

Welcoming Non-Hispanic Students and Faculty to Hispanic Serving Institutions: Predictors
of Hispanic Students Attitudes toward Diversity at Majority Hispanic HSIs

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Abstract

Despite the considerable research that has been conducted on issues of diversity on college campuses, there has been limited research addressing this issue on Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). The present study investigated the predictors of Hispanic students' attitudes toward special efforts to recruit non-Hispanic students and faculty at an HSI. Thirty-nine percent of Hispanic students supported efforts to recruit non-Hispanic students and 45% support efforts to recruit non-Hispanic faculty. Membership in on-campus clubs and organizations predicted students' support of special efforts to recruit both non-Hispanic students and faculty. However, speaking Spanish at home was only a predictor of support for efforts to recruit non-Hispanic students.

The Hispanic population within the United States is projected to increase from 46.7 million people in 2008 to 132.8 million by 2050 (US Census Bureau, 2008) and this increase in population is very likely to result in an increase of Hispanic residents in a variety of institutions in the United States. One of these institutions likely to see an increase

in the number of Hispanic residents are educational institutions. As the Hispanic population increases in the US, so will the number of Hispanic students attending institutions of higher education. The projected number of Hispanic students attending degree-granting institutions is expected to nearly double between 2000 and 2018, resulting in 2,863,000 Hispanic students enrolling in institutions of higher education by 2018 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics in 2002, 47% of Hispanic students attending a degree granting institution were attending Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) are defined as institutions of higher education where the total Hispanic enrollment is a minimum of 25% of the total enrollment of the institution (HACU, 2009). In 2007 there were 265 HSIs in the United States, as well as 176 Emerging HSIs (Santiago & Andrade, 2010). Emerging HSIs are institutions where the enrollment is between 15 and 25% Hispanic (Santiago & Andrade, 2010).

Currently, the majority of HSIs in the United States have Hispanic populations below 50% resulting in most HSIs not being predominately Hispanic. Consequently, research thus far on issues related to diversity at most HSI-designated institutions have focused on institutions where the majority of the student population is NOT Hispanic (Dayton, Ganzales-Vasques, Martinez, & Plum, 2004). Therefore, the validity and applicability of these findings for HSI where the majority of the student body is Hispanic is questionable. The applicability and validity of these findings for HSI where Hispanic students are the majority is questionable because research has found that exposure to students from other ethnic backgrounds influences Hispanic students' views about people from those groups (Aberson, Porter, & Gaffney, 2008).

The increasing number of Hispanics attending college, and the increasing number of Hispanics attending HSIs, is likely to impact the number of HSIs having a majority Hispanic population. As such, the campus climate towards diversity could then be greatly impacted by the change in HSI composition from minority to majority Hispanic. Not only will the changing composition of HSIs likely influence students' attitudes toward diversity, but recent research on academic leaders at HSIs has found that these persons are concerned about diversity. De Los Santos Jr and De Los Santos (2003) found that HSI campus leaders (e.g. presidents and chancellors) rank growth and diversity as their fourth greatest concern, demonstrating that on some level these leaders are thinking about the issue of diversity and how it will impact their college campuses. The purpose of this research is to determine the factors that influence Hispanic students' attitudes towards diversity at a majority Hispanic HSI.

Review of Literature

Research on issues of diversity on college campuses has primarily been performed at historically and predominately Caucasian institutions. Much of this research has focused on the experiences of non-Caucasian students verses Caucasian students at these institutions. For instance, Ancis, Sedkacek, and Mohr (2000) found that different ethnic groups of students reported different views of the climate toward diversity at their institutions. These researchers found that Asian American, African American, and Hispanic students reported experiencing prejudice in the form of professors and teaching assistants showing limited respect and unfair treatment far more than Caucasian students did/reported. Additionally, African American and Hispanic students reported significantly lower levels of satisfaction with the campus climate toward diversity than Caucasian

students. This research also found that African American and Hispanic students on predominately Caucasian campuses expressed greater comfort with those of different ethnic groups than Caucasian students.

Some studies have gone beyond simple descriptive analyses of students' experiences and investigated the causes of different attitudes toward diversity. Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, and Terezin (1996) investigated the experiences which impacted students' openness to diversity during the first year of college at 18 institutions across the United States. They found that pre-college factors (openness to diversity and academic achievement), age, academics, peer interactions, and students' perception of their campus's openness to diversity impacted students' openness to diversity at the end of their first year of college. Students' pre-college openness to diversity had the largest impact on openness to diversity at the end of the first year of college. All of the other factors had smaller positive relationships to end of year openness to diversity.

Pascarella et al. (1996) also found that white students' and non-white students' openness to diversity was impacted differently by various factors dealing with the college campus. Living on campus and participating in cultural workshops had a greater impact on white students than non-white students in terms of their openness to diversity. Joining Greek life had a strong negative impact on white students and a small positive impact for non-white students. If an institution emphasized being critical, evaluative, and analytical white students were more open to diversity, while non-white students were less open to diversity (Pascarella, et al., 1996). While these findings indicate that campus factors can have differential impact on students from varying ethnic groups, it is impossible to tell whether this difference is because of inherent differences between white and non-white

students or because of the difference in status between groups in the majority and those in the minority.

While the majority of research on students' views of diversity have focused on predominately and historically Caucasian institutions, there are a few studies conducted at majority Hispanic HSIs that have addressed some aspects of diversity related to issues of Hispanics students' sense of belongingness and academic success. For example, Dayton, Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez, and Plum (2004) found that Hispanic students are under unique cultural pressure to focus on family life over personal desires. By attending an HSI, where the classmates understand the pressures unique to the Hispanic population, students have a greater sense of belongingness and higher academic achievement. In addition, the researchers found that having staff at an institution who are similar in ethnic background to the student body also positively influences student success.

Maestaz, Vasquera, and Zehr (2002) also researched the predictors of Hispanic students' sense of belongingness at HSIs. This study found that showing positive behaviors towards diversity, socializing with different ethnic groups, and supporting affirmative action goals positively influences students' sense of belongingness. Other factors which positively impacted students' sense of belonging at HSIs included feeling as if faculty have an interest in students' well being, being involved in Greek organizations, and holding campus leadership positions. These are similar to the factors that Pascarella, et al. (1996) found impacted openness to diversity, suggesting that factors similar to those that impact students at historically Caucasian institutions also impact students at HSIs.

While there has been research done at predominately Caucasian HSIs on factors which influence attitudes of diversity, there has been little research conducted at

predominately Hispanic HSIs regarding attitudes toward diversity. This lack of research limits the understanding of campus climate at these types of institutions. As the number of HSIs and predominately Hispanic HSIs increases in the coming years, it is imperative to have an understanding of the openness of Hispanic students to students and faculty of other ethnic backgrounds.

The present study investigated Hispanic students' openness to diversity through a proxy measure- students' support for special efforts to recruit students and faculty from other ethnic groups. It was hypothesized that students' demographics (sex, household income, home language, and political orientation), level of prejudice (*Modern Racism Scale*), and contact with students from different backgrounds (*Student Acquaintance Scale* and *Club Membership*) would predict students' support of special efforts to recruit students and faculty from non-Hispanic ethnic groups.

Method

Sample

Hispanic undergraduate students at a predominately Hispanic HSI were surveyed for this study. At the time of data collection, 96% of students enrolled at the institution self-identified as being of Hispanic origin. The sample was balanced in terms of sex (53% male) and political orientation, with ~~and~~ 42% of the sample reporting a liberal political orientation. The majority of respondents were born in the United States (80%) and lived in the United States (95%). The average age of participants was 22 years old and the median household income was \$30,000-\$39,999.

Instrument

The present study used data from a larger survey of Hispanic students' attitudes toward diversity. The independent variables were based on 5 demographic questions, the Modern Racism Scale, and the Student Acquaintance Scale. Sex, political orientation, home language, and club membership were all rated on dichotomous scale: male/female, conservative/liberal, English/Spanish, non-member/member.

The present study used a 5-item modified version of the *Modern Racism Scale*, which excluded questions concerning busing. Each question was rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree), with one reverse coded item. High scores represent more negative attitudes toward African Americans.

The Student Acquaintance Scale consists of 8 Likert-type items that measure students' contact with other students from different backgrounds. Each item asks students to rate the frequency with which they have had contact with students from different backgrounds on a 4-point scale, from 1 (Never) to 4 (Very Often). Higher scores represent more frequent interactions with students from different backgrounds.

The dependent variables, participants' openness to taking special efforts to recruit non-Hispanic students and faculty, were measured using dichotomous variables. For each question, students were asked to identify which ethnic groups of students or faculty the college should take special efforts to recruit (students could identify more than 1 group). Students could also indicate that no special efforts should be taken to recruit students and faculty from specific ethnic groups. Student responses were recoded into a single dichotomous variable, with 0 representing the no special efforts should be taken option and 1 representing the identification of at least one group for special recruitment efforts.

Design

The present study used a predictive correlational design. Specifically, the present study used a binary logistic regression. A binary logistic regression is used to predict a nominal dependent variable using nominal and continuous variables (Afifi, Clark, & May, 2004). In the present study, dependent variables (special efforts to recruit non-Hispanic faculty and special efforts to recruit non-Hispanic students) are both nominal. The independent variables include both nominal (e.g. sex & club membership) and continuous variables (e.g. *Student Acquaintance Scale* and *Modern Racism Scale*).

Procedure

Students were recruited using two techniques. The first techniques involved visiting undergraduate social science classes and asking students to complete the survey. The second method involved placing a table at 2 high traffic areas on campus, outside the library and in the cafeteria. As students walked by they were asked if they would be willing to spend fifteen minutes completing a survey. Students who volunteered were seated at a table with privacy dividers to complete the survey. Only surveys completed by Hispanic students were included in the present analysis.

Results

The hypothesis was tested using 2 logistic-regressions. The first regressed the Student Acquaintance Scale, the Modern Racism Scale, sex, political orientation, home language, household income, and membership in on-campus clubs on students' belief that special efforts should be taken to recruit non-Hispanic faculty. The second regressed the Student Acquaintance Scale, the Modern Racism Scale, sex, political orientation, home language, household income, and membership in on-campus clubs on students' beliefs that special efforts should be taken to recruit non-Hispanic students. A slightly higher

percentage of students supported special efforts to recruit non-Hispanic faculty (45%) than supported special efforts to recruit non-Hispanic students (39%). Means, standard deviations, and ranges are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Range	N
Acquaintance	19.21	6.09	24	189
Modern Racism	14.94	4.86	20	189
Sex	.50	.50	1	189
Political Orientation	.52	.50	1	189
Home Language	.59	.49	1	189
Household Income	3.49	2.69	9	189
Club Membership	.38	.49	1	189
Non-Hispanic Faculty	.55	.50	1	189
Non-Hispanic Students	.61	.49	1	189

The first model, regressing the predictors on students' beliefs that special efforts should be taken to recruit non-Hispanic Faculty, was not significant, $\chi^2(7, N = 186) = 12.55$, $p = .08$ (See Table 2). However, club membership was a significant predictor of students' attitudes toward recruiting non-Hispanic Faculty. Students who were members of clubs were 2.26 times more likely to believe special efforts should be taken to recruit non-Hispanic faculty than students who did not belong to clubs.

Table 2
 Logistic Regression of
 Non-Hispanic Faculty

Predictor	B	Wald χ^2	P	Odds Ratio
Acquaintance	.01	.18	.68	1.01
Modern Racism	-.03	.03	.38	.97
Sex	.39	1.58	.21	1.48
Political Orientation	.22	.51	.48	1.25
Home Language	.32	.89	.35	1.38
Household Income	-.06	1.00	.32	.94
Club Membership	.82	5.69	.02	2.26

The second model, regressing the predictors on students' beliefs that special efforts should be taken to recruit non-Hispanic students, was significant, $\chi^2(7, N = 189) = 25.38, p = .001$ (See Table 3). Using the Cox & Snell R-Square, the model explains 13% of the variance in the probability that students support special efforts being taken to recruit non-Hispanic students. At the individual variable level, two variables were significant predictors. Students who belonged to clubs were 3.01 times more likely to support special efforts being taken to recruit non-Hispanic students, while students who spoke Spanish at home were 2.13 times more likely to support special efforts being taken to recruit non-Hispanic students.

Table 3
 Logistic Regression of
 Non-Hispanic Students

Predictor	B	Wald χ^2	P	Odds Ratio
Acquaintance	.01	.22	.64	1.01
Modern Racism	-.05	2.25	.13	.95
Sex	.61	3.39	.07	1.84
Political Orientation	.41	1.55	.21	1.51
Home Language	.76	4.57	.03	2.13
Household Income	-.07	1.41	.24	.93
Club Membership	1.10	8.71	.003	3.01

Discussion

The hypothesis was partially supported by the findings. The overall model predicted student attitudes toward recruiting non-Hispanic students but not non-Hispanic faculty. However, individual variables did significantly predict both dependent variables. The present study found that club membership was a predictor of students' attitudes toward recruiting both non-Hispanic students and faculty. Students who belonged to clubs, compared to those who did not have club membership, were more likely to believe special efforts should be taken to recruit non-Hispanic students and faculty.

Club membership's influence on students' support of special recruitment efforts for non-Hispanic faculty and students was supported by Pascarella et al's (1996) findings concerning peer interactions. They found that interacting with peers and acquaintances

had positive impacts on students' openness to diversity. Openness to diversity was defined by Pascarella et al as enjoying intellectual challenges caused by various perspectives and appreciation of racial/cultural diversity. Similar to what was found with Pascarella et al and their findings of the benefits of club membership regarding openness to diversity, students in the present study who belonged to clubs (which would increase their peer interactions) were more supportive of the present study's measure of openness to diversity.

While club membership predicted students' attitudes, the other measure of contact with diverse students did not. This may be due to the nature of interactions measured by the two predictors. The *Student Acquaintance Scale* measures both casual and long-term intimate contact, while being a member of a club requires one to have long-term contact with other students. The present findings suggest that long-term intimate interactions, such as those provided through club membership, may be required to impact students' attitudes toward diversity.

Students whose home language was Spanish were more likely, than those students who spoke English at home, to support special efforts to recruit non-Hispanic students. This finding is similarly supported by Pascarella et al's (1996) findings. If a student speaks primarily Spanish at home, the student is already immersing themselves in cultural differences by attending an English speaking school. Based on Pascarella et al's findings, this interaction with students from different cultural backgrounds would increase students' appreciation for culturally diverse surroundings and their support for efforts to increase diversity.

These findings suggest that similar factors impact students' attitudes toward diversity regardless of the ethnic group of students who are in the majority. This is good news for college officials who are trying to promote openness toward and acceptance of diversity at their institutions. Strategies and techniques developed at predominately Caucasian institutions are likely to be effective at predominately Hispanic HSIs because similar factors impact majority students' attitudes at both types of institutions.

In order to further develop our understanding of issues of diversity at HSIs, future research should continue the present study's investigation of factors that predict Hispanic students' support of policies that promote diversity. Additionally, research should investigate the experiences of non-Hispanic students at Majority Hispanic HSIs. Research should also be performed on which ethnic groups Hispanic students at majority Hispanic HSIs would support their universities recruiting. This research can help institutions make more appropriate policies which influence diversity and improve openness/appreciation for diversity at these institutions.

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