005), which means these norms should be disrupted. Practitioners should intentionally engage students in conversations across difference including those focused on difficult topics surrounding social identities (Zuniga, Lopez, & Ford, 2014) and consider ways other scholars have suggested navigating student responses to these discussions (see King, Baxter Magolda, & Massé, 2011). Student affairs professionals in particular are in a unique position to incorporate these practices in their respective programming.

When issues occurred on campus that negatively affected campus climate, both the event and the response to the event was significant to participants. Participants considered institutional behaviors as an indicator of their commitment to cultivating positive climates for ethnic and racial diversity. One way this was evident in participant discussions was when Plains embraced then presidential candidate Donald Trump on campus. Because the institution did not make it clear that they did not support Trump’s views on the Latina/o/x population, students saw his presence in opposition of institutions valuing their identities. As institutions plan

events and initiatives, they must carefully consider not only explicit messages they send with their behavior but also ways they implicitly stand in opposition to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Furthermore, based on the participants' reflections, timing and message were important considerations for responses to incidents affecting campus climates. For instance, in terms of timing, Participant01 appreciated Clearview University's prompt response when football players took a knee during the National Anthem, noting that it made her "proud" to be part of the university. This was in contrast to participants' experience at Plains where the president sent out a video condemning a series of racial incidents a year after they began. Fernando expressed it was simply too late to change his perspective of the university and hoped that they would do better for future students. Again administrators, including student affairs professionals, should remain cognizant of the element of time as a reflection of nonverbal messages they send to students regarding the importance of these issues.

In terms of message, it was important for issues to be addressed, but the way they were addressed was perhaps more important to the participants. For instance, when the White supremacy posters appeared at Plains University, the president sent out an e-mail to the campus. Christina was frustrated by his focus on how the posters violated poster policies on campus instead of emphasizing how students could be affected by racism. Institutions should carefully consider the semantics of messages to ensure they are emphasizing the intent of the message. Skating around campus climate issues rather than addressing them head on could cause students to question whether the institution is merely putting on a diversity show rather than being truly committed to inclusivity and equity.

Finally, participants largely believed that diversity, equity, and inclusion commitments were only enacted through particular spaces on campus as opposed to the greater institution. Further, the fact that participants were forced to seek out spaces they deemed as "safe" was indicative of hostile climates for diversity. Notably, these spaces included some areas that fall into the scope of student affairs divisions, but not all spaces. In response, all areas of campus should critically evaluate ways they contribute to campus climates—for better or worse. While student affairs practitioners should work alongside other campus personnel to ensure institutions enact a unified approach to cultivating climates for

diversity, this responsibility should not lie solely in the hands of student affairs professionals. It is imperative for upper level administration to initiate these conversations and initiatives to work collaboratively across campus communities.

Conclusion

This study offers a contribution to discussions on campus climates for racial and ethnic diversity at predominantly White institutions. As in all research studies, this work had particular limitations that future research should extend. The focus of this work was intentionally limited to individuals involved in Latina/o sororities and fraternities, which is only one form of a diversity-focused experience. Future studies should further explore perspectives of students engaged in other diversity focused experiences to discover ways these experiences inform how students experience campus environments. Furthermore, while this work centered the experiences of Latina/o college students, future studies should continue to center discussions on campus climates from the perspectives of other marginalized student populations including Latinx students. The nature of fraternities and sororities as spaces that reify the gender binary is an important area to unpack as FSL communities work towards inclusivity and equity.

Furthermore, future studies can address ways disparities between espoused and enacted commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion contribute to students' perspectives of campus climates. Future work should also interrogate ways campus personnel consider these espoused commitments in strategic planning as well as in their daily work. Intentionality and a concerted effort from the entire campus community is key in cultivating positive climates for diversity.

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