SHALLOW INCLUSION: HOW LATINX STUDENTS EXPERIENCE A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION "DOING DIVERSITY WORK"

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ABSTRACT
A university's culture cycle includes institutional *ideas* around racial/ethnic diversity that inform *institutional* practices and norms, which shape daily *interactions* and *individual* experiences of students. Using qualitative methods, we explore how Latinx students experience these elements of campus culture at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) publicly committing to engaging in diversity work. We examine the university's ideas and institutional practices and compare them with the interactions and individual experiences of students. We discuss what Latinx students' experiences reveal about how the university's culture cycle considers and promotes the inclusion of Latinx perspectives, experiences, cultural traditions, histories, and challenges. We supplement our understanding of the culture cycle model with elements of Latinx Critical Race Theory

(LatCrit) to account for the pervasive influence of race and racism. We conclude that a race-informed Latinx cultural consciousness is only present in shallow ways within the culture cycle of the university studied. To facilitate an understanding of Latinx student perspectives, meaningfully serve Latinx students, and extend the benefits of diversity to all students, a Latinx cultural consciousness must be infused in *all phases* of the culture cycle.

To be honest I don't see [diversity being promoted on campus], besides being involved in organizations…. I think the only way I see it from administration is through letters and emails, 'Oh, we're trying to diversify. Oh, we're trying this.' But I don't see much of the action (Liana[1])

I guess at first what scared me was how is diversity going to be tackled? Is it just going to be increasing the populations? I don't want to say 'No, there's not enough,' because I see progression. I just hope that it continues to grow in the future (Rafael)

Introduction

Liana and Rafael recount their experiences as Latinx students at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) during a unique transitional period. Several years before they were interviewed, the university publicly announced that it was deepening its commitment to diversity. In its university blueprint, institutional stakeholders outlined the "value for diversity and inclusion" as a core belief that is essential to the pursuit of excellence and to the goal of educating global citizens. In juxtaposing this commitment with the experiences of Latinx students, our article explores how Latinx students perceive the campus climate for diversity and how the campus nurtures their development and engagement.

A focus on the experiences of Latinx students is timely given how this growing population continues to transform the cultural and linguistic tapestry of U.S. classrooms across the PK-16 spectrum (Irizarry, 2015; Marrun, 2020). Between 1976 and 2017 the percentage of enrolled college students who were Hispanic grew from 4% to 19% (NCES, 2018).

Yet, the demographics at most PWIs do not reflect this growth. This focus is also opportune given increased pressure (e.g., media focus on racialized campus incidents, student group demands, increased diversity metrics in university rankings) on universities to develop institutional initiatives that reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and student success (Lewis & Shah, 2019). Such initiatives do not always translate into meaningful change or equitable opportunities and outcomes. For example, Latinx students continue to experience structural challenges in universities, including confronting racism and a lack of representation of their histories and cultures, that undermine their likelihood of completing a 4-year degree relative to their White counterparts (Cuellar & Johnson-Ahorlu, 2016; Garcia, 2016; Harper, 2012; Sanchez, 2019).

In this article, we use a culture cycle model -- a framework that examines how culture and individuals mutually influence one another (Markus & Kitayama, 2010) -- to explore how Latinx students experience the cultural setting of a PWI publicly committing to diversity-related initiatives. In optimal circumstances, this framework assumes a dynamic process of influence, including the opportunity for Latinx students to agentically influence institutional practices and policies. Yet, cultural systems plagued by institutional barriers - like persistent racism - limit these opportunities. Thus, we supplement our understanding of the culture cycle model with elements of Latinx Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) to account for the pervasive influence of race and racism. A race-conscious culture cycle analysis helps us explore how Latinx students experience the climate for diversity at various levels of the culture cycle, including their places of influence; and helps us emphasize the role of race, which is often absent in cultural frameworks (Bell & Hartmann, 2007). We can also understand how race influences the cultural ideas, institutional practices, and daily interactions of a PWI committing to diversity and the psychological effects on students.

Theoretical framework: A Race-conscious culture cycle

The culture cycle comprises four intertwined features: ideas, institutions, interactions, and individuals (Fryberg et al., 2016; Markus & Kitayama, 2010). In the *ideas* feature, we focus specifically on the prevalent beliefs around racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion, including how racial/ethnic identity differences should be integrated into the fabric of institutional life (see Jones, 2010). These beliefs also include viewpoints on the racial history of power and status and the tensions among racial/ethnic groups that have existed in the university's history (e.g., Plaut, 2010). These ideas are reflected and inscribed in *institutional* practices and policies (e.g., curricular and co-curricular offerings, hiring practices) that convey important messages about which students are being served, or not served, by the institution. These practices dictate the everyday socio-cultural exchanges and *interactions* of students with others, including faculty, staff, and other students. Finally, these interactions shape the *individual* psychological experiences of students at the university, including their sense of fit or thoughts about their capability in the university context.

Although some work considers questions of race and diversity using a culture cycle framework (e.g., Plaut, 2010), other perspectives offer more robust theory. Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education, for example, is an interdisciplinary framework exploring the role of race/racism and the experiences of students across educational contexts (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). LatCrit, a strand of CRT, brings attention to the intersectionality of race with other factors such as language, culture, immigration, citizenship status, intra-group diversity, and colonization that shape Latinx experiences (Espinoza & Harris, 1997; Háney-Lopez, 1998; Valdes, 1998). In our use of the culture cycle framework, LatCrit is necessary because it conceptualizes racism as an endemic, normalized feature in U.S. culture and institutions (Bell, 1993) and because it values and relies on the experiential knowledge - and resistance - of minoritized individuals and communities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As

scholars who approach educational and racial equity from anthropological and psychological frameworks, we were drawn to integrating both frameworks. To better understand this integration, we review existing research focused on how the different features of the culture cycle - ideas, institutions, and interactions - influence the psychological experiences of Latinx students.

Cultural ideas: University diversity initiatives

Many diversity planning initiatives are reactive in nature; they are initiated in response to national movements, legal demands, or disruptive campus incidents, such as hate-bias incidents, which highlight racism within the campus structure (Williams & Clowney, 2007). These diversity initiatives often produce superficial-level change (Williams & Clowney, 2007). For example, institutions invest in easy solutions for addressing diversity, outlining their ideas in a diversity mission statement (see Ahmed, 2012) or promoting an insubstantial commitment to multicultural centers and a diversity course requirement (Hikido & Murray, 2016). This investment is often done without careful thought about how to engage all students in meaningful interactions with diverse peers, also known as interactional diversity (Keels, 2020), with insufficient emphasis on shifting the campus cultural practices, or with insufficient resources devoted to diversity work.

These institutional initiatives may also address racial conflict and tension in superficial ways by minimizing conflict. Institutions might shift diversity-related policies and language to appear more seemingly race-inclusive but, in fact, might be more color-evasive[2] (see Cobham & Parker, 2007; Keels, 2020). Indeed, researchers have documented the prevalence of color-evasive racist ideologies in students' perceptions of diversity (Dingel & Sage, 2020; Hikido & Murray, 2016) and university diversity efforts (Cobham & Parker, 2007; Keels, 2020). For example, mission statements or welcome letters that celebrate "multiculturalism" without a critical lens on racism and diversity can render invisible the different experiences of racial/ethnic groups, including experiences with persisting structural barriers for racially minoritized students (see Forman, 2004; Plaut, 2010; Salter & Adams, 2013). Superficial attempts at celebrating diversity perpetuate invisibility and color-evasiveness and sustain white supremacy. They value sameness in opportunity and treatment of groups (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010) and are based on the idea that promoting assimilation into the dominant culture is desirable (Dingel & Sage, 2020). This is problematic as robust literature points to the negative effects of color-evasive approaches for both white (e.g., higher pro-white bias) and racially minoritized (e.g., lack of belonging) students (Aragón et al., 2017; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004).

Addressing the pervasive ways that white supremacy structures institutional culture is important if diversity initiatives are going to make systemic changes that move beyond the status quo to meaningfully serve racially minoritized students (Bensimon, 2018; Patton, 2016). Scholars argue that university diversity efforts that promote equity for racially minoritized populations must include both an understanding and valuing of differences among social identity groups (Aragón et al., 2017) and a focus on addressing structural inequality, racism, and white privilege within the institution (Dingel & Sage, 2020). Conceptual frameworks that appropriately serve Latinx students in higher education importantly address issues of diversity through a critical lens that includes a

race-forward agenda (Garcia, 2016; 2019; Hurtado, 1994; Kiyama et al., 2015; Museus, 2014). This is particularly important as, historically, institutions have not represented or integrated the histories and backgrounds of Latinx communities into their institutional structures (e.g., Hurtado, 1994; Kiyama et al., 2015) nor have they given sufficient attention to the ways racism has impacted the pursuit of higher education by Latinx people.

Institutional practices and policies: How diversity initiatives are enacted

To understand how ideas that undergird diversity initiatives impact the campus climate, scholars must examine elements of institutional culture. We focus on three such elements: structural diversity, curricular diversity, and co-curricular diversity. Structural diversity includes the numerical representation of minoritized people, including students, staff, and faculty, within an institution (Gurin et al., 2002). Structural diversity is one indicator of diversity initiative priorities as it showcases who an institution hires and retains among their faculty or who they enroll and serve among their student population. This is important because robust literature points to the benefits of attending an institution with a more diverse student and faculty population (Gurin, et al., 2002, Denson & Bowman, 2013). Yet, systems of higher education continue to lack critical representation of minoritized people, including those from Latinx backgrounds. Of all full-time faculty (e.g., tenure-track faculty, lecturers) in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, Latinx faculty only accounted for 4.76% in 2018 (NCES, 2018). This is disproportionately lower than the U.S. Latinx population (18.1%, United States Census, 2017) and the percentage of Latinx students (18.9%) enrolled in postsecondary institutions nationwide (NCES, 2018). Without appropriate representation, Latinx students can experience difficulty forging meaningful relationships with similar others, which undermines feelings of belonging and connection to campus (Hurtado, 1994; Strayhorn, 2012). Continued underrepresentation of Latinx faculty and students is evidence that diversity initiatives are not race-forward and are not sufficiently shifting the campus climate for diversity.

Another reflection of an institutional commitment to diversity is in the structure of curriculum offerings. Diversity or multicultural course requirements are now common in higher education; however, the menu of courses is often so broad that topics related to the racialization of groups, such as Latinx groups, are neutralized and given limited attention (Patton, 2016). Furthermore, diversity course requirements have not sufficiently impacted the broader curriculum where "whiteness remains embedded, regardless of subject matter" (Patton, 2016, p. 320). Ethnic studies courses, on the other hand, are more likely to benefit racially minoritized students because they center attention on racial projects, draw on the underutilized knowledge production of racially minoritized groups, expose minoritized students to their histories and provide access to a language of critique and possibility (de los Ríos et al., 2015). Low-income, first-generation Latinx college students reported a greater sense of belonging and intergroup understanding after taking a semester-long course focused on the histories and lived experiences of Latinx students (Nuñez, 201l; see also Keels, 2020).

Co-curricular offerings also reflect an institution's commitment to diversity. Latinx-centered student organizations play an important role in the experiences of many Latinx students, particularly in PWIs that may provide few opportunities for Latinx students to interact with each other (Ponjuán & Hernández, 2020) or to find spaces where their cultures and identities are centered or sustained (González, 2002). These organizations further the leadership development of Latinx students, as many tend to have missions that are rooted in community outreach, social change, and activism (Lozano, 2010). Interestingly, involvement in Latinx student organizations does not necessarily facilitate a sense of belonging at PWIs as students may participate in these organizations because of the marginality they feel in the broader university context (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

The daily interactions and experiences of Latinx students at PWIs

In shaping these structural elements of institutions, diversity initiatives also inform the daily interactions of Latinx students through both formal and informal interactional diversity. Formal interactional diversity includes intentional opportunities for students from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds to develop meaningful relationships, engage in open dialogue about race, or take courses that fulfill diversity requirements (Keels, 2020; Hurtado et al., 2008). Informal interactions are not planned but can happen within and between racial groups across all campus spaces (Hurtado et al., 2008). In general, positive cross-racial interactions are associated with growth in academic self-concept (Cuellar, 2014), sense of belonging (Nuñez, 2009), and critical perspectives on campus racial climate (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005). Conversely, negative cross-racial encounters, especially through microaggressions-- racialized everyday putdowns, insults, or indignities experienced by people of color (Pierce, 1970; Sue et al., 2007) -- can cause psychological distress (Sanchez et al., 2018), leave students feeling devalued, isolated, or invisible (Sanchez, 2019; Yosso et al., 2009), and negatively impact cultural and social adjustment (Von Robertson et al., 2016).

Latinx students cope with microaggressions and other forms of racism in a variety of ways including engagement in spaces that offer opportunities for positive intra-group interactions (Yosso et al., 2009). These spaces can help Latinx students navigate their institutions together (Von Robertson et al., 2016; Yosso et al., 2009), including learning how to resist racism (Villalpando, 2003; Yosso et al., 2009). With such intra-group support, Latinx students might be less likely to minimize the microaggressions they experience (see Sanchez, 2019) and more likely to perform better academically (Cerezo & Chang, 2013). Intragroup interactions, however, are not always positive for Latinx students. Conflicts may arise, for example, when essentialized notions about what it means to be Latinx are expressed and used to mark boundaries of belonging (Sanchez, 2019).

Prior research has examined how institutional diversity initiatives in both structural elements and interactions separately influence the socio-psychological experiences of Latinx students. Our goal is to examine these processes together using a race-conscious culture cycle analysis and to explore how Latinx students experience the campus climate for diversity at a PWI

publicly committing to diversity-related initiatives. We draw from interviews and focus groups with Latinx students as the primary data source; we also use selected statements from interviews with campus staff, faculty and administrators because they provide additional information on institutional history related to diversity efforts and racial dynamics.

Method

University Context

The study took place at State University (SU), a research-intensive public university in the Eastern United States. The racial/ethnic breakdown of the university at the time of the study was: 76% White, 6.9% Latinx, 4.7% Black, 4.2% Asian, 0.1% Native, 4.3% International, and 3.8% two or more races. As a PWI with a history of explicit racial exclusion before the Civil Rights Movement, past efforts related to diversity at SU mostly focused on redressing the institutional inequalities that resulted from denying Black students access to the university. Thus, over the decades, there were centers, curricula, and programming directly aimed at improving the inclusion of Black students. For instance, efforts by the Black community resulted in the formation of a cultural center, the Black Student Center (BSC), and a Black studies department. While issues pertinent to the Black community have by no means been resolved, this focus on the Black/White binary has historically dominated official discourses around race at SU. As a result, successive administrations have paid minimal explicit attention to the experiences of other racially minoritized groups such as the Latinx group and all its racial and ethnic complexity.

These historical trends were evidenced in the low scores SU received on diversity by an accreditation agency several years before the present study. The agency's report indicated that SU lagged behind its peers on absolute and relative measures pertaining to diversity. At the time of this study, SU had embarked on a university-wide campaign to address these dismal diversity measures. This included the crafting of a diversity mission statement and the creation of a task force responsible for defining the diversity concept, identifying the state of diversity efforts, and recommending policy changes. The administration also created a new office focused on diversity and provided limited diversity-related resources. Likewise, the SU's office of admissions was reconfigured to reach out to a more diverse student body in terms of race, ethnicity, and class.

Research Positionality, Participants, & Procedure

The research team reflects multidisciplinary perspectives in education, psychology, and anthropology that guided their understanding and analysis of participants' responses. The three primary researchers are Latina professors, one was a postdoctoral fellow at the time of the study, whose research agendas reflect commitments to better understanding and improving the experiences of Latinx students in education. Students were recruited as part of a larger campus survey that our research team created and administered. All Latinx students, identified via institutional record data, on campus (N=1186) received an invitation. At the end of the survey, students indicated their interest in participating in student focus groups and interviews about "the experiences of Latino/a, Hispanic, or Latin American students at SU." These terms allowed for

broader identification with the study and, thus, for broader recruitment of a diverse sample of Latinx students. Once in the study, participants were encouraged to use their preferred racial/ethnic identity term; we provide this information in the results when offered.

Of all those who completed the survey, 25 participated in focus groups or interviews. We obtained demographic information from institutional records and students' self-reports on the survey. The majority of the sample was female (60%) and 28% were the first generation in their family to attend college. All years of school were represented: 35% were fourth-year students, 28% third-year, 20% second-year, and 16% first-year. Self-report data revealed that 60% of students identified as Latino/a or Hispanic, 16% specified an ethnic subgroup (1 Argentinian, 1 Guatemalan, 1 Cuban American, 1 Colombian), 12% identified as White and Latino/a or Hispanic (1 White/Ecuadorian, 1 White/Argentinian, 1 White/Venezuelan), 4% identified as Black/Latina/o, and 8% of participants did not report their identification. The sample also represented diversity in terms of their college major affiliation.

We held four 60-75-minute focus groups with enrolled Latinx students (N=13) and 45-75-minute individual interviews with students identified as Latinx student leaders (N=12).

The semi-structured format of the student interviews and focus groups allowed for consistency in topics but also for an opportunity to engage in comfortable yet flexible conversations (Wengraf, 2001). Interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed. During these interviews, we asked open-ended questions about a) reasons for selecting SU; b) how they described their experiences as Latinx students at the institution; c) positive and challenging factors of being a Latinx student at SU; d) views of the contributions of Latinx students to the SU community; and e) opportunities for learning about Latinx-related topics.

We also conducted 14 individual interviews with administrators, faculty, and staff, recruiting those who were Latinx and worked directly with issues of equity and diversity or who worked directly with Latinx student organizations. These interviews, which provide secondary data in this article, focused on questions about a) the institution's history with diversity initiatives; b) work specifically addressing the needs of Latinx students; c) what administrators, faculty and staff learned from personal experiences working with Latinx students; and d) the ways they experienced the campus climate (especially those who were Latinx).

Coding Procedure

We began coding with a data-driven, inductive coding approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The research team read transcripts individually and then met to construct codes related to the research question, also known as open coding. We developed a coding dictionary and then coded and analyzed the data using Dedoose, a data analysis web-based program. The final coding scheme included 16 codes that addressed three main features of the data, including how students experienced being Latinx at SU, how they described SU more broadly, and how they described the Latinx community at SU. We then conducted a second reading of the data, reading by code instead of by transcript, and engaged in selective coding to identify the significant relationships and findings in our codes and categories. At this stage, we utilized the culture cycle framework to

provide an organizational structure for our codes. We constructed 5 main themes that reflected descriptions of *institutional* practices (i.e., structural diversity; (co-curricular diversity) and of daily *interactions* (i.e., opportunities for connection with Latinx people, encounters with non-Latinx others, responses to racist interactions). In our analysis, we noted how these features influenced participants' psychological experiences.

To enhance the trustworthiness of our data, we utilized two forms of triangulation. These included both investigator triangulation, where multiple investigators coded the data, and methodological triangulation, where we utilized multiple sources of information (Merriam, 1991). This included data from students, faculty, and staff and a comparison of our findings against our contextual analysis of SU's history and curricula. The team met regularly to discuss how our own subjectivities impacted our reading of the data, clarify and resolve any coding discrepancies between researchers, and explore relationships between codes. Specifically, we engaged in constant comparison of our interpretations of the data to our research question and relevant literature.

Results

Applying a race-conscious culture cycle framework, we first focus on the institutional level and detail how Latinx students experience the institutional elements and structures of SU, including structural diversity and (co-)curricular diversity. We then focus on Latinx students' interactions at SU, including opportunities to connect with Latinx people, racist interactions with non-Latinx others, and students' responses to these limited and racist interactions. We embed students' descriptions of their socio-psychological experiences at SU in each of these discussions to highlight the influence of the levels of the culture cycle on students' belonging, well-being, and other psychological experiences. In each of these sections, we also feature statements from the faculty, staff, and administrator interviews; these data bolster the findings as they provide the perspectives of those who have non-student roles at the university.

Structural diversity and Latinx students: "It's not known for being diverse"

At the time of the study, Latinx students at SU (6.9%)[3] were underrepresented when compared to the Latinx population of SU's state. Latinx students repeatedly addressed these structural diversity challenges, especially regarding visibility and underrepresentation. Enrique discussed the low percentage of Latinx students on campus, saying, "we're not a very visual part of campus." Briana, another student, expressed a similar statement saying that "we go unnoticed." The (in)visibility described by Latinx students may reference both their limited numbers on campus and the ways diverse phenotypes impacted how Latinx were identified by others. Raquel pointed out: "there is a lot of [Latino students] that you would not know are Latino because of the way they look, like some of us are lighter than others." As asserted by LatCrit scholars (Haney-López, 1998; Trucios-Haynes, 2000), phenotype intersects with national origin, accent, citizenship status, and other characteristics to shape individual level racial identity and the ways Latinx sub-groups (e.g., Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, etc.) are racialized within the context of the narrow Black-

White binary. That is, the variety of Latinx phenotypes inform issues of visibility, including who is seen as Latinx.

The limited number of Latinx students and faculty discouraged some prospective students from attending SU. Marisol explained:

> A lot of my friends and my sister did not choose SU because of the lack of diversity; because there were not going to be a lot of Hispanics. It's not known for being diverse, at least in the people I keep talking to in the immediate areas [of our state] where you have the biggest concentration of Hispanics.

Diego noted the lack of representation of Latinx people in his major and explicitly linked this minimal presence to a larger institutional issue of diversity on campus:

> I know one of the things [the president] is big on is diversity. But how come I still see ... It's me and two other guys who are Latino in the whole college, at least in my major. If he's putting too much emphasis on diversity, why haven't we seen a number of Latino students ... For example, in the enrollment rates? Why hasn't that gone up?

Diego's response showcased how commitments to diversity without changes in structural diversity can have a superficial impact on the culture cycle of the university. Faculty offered a similar analysis about the importance of representation in doing meaningful diversity work. Elliot shared: "Frankly, I feel like if you're going to apply money to try to enhance diversity, the bottom line is trying to get more Hispanic faculty and students here… if you want to start changing culture… There's got to be some critical mass and I don't think we're there." Comments on SU's structural diversity highlight how SU was an overwhelmingly white campus both in terms of who it served and, as will be discussed next, in terms of what students experienced in the curricular and co-curricular structures of the university.

Curricular and co-curricular diversity: "Where are things to unite Latino students?"

With the exception of a few courses primarily discussing ethnicity, migration, and Latinx literature in departments such as Anthropology, Geography, Sociology, and Women and Gender Studies, there was not a Latinx studies department, program, certificate, or even a full course that addressed Latinx experiences in the United States. SU's Latin American Studies program and course offerings, although robust and diverse, are primarily centered on the history and cultures of peoples in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Spain. Some courses integrated material about these regions with the history of Latinx presence in the US. However, this was not central or visible in the mission or purpose of the program.

When asked about courses that offered Latinx-themed curricula, students and faculty mentioned only a few opportunities. Steven, a student, said, "I've taken the Spanish language course where we learned about language; the culture, the history and things like that are sidebars of the course." Some students hoped the university would offer opportunities for them to strengthen connections to their Latinx heritage and history. Alex, a student, mentioned that he

came to the university "wanting to learn more about [his] Puerto Rican/Latino heritage." Yet, he said that he did not find much in the curriculum about the experiences of Latinos:

> I did take an African-American studies class that dealt with discrimination and the criminal system and it did have a lot of similarities between Latinos and Blacks. But honestly, the library is probably the best thing [for information on Latinos] cause they have a whole section for just history, and then also the internet.

Beyond just a few references to courses or other types of academic experiences, students' conversations about opportunities to learn about Latinx content knowledge repeatedly focused on Registered Student Organizations (RSOs). Rafael explained:

> I would say MGC (Multicultural Greek Congress), Unidad Latina and La Raza, that's the Latino community that I think of on campus because that's what I see most advocating for the Latino community.

Marisol mentioned that she only saw the Latinx community in the RSOs. She shared, "I was amazed that there were so many Hispanics in one place. I had no idea. There were like 30 or something." Lysandra, who was a staff member, an SU alum, and an advisor for one of the Latinx RSOs, also identified RSOs as the primary place for the Latinx community, even for faculty and staff, "In terms of a Latino community, I don't feel like there's any organized home away from home for us. Basically, the Latino community to me is just Unidad Latina and La Raza."

The RSOs served different functions for students including allowing students to feel a sense of pride, belonging, unity, and strength as members of a Latinx community. Alex commented, "I go to these meetings of the student organizations and just seeing the pride that the Latinos have on this campus, you can't really shoot that down at all." Liana explained that Unidad Latina was where she made her close group of friends and where she wanted to be involved because, "I instantly felt connected to the people there, I felt it was like my home."

RSOs also educated others on campus about Latinx life and cultural practices. Eva explained the multiple goals of Unidad Latina. "They try to bring everyone together, not just Hispanic people, because they will have events that everyone can attend. So I think [we are] trying to promote the culture not just within the group but to everyone." According to Paloma, a faculty member, the focus on Latinx culture was important but superficial: "I know that there are organizations that focus on Latino issues [but] for the most part they tend to be stereotypical. They talk about the 'lite' cultural aspects of the Latino culture; about the food, the music but I don't see anything political". The feeling of superficial programming was also observed in opportunities related to Latinx Heritage Month. Robert, a staff member, explained, " being Latino is an everyday experience. It's not only designed for one month. It shouldn't be our only source of [Latinx] diversity on campus." Students and faculty yearned for both broader university participation at these events and for the inclusion of Latinx speakers, events, or concerns into other aspects of university life.

Participants also repeatedly noted that there was no physical space designated for Latinx students or a place to serve as a resource for connecting with surrounding Latinx organizations or communities. The staff at the BSC referred to intentional outreach efforts to the Latinx community

as part of their purpose on campus. Yet, the majority of Latinx participants described this space as primarily serving Black students and not as a place that nurtured belonging for Latinx students. This may be, in part, a function of anti-Black racism, which can be expressed within Latinx communities as a rejection of Blackness as a cultural marker (Deche et al., 2019). Rafael, a student who used the BSC, explained:

> I definitely do think the BSC is a very large support system [but] I never see Latino students there. I guess because… many students feel they can't go in there. I think just because of the name, people shy away from it.

Raquel, a student, hoped that what BSC offered to the Black community could also be offered to Latinx students, "Just thinking of what the BSC does, where are things like that to unite Latino students, to just get them to know each other and have them form a community [or] just to make their presence known?"

In the absence of physical or academic spaces to address the experiences of Latinx populations, the expression and development of relevant learning opportunities remained largely dependent on Latinx students themselves. This left students and faculty feeling skeptical about the university's commitment to institutional change. All the faculty and staff interviewed expressed that the university's efforts insufficiently addressed the core of institutional life. Natalie, a staff member, stated, "I think many people see it as a to-do. We did diversity. But it's not something that you can just do, it's who you become. It's what your institution values. It's the core of it, and I just don't see it here. I think if I don't see it, how are students really seeing it?" Elliot, a faculty member, who was invited to participate in a task force report, mentioned that the university remained largely the same,

> I was initially cautiously optimistic when the new president came and he seemed to proactively want to create this diversity task force and it seemed to be a principle of his strategic plan. He was talking the right talk, but then it felt like all of the work that went into getting all of the information that was needed to create that diversity task force report wasn't really used. It was superficially used.

In sum, SU lacked a strong emphasis on the integration of Latinx students, their cultures, histories, and concerns throughout the institutional level of the culture cycle of SU. Although institutional practices importantly determine the interactions and individual-level experiences students confront, a culture cycle framework acknowledges how these levels can both reflect and counter such institutional patterns. For example, further examining issues of diversity within interactions reveals how institutional agents - like faculty, staff, and students - experience a shallow attempt at diversity but also how they themselves engage in meaningful resistance to address these disconnects.

Intragroup interactions at SU: "It's really hard for Latinos to network"

Students shared a number of ways in which they felt challenged by the opportunities (or lack thereof) for building relationships with other Latinx students and the psychological impact of these experiences. One challenge was the limited options for meeting other Latinx students. As

Miguel noted, "I have a hard time meeting [other Latino] people because the campus is so big and … [Latinos are] spread out." Xiomara experienced a similar challenge,

> I came to SU and I was the only Latina on my floor, in my building. It wasn't something that I thought would bother me, but it did. It did take getting used to, especially [my] freshman year. I'm getting used to everything to begin with and then on top of that, I have to get used to not knowing... anyone who shares your ethnic perspective.

Without opportunities to interact with Latinx peers, some students felt isolated or misunderstood. For Alex, this was especially felt in his courses, "there's not too many kids that I talk to during class or have anything to talk about. It's really hard for Latinos to network, especially if they want to identify with somebody that they can relate to as much as possible." When asked how he felt being at SU, he shared, "I would kind of say like, isolated honestly." Sofia, noting a similar challenge, shared that it would have been "a little easier to transition into college if there were more diversity, of even ideas and backgrounds."

Students also spoke about the challenge of finding or expressing their Latinx identities in the context of a culturally white campus that also attracts many students from middle-to-upper-class backgrounds. Because of the range of ways that students identified racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically, interactions between Latinx students did not always nurture a sense of shared experience. This was evident in one focus group of three Latina students:

> Gloria: I think that college is... like trying to really find an identity, but it is harder as a Latino. There are obviously people who are "Americanized" and aren't with their cultures. They don't celebrate it. With me, it's no shame, but it might be different with another person, that they'd rather just kind of shy away from that just because it is a minority [at SU]
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> Estela: I feel like a lot of people say they're Latino, but they're mixed. They don't have our culture, so they don't count.
>
> Heather: It's not like you're interacting with someone that's Latino and can talk to you about that kind of stuff, because you have your culture, and they're more Americanized, I guess.

Although they sometimes essentialized Latinx identities, their conversation illustrated the complexity of negotiating one's Latinx identity in a predominantly white space and the consequences this had on intra-group interactions.

While these students primarily focused on cultural differences, diversity within the Latinx population in terms of racial identity also influenced intra-group interactions. Rafael, who spoke of his family as Afro-Latino, saw a lot of similarities in the struggles experienced by African Americans and Latinx communities and helped organize a campus Afro-Latino event. But he was frustrated by the limited number of Latinx students who were involved in such events on campus and implicated both racial and cultural differences within the Latinx population in this challenge.

> You're telling me that the Latino population is increasing but I don't see these faces.
> Maybe it's someone that's on paper putting Latino but they don't necessarily identify

with the culture. Even if I were to hang out on Main Street on the weekend and they see me and they ask, "Oh, what are you?" and I say, "I'm Puerto Rican." They're like, "Oh, I'm half Puerto Rican." But you would never be able to tell because they don't vocalize it as much or necessarily identify with the culture. They don't identify because they don't know much of the culture because they weren't brought up with it.

Indeed, some of the students we interviewed mentioned that they had grown up in predominantly white environments and were used to and comfortable interacting with white peers. Heather, a student, explained:

I noticed here that it's predominantly Caucasian. But I also lived in an area that was predominantly Caucasian already, so it wasn't like a huge culture shock for me. I guess I got so used to being the minority that it would be natural to be in the minority again.

Other social identities influenced intra-group relationships for Latinx students. Javier highlighted issues of intersectionality when he spoke of his experiences as a Latinx, first-generation student. He described that a challenge for him was "finding people that actually understand what you're going through as a Latino student. My parents don't know much about college so it was hard to find people who knew what you were talking about." This sentiment was expressed by other first-generation Latinx students in our focus groups.

LatCrit's focus on intersectionality illuminates some of the challenges that SU Latinx students face in building intra-group interactions, and how their challenges are exacerbated by the underrepresentation of Latinx students at SU. Insights from LatCrit theory reveal how hierarchies of racial identity impact Latinx populations at SU, privileging and rewarding White identification and previous experiences in white contexts (Haney-López, 1998; Trucios-Haynes, 2000). Furthermore, a LatCrit analysis helps us understand this quality of the Latinx experience at SU as a manifestation of racism within the institution's culture cycle.

Intergroup interactions and microaggressions: "What's wrong with being Hispanic?"

The minimal representation of Latinx students on campus also complicated interactions with non-Latinx students. Eva, a student, explained that non-Latinx students often had limited opportunities for building relationships with Latinx people both before they arrived on campus and on the campus itself. She stated, "If students are not used to interacting with other Hispanic people they're not really going to get to know them." Consequently, without "getting to know" Latinx students through in-person encounters or classroom curriculum, Latinx students confronted problematic interactions with non-Latinx students at SU. Stories of microaggressions and racial stress emerged as students spoke of their campus lived experiences. Lucas, a student, shared,

I feel like people kind of look at me differently just because the color of my skin….
I feel like I don't fit in. There's always that percentage that stereotypes you, they have a typical view of Hispanics so they either put you aside or just overlook you

in general…. I didn't feel they thought I was equal to them in any way. In class I felt if I answer a question, they'll look at me some type of way.

Diego noted the same "weirdness" in classes. He explained, "There is a lot of stereotyping. I get that a lot from students. When I'm with some of my buddies, I am always getting Mexican jokes and stuff." Roxanna also described her frustrations with a hurtful interaction with close friends:

I was walking with two of my friends and they both happen to be from one of the wealthier parts of Logan town, [which is] predominately White. One of my friends was interested in this kid named Victor. The other girl that was with us hadn't heard anything about Victor yet and she was like, "Oh who's Victor?" The other one says, "Oh I swear he's not Hispanic." So, I said, "what's wrong with being Hispanic? The girl who was interested in this Victor guy [said], "Oh no, I didn't mean anything by it." And the other one said, "she meant like Mexican." It's awkward, it's two of my close friends and I was taken aback. Just things like that [happen] where people just haven't been exposed to Latinos before and they're not being exposed to it here so they just continue with a narrow-minded path.

Latinx students confronted hurtful, racist interactions even in close friendships with non-Latinx students. Jessica, a student, who confronted stereotypes of being a "sassy, sexy Hispanic woman" explained, "I think a lot of it is that most of the contact the students here have with Hispanics is through the TV. It's not so much with real-life students." The stereotypes that Jessica and other Latinx students described reveal that the complexity and nuance of Latinx lived experiences often remains unnoticed or misunderstood at SU. Although SU is committed to a "zero tolerance policy" on racial bigotry and harassment, the racial microaggressions described by Latinx students serve to maintain racism as a normalized feature (Bell, 1993) of institutional life. Using a LatCrit lens, we identified how race-based microaggressions in daily interactions challenge ideologies of an objective, inclusive diversity climate that provides mutually beneficial experiences and opportunities for all students.

Latinx students as cultural ambassadors: "I kind of blow it off and then sort of teach them"

Some Latinx students sought to combat microaggressions or their classmates' limited experiences engaging with Latinx individuals and communities by assuming the role of cultural ambassadors. In this role, Latinx students taught other students about Latinx identities and cultural practices or they countered faulty assumptions embedded in stereotypes and microaggressions. Sofia explained that "in classes, if there's anything pertaining to Latinx culture or traditions or history, if it's not correct, I feel the responsibility to kind of set things straight." Raquel played Latinx music in her residence hall and responded to classmates' requests to teach them how to dance. Marisol educated others about her cultural practices and, at the same time, countered stereotypes and unconscious biases about Latinx life:

Everybody thinks everybody's Mexican and that you like spicy food. What I do now is, I kind of blow it off and then sort of teach them. It's a moment for education.

No, I don't eat this, or I am a little bit like this, let me tell you more about that. I think people start thinking a certain way about you, unconscious bias is what you call it, which is sad but very real. You try to cope with it, try to be as positive as possible.

Like Marisol, other Latinx students expressed mixed feelings towards their roles as cultural ambassadors. Although students often mentioned that they appreciated their classmates' curiosity or attempts at better understanding Latinx cultural practices, they also found it frustrating to try to bridge the gap between their classmates' (or faculty's) level of understanding and their own lived experiences as Latinx students. Marlene, a student, explained:

I guess it's hard because they can't understand, because they're not in that place. It's completely fine that they don't understand because it's not their fault, but it's sometimes frustrating to try to explain and you just get impatient. Well, not impatient, but frustrated, because you want them to understand where you're coming from.

Latinx students did not always frame these interactions as examples of racism, but they noted that their role as cultural ambassadors was taxing and that they were tired of interpreting whether interest in them was genuine or superficial. For example, Rafael, who reframed the stares he received as "positive" attention, also noted how these stares drained his energy as he felt he was working to "prove" his merit and belonging at SU:

[There's] frustration of constantly seeing how people from my city[4] are looked at negatively or the stereotypes that exist for Latino culture on campus and just seeing how differently they may perceive me. I'm in business school. I'm a Latino male, I have long hair. I don't look like your typical business student. I feel like it draws attention in a good way rather than me conforming to what people are used to. You didn't expect that from me and now I showed you that I did it just as good.

Rafael's story, like the stories of several other students, illustrated how his role as a cultural ambassador arose in direct response to the stress that came from different manifestations of racism rather than out of a desire to play this role. He shared,

I remember sitting in a class one time just listening to two students talking about the business district in my city. They were saying, "Yeah you have all these corporate offices and buildings but then they're surrounded by the slums." These things happened my freshman year and I think it just got to a point where, in my college career I stopped listening and started saying something.

Still, other students expressed that they did not always know how to respond. After describing a microaggression involving a professor's statement that Latinx people were "good at cutting our grass," Raquel said, "I didn't know what to do with that." In general, while the students talked about positive aspects of their interactions at SU, when they talked specifically about how being Latinx impacted their experiences, they had some critiques or suggestions to offer about how interactions at SU could be less racist or more positive and fulfilling for them as Latinx students.

Conclusions

A race-conscious culture cycle approach shed light on Latinx students' experiences at a PWI engaged in diversity work. Despite a public commitment to diversity and inclusion, including efforts to fund diversity-related initiatives (e.g., creation of a diversity center), our findings reveal that these attempts are shallow. That is, SU's commitment to diversity has not meaningfully included a Latinx cultural consciousness at varying levels of the culture cycle. At the *institutional* level, we illustrated the absence of substantial and intentional institutional structures and practices for nurturing Latinx identity and culture across multiple facets of students' experiences, including SU's structural diversity and curriculum offerings. In their *interactions*, Latinx students experienced intra- and inter-group challenges related to the lack of representation of Latinx people and knowledge, including not being able to find other Latinx students to connect with, confronting race-related microaggressions, and serving as cultural ambassadors by teaching non-Latinx students about their culture. Through these experiences, they noted feelings of isolation and disconnect as students at SU.

There are some limitations to this conclusion. First, in examining the culture cycle of SU, we included perspectives of faculty, staff, and students. Yet, the perspectives of higher-level campus leaders and administrators (e.g., university president, deans) who make consequential decisions about diversity on campus are absent. Other work has included these perspectives and noted similar shallow, color-evasive ideas regarding diversity (see Ahmed, 2012), but tying these with other levels allows a fuller picture of an institution's culture cycle. Second, while we explored differences among our students in terms of ethnic background and in the different ways they experienced racialization, these intra-group differences were not centered in our study design. Latinx higher education scholarship needs to include further attention on Latinx sub-groups and needs to study anti-Black racism within university Latinx communities (Dache et al., 2019). Third, we interviewed students several years after the public commitment to diversity, which might not be sufficient time for meaningful institutional change. Future work should engage longitudinal approaches to understand how students experience diversity initiatives at the onset of the commitment and years later. Nonetheless, scarce research does note that such change is not substantial over time (see Dingel & Sage, 2020).

A Latinx cultural consciousness - a deliberate and race-informed awareness of the needs, values, and intellectual contributions of Latinx peoples - is useful for informing an institution's *ideas* about how diversity initiatives best serve racially minoritized students. Scholars have theorized and documented how higher education institutions--particularly Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)--develop an organizational identity that appropriately serves, and not simply enrolls, Latinx students (see Garcia, 2016). While HSIs serve larger numbers of Latinx students (at least 25% of the student population is Latinx) than PWIs like SU (where approximately 7% is Latinx), the continuous growth of Latinx students at SU, and other PWIs like it, warrant intentional learning from existing funds of knowledge of HSIs. There are concrete, diverse examples of how to serve Latinx students in meaningful ways (see Garcia, 2020).

Linking a model of servingness within a culture cycle framework, we argue that a meaningful commitment to Latinx consciousness should foster *institutional* practices that pay attention to structural diversity and the ways in which Latinx perspectives and content knowledge are integrated into the cultural practices, policies, and curriculum. For example, institutions must hire and recruit more Latinx people, increase the number of Latinx studies courses, and transform existing curricula to be more inclusive of Latinx and anti-racist content (e.g., Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015; González, 2002). A campus that serves Latinx students also encourages *interactions* and connections with Latinx communities both within and outside the campus and facilitates Latinx-centered community building. Campus professionals should work to provide resources for the establishment or maintenance of Latinx peer communities as a way to promote cultural validation and bolster Latinx students' social capital for navigating PWIs (e.g., Cerezo & Chang, 2013). This work must guide Latinx campus groups in addressing anti-Blackness within the Latinx community. Institutional commitments must also address intergroup racist encounters students face or the added responsibilities placed upon them, such as the role of cultural ambassador, in resisting such racism. Without meaningful responses, institutions will continue to rely on the labor of students to engage in meaningful diversity work for change, which comes with high emotional and academic costs for students (see racialized equity labor, Lerma et al., 2020).

In centering Latinx perspectives in our study of SU's culture cycle, we both contribute to theory and draw conclusions about meaningful diversity work. Using a LatCrit lens, we adopt a more critical view of the role of race and racism in the experiences of Latinx students, specifically, within the levels of the culture cycle. Merging LatCrit with a cultural framework uniquely sheds light on the racialized experiences of Latinx students at a PWI - with historical and cultural tensions grounded in a White/Black binary - engaging in diversity work. In addressing race and racism, we highlight points of disruption along a culture cycle process. Addressing these disruptions requires more than shallow attempts but rather a deep commitment to analyze and disrupt racist cultural and foundational ideas, institutional practices, and daily interactions that thwart opportunities for Latinx students, faculty, and staff to thrive and for educational equity to be achieved.

Notes

[1] All participant names are pseudonyms.

[2] Although the term color-blind is more widely used, the term color-evasive does not position people with disabilities as problematic and addresses the purposeful, as opposed to passive, ways race is avoided (see Annamma et al., 2017).

[3] Over half of the SU Latinx students were out of state students, making the underrepresentation of in-state Latinx students starker.

[4] Rafael came from the city nearest to the campus.

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