



eCOMMONS

Journal of Critical Scholarship
on Higher Education and
Student Affairs

Volume 3

Issue 3 *Resilience, Resistance, & Reclamation:
Changing the Narrative of Higher Education*

Article 6


October 2018

Trump and an Anti-Immigrant Climate: Implications for Latinx Undergraduates

Jeremy D. Franklin
University of Utah

Rudy Medina
University of Utah

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ecommons.luc.edu/jcshesa>

 Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), [Inequality and Stratification Commons](#), and the [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Franklin, J. D. & Medina, R. (2018). Trump and an anti-immigrant climate: Implications for Latinx undergraduates. *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs*, 3(3), 74-87.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs* by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](#).

Trump and an Anti-Immigrant Climate:

Implications for Latinx/Chicanx Undergraduates



Jeremy D. Franklin
University of Utah



Rudy Medina
University of Utah

Students of color have reported encountering significant challenges while entering and attending institutions of higher education (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Turner (1994) stated that students of color feel like strangers in someone's house when referencing institutions of higher education. As a result of racism and anti-immigrant

attitudes, scholars have identified that students of color experience hostile campus racial climates, a lack of sense of belonging, racial microaggressions, and racial battle fatigue (Hurtado, 1992; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). The collegiate experience for students of color has been further negatively intensified by the era of President Trump's administration with rhetoric

and proposed policies that are anti-immigrant, Latinx/Chicanx, Muslim, Black, and LGBTQIA+. The rhetoric and policy positions of the Trump administration and like-minded individuals are nothing new in American society, but the delivery method has become anything but subtle. Universities have experienced racist propaganda found on campus and a rise in controversial conservative guest speakers that have led to students across the nation protesting these events. For instance, at the institutions where this study took place, signs stating "STOP THE RAPES, STOP THE CRIMES, STOP THE MURDER, STOP THE BLACKS" were found the week before school started. Additionally, other signs were posted once the semester began that stated, "It's Okay to be White." In other words, as the political rhetoric has become blatant, actions targeting communities of color have followed suit.

Several of Trump's proposed policies have targeted communities of color through bills that would prohibit Muslim refugees, end Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and deny rights to transgender individuals. Considering the immediate shock and heightened discussion of such policies among students, this paper investigates the impact of the rhetoric and anti-immigrant policies on Latinx/Chicanx¹ undergraduate students leading up to the 2016 presidential election and after the election of Donald J. Trump. The paper uses the campus racial climate as a theoretical framework to understand their experiences on campus. The paper asks three questions:

1. **What are the impacts on Latinx/Chicanx undergraduate students (on and off campus), regardless of documentation status, due to the election of Trump and the anti-immigrant and anti-Latinx/Chicanx rhetoric?**
2. **How has the campus racial climate for Latinx/Chicanx students been altered by the heightened discussion of potential anti-immigrant policies?**
3. **What are the intended and unintended consequences of the Trump-era discourse on the Latinx/Chicanx college student experience?**

In the following section, we introduce racist nativism and its influence on political rhetoric and policy. Next, we cover how literature describes the Latinx/Chicanx student college experience. Then we delve into our study that draws from campus racial climate frameworks and literature. After presenting our methods and data sources, we present eight themes across all focus groups and end the paper by discussing the findings and the impact on Latinx/Chicanx students.

"Responses from students suggest the election of Trump and likeminded political leaders profoundly and negatively impact the campus climate for Latinx/Chicanx students."

Exacerbation of Racist Nativism and Trump

Nativism is defined by Hingham (1955) as an intense opposition to an internal underrepresented group because of fear it is foreign or "un-American." Nativism has a connection to nationalism in the sense that nationalistic ideologies justify the fear "that some influence originating abroad threatens the very life of the nation within" (Hingham, 1955, p. 4 as cited in Huber, López, Malagon, Velez, & Solórzano, 2008). The discourse around nativism can be described as "dog whistle politics," or a form of strategic racism spoken in code and targeting a specific audience (López, 2015). Such discourses emphasize racial divisions while masking themselves as "neutral." For example, Attorney General Jeff Sessions justified the rescinding of DACA by stating that the program "denied jobs to hundreds of thousands of Americans [citizens] by allowing those same illegal aliens to take those jobs" (Shear & Davis, 2017). This fear is exacerbated when foreigners are racialized as Latinx/Chicanx and that traditional American values will be lost if overtaken by this growing minority population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Through this fear, racism becomes an important factor in how nativism is exercised where it begins to attack the Latinx/Chicanx community as non-native. During his presidential candidacy announcement, Trump played off of this fear by stating that "when Mexico sends its people ... they're not sending their best ... They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists ..." Racist nativism is then defined as assigning people of color, like the Latinx/Chicanx community, values that are perceived to be inferior to traditional native (White) values. Furthermore, racist

¹We use Latinx/Chicanx instead of Chicana/o Latina/o to disrupt the gender binary and be more inclusive and acknowledge the vast spectrum of gender and sexual identities. The x also politicizes language because it is purposeful in creating a more inclusive term while disrupting formal language structures that have excluded queer and transgender communities.

nativist rhetoric divert attention from social structures that maintain oppressive practices and exploit immigrant communities (Huber et al., 2008).

We argue that the Trump administration, as a result of the changing demographics in the United States, upholds these racist nativist ideals through hostile discourses and policies against people of color, immigrant communities, and other historically marginalized/minoritized groups. Through this discourse, there is a strong urgency to revert back to so-called traditional American values while assigning negative values to historically marginalized communities. Through this paper, we intend to look at how discourses of the Trump administration are impacting the sense of belonging for Latinx/Chicanx students and how they experience the campus racial climate.

Latinx/Chicanx Students and the College Experience

Studies have demonstrated that hostile campus racial climates create traumatic and unwelcoming experiences for Latinx/Chicanx students (Franklin, Smith, & Hung, 2014; González, 2002). Many of these experiences are perpetrated by racial microaggressions (Huber & Solórzano, 2015; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009) or the subtle, innocuous, preconscious, or unconscious degradation and putdowns aimed at reducing, diluting, atomizing, and encasing the hapless into their place. Additionally, Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) correlated racial microaggressions to racial battle fatigue, or the stress responses due to constant exposure to racial microaggressions. These traumatic experiences contribute to why students of color report that the campus climate is more hostile compared to their White counterparts (Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

Negative campus racial climates are facilitated by the institutional campus culture that often perpetuate “prejudice and discrimination, racial stereotypes, low expectations from teachers and peers, exclusions from the curriculum, and pedagogy that marginalizes and tokenizes the voices of Latinx/Chicanx college students and other undergraduates of color (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Lopez, 2005 as cited in Kiyama, Museus, & Vega, 2015). For instance, studies have found that Latinx/Chicanx students experience racist stereotypes and anti-immigrant sentiments that are perpetuated by entities across campus like university staff, faculty, and students (Gloria, Castellanos, Scull, & Villegas, 2009; Sanchez, in-press; Yosso et al., 2009). Latinx/Chicanx students experienced hostile college experiences partly because of the narrow perception of racial and ethnic identities by universities and colleges (Cavazos, Johnson, & Sparrow, 2010; Cerezo & Chang, 2013;

Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Pérez & Sáenz, 2017). A large body of research has demonstrated how Latinx/Chicanx and fellow students of color feel “out of place,” lack a sense of belonging, feel unsafe, and experience regular racial microaggressions on college campuses (González, 2002; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Kiyama et al., 2015; Yosso et al., 2009). Nonetheless, institutionalized resources that foster multiculturalism and diversity traditionally have not had the full support of educational institutions (Bauman, Bustillos, Bensimon, Brown, & Barteel, 2005). By not addressing hostile campus racial climates, institutions are contributing to the trauma of students of color and, with it, to the barriers they must navigate.

Furthermore, studies have also demonstrated that Latinx/Chicanx students have to fulfill family commitments such as being caretakers and helping financially while in college (Cerezo, Lyda, Beristianos, Enriquez, & Connor, 2013; Kouyoumdjian, Guzmán, Garcia, & Talavera-Bustillos, 2017). Studies have also revealed that finances play an important factor in how Latinx/Chicanx experience college (Gloria et al., 2017; Kouyoumdjian et al., 2017; Oseguera, Locks, & Vega, 2009). Pérez and Sáenz (2017) interview students that underwent physical and psychological trauma due to the possibility of losing scholarships and other financial aid. These challenges add to how Latinx/Chicanx experience their college campuses and demonstrate a lack of commitment and/or understanding on how to support, retain, and graduate historically minoritized students (Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

Theoretical Framework: Campus Racial Climate and Culture

To understand the impact of Trump-era rhetoric on Latinx/Chicanx student experiences, we use campus racial climate and culture literature as our theoretical framework. The campus racial climate and culture are often referenced when discussing the experiences of historically marginalized students on campus. However, there are important distinctions between the two. Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) define the campus racial climate as the overall racial environment of the college campus, and this is supported by studies that have found that there are racial differences in the perceptions of campus climate (see Harper & Hurtado, 2007, for a review). The campus racial climate is more relevant to the experiences of students of color than the general campus climate because there is a racialized component to their postsecondary experience due to historical and contemporary exclusion (Hurtado 1992). Scholarship has demonstrated that hostile campus racial climates negatively impact students’ sense of belonging, academic outcomes, and health outcomes (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Solórzano et al.

(2000) stated that a positive racial campus climate includes at least four elements: (a) the inclusion of underrepresented students, faculty, and administrators; (b) a curriculum with an underlying historical context of people of color; (c) programs that encourage the recruitment, retention, and graduation of students of color; and (d) a university commitment to a racially diverse college campus. Hurtado, Clayton-Pedersen, Allen, and Milem (1998) and Milem, Chang, & Antonio (2005) provided a framework to understand campus climate that included organizational structures, histories, and external forces such as governmental policies and sociohistorical forces. The campus racial climate is focused on finding these discrepancies, measuring students’ attitudes, perceptions, observations, or inter-

physical structures, and other symbols (Museus & Jayakumar, 2012). In essence, campus culture is the shared values and norms that govern the institution and their decision-making. Campus culture is intertwined with the decision-making of institutions, the effects of campus cultures are far reaching where the experiences of all their students are impacted by it at some level (Museus & Jayakumar, 2012).

Methods

Because the purpose of the paper was to identify how anti-immigrant rhetoric impacts Latinx/Chicanx students and how they experience the campus racial climate, we utilized an interpretative approach. A qualitative approach enables the examination of topics from the collection and analysis of detailed information (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). Qualitative research allows us to answer how, what, and why questions (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). Finally, qualitative techniques enable us to collect, analyze, and report rich information regarding how anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric influence the undergraduate Latinx/Chicanx experience.

Participant Selection

Participants in this study were selected purposefully to ensure a participant pool comprised of individuals who are likely to have experience with the phenomenon being

studied (Patton, 2002). We used sampling for intensity, snowball sampling, and personal network sampling to recruit participants. Sampling for intensity refers to seeking information-rich cases and snowball sampling provided us the opportunity to ask current participants to recommend other participants (Patton, 2002). One of the authors is the first-year coordinator and advisor in the Office for Equity and knew many of the students, which assisted with recruitment and was part of the personal network sampling we employed. The sampling methods used ensured participants that could speak meaningfully about the institution and the experiences of Latinx/Chicanx students.



Image by Natalie Battaglia

actions within the racial environment of their campus (Museus & Jayakumar, 2012).

Campus climate can change based on surroundings, perceptions, and times, campus culture is deeply embedded into institutions and takes a long time to change. Campus culture has been defined as “the institutional history, mission, physical settings, norms, traditions, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that guide the behavior of both individuals and groups in an institution (Kuh & Hall, 1993, p. 2). Additionally, the campus culture is manifested in the institution’s mission, traditions, language, interactions, artifacts,

The final sample consisted of 23 students that identified as Latinx/Chicanx. The gender breakdown was nearly even with 12 participants identifying as male and 11 as female. All the students attended the same four-year institution in the western United States. The total enrollment of the institution was around 34,000 in the fall of 2017 and was primarily a commuter school, but recently offered greater on-campus housing options. The city and state in which the institution is located is experiencing rapid growth of Latinx/Chicanx populations. In addition, the enrollments of Latinx/Chicanx have been growing year over year. In 2015, Latinx/Chicanx students were 15% of the first-time freshman and 12% of the undergraduate population. Focus groups occurred between September 2016 and September 2017.

Data Collection Procedures

Each student participated in one of two focus groups lasting between 60 to 90 minutes. Prior to the focus groups, students were asked to fill out a brief demographic questionnaire. Focus groups were conducted using a semistructured protocol. Participants were asked general questions about what it is like to be a Latinx/Chicanx student at the institution and their perceptions of the campus racial climate before and after the election of Trump. Participants were also asked how they were impacted by the political rhetoric occurring that was seemingly anti-Latinx/Chicanx and immigrant. Interviewers asked probing questions to better understand how students view their experience at the institution and what it was like to be Latinx/Chicanx. Authors had participants pick pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Data Analysis

Each focus group was audio taped and transcribed. Data was analyzed using methods described by Strauss and Corbin (1988) and Moustakas (1994). HyperRESEARCH 2.8 qualitative data management software was used to organize, manage, and code the data. First, the authors created textural-structural descriptions to review each interview and to better understand how students experienced the campus racial climate (Moustakas, 1994). Second, the authors utilized open and axial coding to generate themes and identify the corresponding elements of these thematic categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Specifically, open-coding procedures were utilized to identify eight themes that cut across the focus group transcripts. Using HyperRESEARCH, the authors generated a code report for each theme and then used axial coding techniques to identify salient properties of themes. The eight themes and related quotes are presented in

Additionally, several participants mentioned how they felt the institution did not take into account the impact the rhetoric and election were having generally on historically marginalized students and their ability to perform academically.

the findings.

Trustworthiness

Methods suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1986) were used to strengthen trustworthiness of the findings. First, the authors triangulated multiple data sources including interview transcripts, HyperRESEARCH code reports, and researcher notes to develop and verify themes. Second, the authors utilized member checks to ensure researcher interpretations aligned with students' perceptions and comments. Participants were asked to provide feedback on the findings of the data analysis. Finally, the authors continually reviewed and examined the data and themes to develop additional themes.

Limitations

At least three limitations should be noted. First, students were recruited through the multicultural center where one of the authors holds a full-time position. Second, because students were recruited from the multicultural center on campus, participants were already heavily involved in on-campus events and protests before and after the election. Thus, the experiences of participants in this study may differ from other Latinx/Chicanx students. Third, the majority of student participants were of Mexican descent, with only three participants identifying as Central or South American. We cannot draw conclusions of fellow students who self-identify as Latinx/Chicanx.

Findings

This analysis resulted in eight themes: (1) power of political rhetoric and Trump; (2) coded language; (3) unsafe academic spaces; (4) racialization of immigration as a Latinx/Chicanx issue; (5) burnout, stress, and racial battle fatigue; (6) balancing academic commitments and social activism; (7) the reactive university; and (8) students doing the work of the administration. The themes presented below are not an exhaustive list of all the ways that Latinx/Chicanx students experience the campus racial climate.

Power of Political Rhetoric and Trump

Participants discussed the impact political rhetoric was having on their everyday experiences and academics before and after the election. For example, Vanessa (female), a senior getting ready to graduate, mentioned:

I remember when Trump got elected, you know how it was at 3 a.m. or something, the next day I had an exam at eight in the morning and I went and I did it ... I remember going to my teacher after he graded and I got like a C, so I was like, "Yeah I really couldn't study or think for this test because of the election." And he was just like, "Oh yeah ..." I guess I couldn't find the people that gave a fuck.

Vanessa had been impacted heavily by Trump and his political rhetoric prior to the election. Once Trump was elected, the anxiousness and stress of the rhetoric and what it might mean for her friends and family negatively impacted Vanessa's ability to focus and prepare for an exam and other academic responsibilities. This anxiousness and what it meant for the future was a common thread among participants.

Additionally, several participants mentioned how they felt the institution did not take into account the impact the rhetoric and election were having generally on historically marginalized students and their ability to perform academically.

Participants referenced how the political discourse impacted their perceptions of safety in certain spaces. For example, students protested the visit from Ben Shapiro, a conservative commentator, citing his rhetoric was harmful to the student body, campus racial climate, and attacked students of color, queer students, and trans students. By the institution allowing Ben Shapiro and his rhetoric on campus, several students indicated fearing for their safety. Roberto (male), a first-year student, described the day of Shapiro's visit to campus:

There was tension in the air ... you could feel it. I realized I was the only person of color there [near the auditorium where Ben Shapiro was speaking]. I felt like I was unsafe, like oh no, everyone is going to start looking at me. They were just like saying the rhetoric that Ben Shapiro was saying. I'm like this is not a safe space for me, I should head home.

Roberto's comments expressed the fear participants felt with the increased brazenness of anti-Latinx/Chicanx rhetoric on campus.

Coded Language

Participants identified the role of coded language in creating a hostile campus racial climate especially when issues of immigration were discussed. Coded language was used to communicate that Latinx/Chicanx students were not welcome on campus and

was rooted in racism, xenophobia, and American exceptionalism. Hector (male), a graduating senior, explained how general comments on campus were rooted in liberal politics and those making the statements often made the comments in a subtle way that created a hostile campus racial climate. Hector stated: It's not directly anti-Latino, but this place is weird. All of these fucking racist hide behind anonymity and liberal politics that White people buy into that make them seem like they are not racist. Brenda (female), a third-



Image by Natalie Battaglia

year student, echoed the sentiment and experiences of Hector when she discussed “American” being fundamental to the coded language. Brenda identified how the coded language often normalized America and Americans. When describing the climate, Brenda (female), a junior stated:

When I think of the campus, I think of hidden racist that have particular languageThey talk in a coded language, that start off sentences Americans think this ... It’s different to where you are on campus [language changes between colleges/academic departments] it’s also very subtle, but you can still catch it.

Although many of the students talked about coded language and the campus racial climate and culture in general, Hector went on to describe a specific experience in the classroom. Hector compared a comment by his professor to what he would think of that professor absent of the comment. Hector stated:

In my chemistry class the professor made a joke about the ways chemistry is used to track down people who illegally immigrate into the nation, but talking to the guy you wouldn’t think this guy, he would be directly opposed to immigrants.

Fellow participants expressed that the political rhetoric leading up to and after the election of Trump enabled greater numbers of people and discussions that often had to be decoded. Participant comments suggested that coded language is used to not appear overtly xenophobic or racist, especially during a time when there was a lot of pushback on campus to perceived anti-Latinx/Chicanx comments.

Unsafe Academic Spaces

In addition to discussing the general campus racial climate created by the increased discussion of an-



ti-Latinx/Chicanx and immigrant rhetoric, students overwhelmingly identified the classroom as a place of increased hostility and increased microaggressions during the election cycle and after the election. Paco (male), a senior, described experiences in classes when discussing immigration:

There has been a lot of hostile encounters in the classroom. There have been cases when we are talking about the benefits of immigration and immigration reform. And there have been times when people have spoken out aggressive and dehumanizing comments, something along the lines of “we should exterminate these people” is something I actually heard in the classroom when I was presenting ... and the professor did NOTHING.

Throughout the focus groups, Paco highlighted another common occurrence where professors and/or administrators did not take any action in challenging microaggressions as in Hector’s experience with the chemistry professor.

Blue (male), a third-year student, described how discussions in the classroom would be ahistorical and often not acknowledge inequality, racism, and nativism. Blue stated:

Discussions about race or nonequal representation is present in classrooms and is observable for someone in the Latinx community, but it doesn’t mean someone outside of it will acknowledge inequality.

Blue’s quote is similar to other participants that expressed the classroom was often a contentious environment and climate when race and inequality were brought up. Some participants referenced the idea of “alternative facts” being more prevalent in the classroom.

Gabriella (male), a graduating senior, described an incident with the president of the institution during a sit-in demanding Ben Shapiro not speak on campus due to the hostile climate his presence would create. Gabriella stated:

When we were at the sit-in, one of the students told the president that they are afraid to go to class. His face is the exact same reaction the university has when anything happens, it is this clueless dumbfounded, “I don’t know what to do ... but I know it’s bad” expression.

Despite years of meeting with Latinx/Chicanx and other racial/ethnic student groups on campus about the unwelcoming campus racial climate and culture, the president continued to act unaware and confused

“Responses from students suggest the election of Trump and likeminded political leaders profoundly and negatively impact the campus climate for Latinx/Chicanx students.”

about the hostile environment. These fears were exacerbated during a period of time in which there were multiple instances of anti-queer and anti-Black flyers posted on campus that played on stereotypes of the respective student groups.

Racialization of Immigration as a Latinx/Chicanx Issue

Participants were critical of how students, staff, and faculty at the university were unaware of the complexities of immigration even though there is a center on campus that focuses on undocumented students and numerous yearly events bringing awareness to immigration issues. This theme manifested in university entities racializing immigration as strictly a Latinx/Chicanx problem and therefore as a topic that did not have to be addressed in certain spaces. For example, Juan (male), a senior elaborated:

In terms of like immigration being racialized as Latinx, a lot of the people within the multicultural center completely dismiss it [issues around immigration], it’s a lack of awareness because of its association as being Latinx.

Universities are supposed to serve all students, but Juan reported how the racialization of immigration as a Latinx/Chicanx issue allowed several university entities, including the multicultural center, to pass on the opportunity to comfort and support students with multiple identities and who were undocumented. Instead, university offices relied on Latinx/Chicanx-centric programs/organizations and the Dream Center to address the undocumented community. Juan continued by giving an example of how even other progressive student organizations did the same, “I am also a part of QTSOC (Queer/Trans Student of Color), we met on the day DACA was rescinded and no one brought it up.” Juan’s comments demonstrated how even departments and student groups that are meant to support historically marginalized students can contribute to feelings of being unwelcome on campus.

The racialization of immigration as Latinx/Chicanx also contributed to the “othering” and notion that students who pertain to that community are foreign. In other words, it let Latinx/Chicanx students know that they are not “native” and are not considered American. For example, Gabriella (who was born in the United States) described how Americans are racialized as White: “They [White people] usually start sentences like, ‘Well, Americans think this.’” Gabriella is describing how his White peers contribute to othering Latinx/Chicanx communities as nonnative to the United States and thus their views are considered non-American.

Burnout, Stress, and Racial Battle Fatigue

Individuals identified that as a result of the anti-Latinx/Chicanx and immigrant rhetoric, the hostile campus racial climate created a stressful environment that was physically and emotionally draining. Luz (female), a senior, connected the stress she felt to other academic responsibilities:

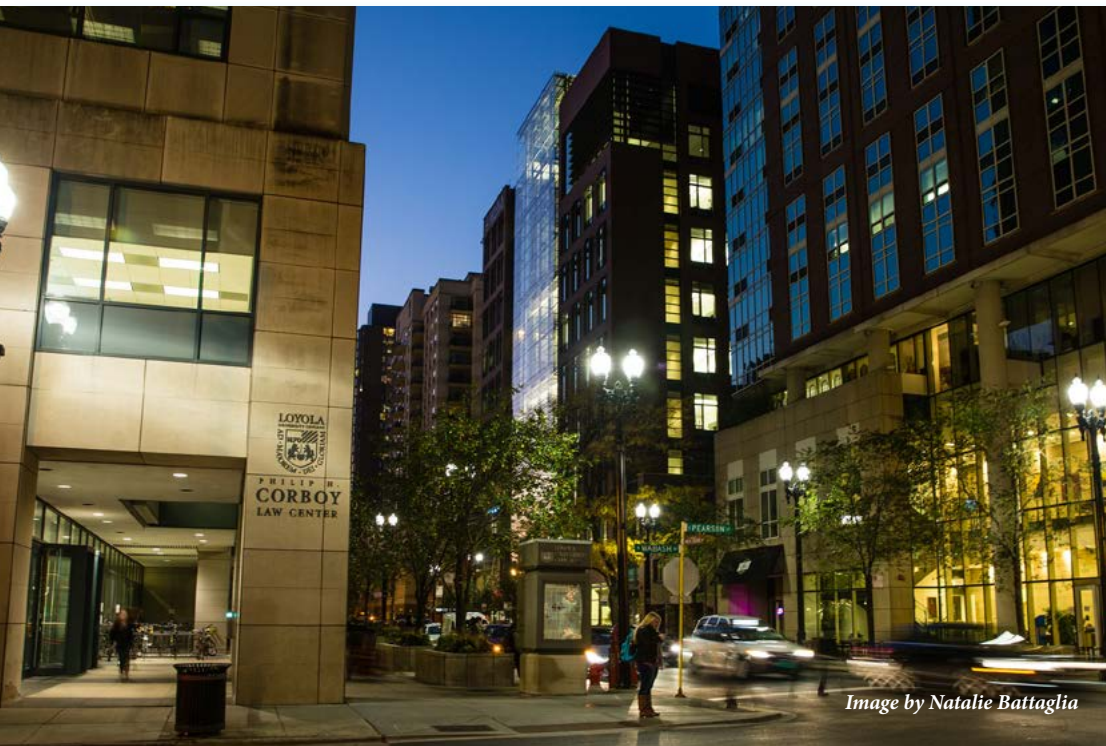


Image by Natalie Battaglia

It's like extra stress on top of like homework and work. It's a lot of shit to deal with, it's like psychologically and emotionally overwhelming. I have depression and anxiety so I'm taking medication for it. There is a pattern that I have noticed that when I'm away from school I am fine you know, I'm good, but once I'm back in school all these things start hitting me at once. In terms of how I navigate, I started being selective of where I spend my time, who I talk too, what classes I even participate in, and what classes I don't. Sometimes I feel like there's no point on wasting my energy on these people who are not going to care about what I have to say.

Luz's experience echoed other students that highlighted they wanted to disengage from the campus and even changed majors to avoid certain spaces. For instance, Vanessa stated, "I don't engage, I disengage. I want to fucking cry all the time. I hate everyone. I changed majors because I don't want to fucking interact with these people anymore."

When asked about how students were handling the increased anti-Latinx/Chicanx rhetoric on and off campus, students expressed that increased stressors were directly related to the political discourse and created a hostile campus racial climate. Glenda (female), a graduating senior who led organizing efforts to protest Ben Shapiro's campus visit, described the energy drain she experienced and how it has set her back on her thesis:

This semester I have just been super tired. I get home, I finish what I have to get done and then just go to sleep. Then I feel guilty the next day

because I could've done a lot more instead of going to sleep. I still need to keep working on my thesis. It's my last year and I got a lot of things compiling. Students regularly highlighted the negative impact rhetoric had on their psychological, behavioral, and physiological well-being. Students did not reference resources on campus that could help them cope.

Balancing Academic Commitments and Social Activism

Participants discussed how they were being pulled in multiple directions and having to choose whether to focus on academics

or participate in protests. This theme highlights the dilemma many students of color in academia grapple with on a daily basis. Gabriella elaborated on this struggle by stating:

The whole purpose of one of my classes is to connect the purpose of research and the progression of anti-oppressive work. But there's this disconnect in between choosing to do an assignment for that class or attending a rally that is directly working towards anti-oppressive work in that moment.

On one hand, students wanted to finish their degrees so they could "get out," but they felt they had a responsibility to actively participate in rallies and protests that could be beneficial to their community. Participation in social actions and protests hampered the ability of several of the participants to keep up with their academic work. Multiple participants directly attributed falling behind in classes to participating in the sit-in at the president's office protesting the scheduled Ben Shapiro event and the perceived lack of urgency by the administration to stop the event from taking place and not allowing hate speech on campus. Luz commented:

It does take up a lot of time and energy. Like I could have been studying, I could have been reading. During the sit in, I spent the whole day [there], that's when I started to fall behind in readings for classes. It's stuff that I don't regret doing because it had to be done and I wanted to be there, but again it's like, you know, it falls on the students.

Participants demonstrated that they were consistently willing to sacrifice their academic standing by falling

"The Latinx/Chicanx students in our study not only have to compete academically, but also have to survive and strive against hostile climates, culture, microaggressions, and racial battle fatigue, while civically engaging and advocating for their communities."

behind and possibly receiving bad grades in order to advocate for their communities. This sacrifice that Latinx/Chicanx and fellow students of color make is rooted in history, but the increased time and energy students used to combat Ben Shapiro's visit and other anti-Latinx/Chicanx rhetoric is an unintended consequence of the election of Trump.

The Reactive University

A common theme throughout the focus groups was a feeling that the university was only reactive and not proactive to the social and political climate. Blue described this phenomenon as the university "always playing catch up." Students had an expectation that the university would be proactive in supporting students during contentious times. Several of the participants stated fellow students, staff, administrators, and faculty did not understand the negative impact the national discourse was having on the campus racial climate. When the institutions did acknowledge these events, it was usually with a statement. Glenda elaborated, "They [the institution] only come up with a statement when something happens, something big has to happen in order for them to start thinking about it."

The feeling that the institution was not proactive in dealing with social political discourse created a sentiment that the institution did not care about them as students. For example, Luz stated, "I don't feel like the university supports me at an organizational level, more like people in certain offices, certain professors you can talk to." Juan continued, "What the Women's Resource Center did, the massages [a day after the Ben Shapiro event], that's something proactive they did, not that the university [administrators and other departments] enlisted them to do so." These statements describe the disconnect between Latinx/Chicanx needs and institutional support. Gabriella (female) summed up these feelings by sharing:

They [university administrators] have no investment in it, they are just gonna go home, all of them are gonna do the same thing. There is noth-

ing at stake for them, they have nothing to lose. There was a feeling that by the institution being only reactive, the leadership lacked a sense of urgency to support Latinx/Chicanx students and change the negative institutional culture.

Students Doing the Work of the Administration

Several of the participants referenced how they believed they were doing the work of the administration in providing support for fellow Latinx/Chicanx students. Vanessa explained, "If the university cared or supported us, they wouldn't have us do their job. Their supposed to care about their students." Glenda supported this notion saying:

A lot of what the university ends up doing is because of students, we are the ones telling them, "Hey you need to do something about it." Like with the student organization that supports undocumented students, they pushed a lot to open an undocumented resources center, for [full-time] staff to get hired, and for funding. If it weren't for students advocating for that [resource center], I don't think it would have ever happen. I don't think that's on their [administration] radar even though that's their job of thinking, "How can we make this campus better and more inclusive for students?"

Due to the perceived lack of proactive behavior of the institution, students felt they needed to do the work or put pressure on the administration to create more welcoming environments. Students discussed how they were taking on extra responsibilities and work that other students did not have to take on. Participants discussed how this led to feelings of hopelessness and feelings of fighting an endless fight they were bound to lose. Javier (male), a third-year student, noted, "There needs to be more serious repercussions for professors who do say problematic stuff to hurt individuals." For Javier, even at the focus group, he felt compelled to advocate for his community however he could. Glenda put into perspective the extra work Latinx/Chicanx students were taking on by saying:



Image by Natalie Battaglia

noted a specific shift from the color-blind racism they experienced to a more overt anti-Latinx/Chicanx discrimination during and after the election. Students provided examples of how the campus racial climate became increasingly hostile to their presence. Participants highlighted the institution only reacted to overt acts of discrimination and frequently failed to address any subtle forms of daily racism. As seen with the Ben Shapiro and other conservative talks on campuses around the country, institutions of higher education often cited freedom of speech reasoning for allowing such individuals to speak on campus. Such color-blind, ahistorical reasoning can be harmful to the sense of belonging of students of color and their health.

Students expressed the toll that rhetoric and action/inaction took on their level of energy, psychological health, and physiological health. Participants cited they were dealing with mental health issues that were heightened while attending the institution. These findings align with previous research on racial battle fatigue that found as a result of racial microaggressions, students experienced different types of stressors (Franklin et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2007; Yosso et al., 2009). Although there has been some scholarship on how discrimination and racism impact Latinx/Chicanx students (Franklin et al., 2014; Yosso et al., 2009), additional scholarship is needed. Furthermore, scholarship is needed to understand how institutions of higher education can support Latinx/Chicanx students and students of color after the Trump presidency.

Fifth, we found that universities are putting a greater onus on students of color with institutional inaction. Several students could pinpoint that the sit-in they participated in where they began to fall behind in their classes. Student activism and participation are sources of learning and knowledge production (Rhoads, 2009). Although these types of activities are fruitful, they can also have negative impacts on the emotional and psychological health of students (Rhoads, 2016). In further analyzing comments made by participants, we pose a question of what it would look like for institutions to acknowledge students' labor of love for their community. Rhoads (2016) acknowledges the extra strains students take on; however, he also commends their work and the sophistication of the insights and forms of knowledge student activists glean from and acquire through their civic participation. Institutions need to be better at acknowledging and rewarding students who are taking on such extra work to better the campus climate and culture.

Suggested Citation:

Franklin, J. D. & Medina, R. (2018). Trump and an anti-Immigrant climate: Implications for Latinx undergraduates. *The Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs*, 3(3), 74-85..

Finally, students expressed the negative impact of the escalation of Trump-era policies had on all Latinx/Chicanx students and their intersectional identities. Although we expected this finding considering certain phenotypes as signifiers of being associated with a Latinx/Chicanx background, we were unsure, at first, how prevalent this would be among our participants. One student spoke about what Picca and Feagin (2007) refer to as performing race in the backstage and frontstage depending on who is present. The student spoke about her light complexion that would enable her to "pass" as White and, thus, hear conversations that were openly anti-immigrant and anti-Latinx/Chicanx. The student was able to see the friendly and hostile sides of the campus racial climate based on her ability to "pass."

Conclusion

The findings in this paper demonstrate the complicated campus racial climates, cultures, and feelings that Latinx/Chicanx students had to navigate leading up to, during, and after the election of Trump. Latinx/Chicanx students have always faced hostile and unwelcoming climates, but students expressed that such occurrences have become more frequent and harsher. The focus groups illustrate what it takes to enroll, persist, and complete a degree in the current political climate. The Latinx/Chicanx students in our study not only have to compete academically, but they also have an obligation to be civically engaged and continuously advocate for their communities. Given the political and anti-Latinx/Chicanx climate, universities need to create programs and policies that are more inclusive of Latinx/Chicanx students. Furthermore, institutions of higher education need to proactively challenge microaggressions and Whiteness on campus that act as the catalyst for anti-Latinx/Chicanx immigrant rhetoric.

***References:**

Can be found at the end of this special issue.

When you come to the university, initially all I thought I was going to focus on was my academics, the same way I did in high school. You never think, "Oh I'm going to devote a lot of my time fighting administration and advocating for my community." That was not initially what I thought about my college experience.

Glenda highlighted the different directions Latinx/Chicanx students are being pulled compared to their peers. For several of the participants, being a Latinx/Chicanx college student meant they had a deep responsibility to their communities and they demonstrated this commitment through social activism.

Discussion

Findings from this study contribute to the literature on contemporary experiences of Latinx/Chicanx college students. Students indicated that the election of Trump and like-minded political leaders profoundly and negatively impacted their perceptions of the campus racial climate and their sense of belonging to the institution. Student responses demonstrated there was a shift that occurred on campus as a result of the election that caused Latinx/Chicanx students to perceive the environment as physically and psychologically dangerous. Previous studies have highlighted the prevalence of negative campus racial climates and cultures (Hurtado & Carter, 1997), but participants in this study demonstrated that universities are sometimes complicit in the shift to greater anti-Latinx/Chi-

canx and immigrant rhetoric without proactive action. We want to acknowledge that campus racial climates have always been unwelcoming and hostile for people of color, but participants expressed the immediacy of the climate shift with the election of Trump.

Findings reflect previous studies that demonstrate the academic sphere of campuses are extremely hostile towards Latinx/Chicanx and students of color (González, 2002; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1992; Yosso et al., 2009). Students highlighted how their peers, staff, and professors often perpetuated macro and microaggressions and/or failed to address such aggressions, which created a hostile campus racial climate. Furthermore, the rhetoric of Trump and his policies often seeped into classroom discussions and made students feel unwelcome. For Latinx/Chicanx students—and possibly other communities—these discussions often brought about unwanted emotional trauma in the classroom and even caused students to miss classes (e.g., some students indicated they missed classes the day DACA was rescinded).

Scholars have argued we witnessed a shift in racism from the overt racism of the Jim Crow era to a subtler, "color-blind" racism that is equally injurious to the everyday lives of people of color (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Our findings partially challenge such assumptions when we see overt racism and xenophobia operating at the forefront of the daily lives of Latinx/Chicanx students with the election of Trump. Participants