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ABSTRACT

        This study examined the relationship between perceptions of
diversity and overall satisfaction in students at the University of Maryland
at College Park. An anonymous 100-item questionnaire on cultural attitudes
and climate was mailed to first and third year students, with mail and phone
call follow-ups resulting in an overall return rate of 60 percent (N=566).
Results were factor analyzed using principal axis factor analysis and varimax
rotation. Factor scores and Pearson correlations were calculated. Among the
study's findings were: comfort in cross cultural situations and respect for
other cultures correlated with overall satisfaction for all students; the
more Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans and Whites were aware of diversity
and changing their behavior accordingly, the less satisfied they were with
University of Maryland College Park (UMCP); awareness of diversity was not
related to overall satisfaction for African Americans; how comfortable
African Americans and Hispanic Americans were with their own culture
correlated positively with their overall satisfaction while the relationship
was not significant for Asian Americans or Whites. For all groups, overall
satisfaction was positively related to fair treatment by students and
teachers, comfort in cross-cultural situations, and respect for other
cultures. Negative correlations were found between satisfaction and
perception of racial tension and lack of support. A slight positive
correlation was found between awareness of diversity and satisfaction for
African Americans, but these were negatively correlated for Asian Americans,
Hispanic Americans and Whites. Results were analyzed in terms of several
theoretical models. Tables provide detail on study participants and the
statistical analysis. (Contains 22 references.) (BF)

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UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

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Summary

An anonymous 100 item questionnaire on cultural attitudes and climate was completed by first and third year students at UMCP. The study was conducted by the Evaluation Committee of the Diversity Initiative of the Human Relations Office. Factor analyses resulted in eleven factors accounting for 48% of the total variance. Correlations of one factor "overall satisfaction" with the university with other factors showed some common patterns across races as well as differences between races. Comfort in cross cultural situations and respect for other cultures correlated with overall satisfaction for all students. However, the more Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans and Whites were aware of diversity and changing their behavior accordingly, the less satisfied they were with UMCP. Awareness of diversity was not related to overall satisfaction for African Americans. How comfortable African Americans and Hispanic Americans were with their own culture correlated positively with their overall satisfaction while the relationship was not significant for Asian Americans or Whites. Results were discussed in terms of literature and theory.

There is considerable evidence that campus climate has a great deal to do with the success or failure of students in higher education. Astin (1993) and Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) demonstrated the value of involvement on campus for students and the importance of programs to encourage that involvement. Sedlacek (1996) has shown the importance of community for what he calls nontraditional students; those from racial/cultural groups other than White, middle class, young and heterosexual.

As more universities and colleges develop and sustain programs to encourage diversity, one must study the implications of those programs on the campus climate for all students, traditional and nontraditional. Sedlacek (1994) noted that there is often much confusion about how diversity is defined, what groups should be included, and what terms should be applied to those groups. Questions arise such as the following: Should gays, lesbians and bisexuals be included in our conceptualizations of diversity? Can Black and African American be used interchangeably? Is the whole issue just a matter of being politically correct?

Westbrook & Sedlacek (1991) studied the labels used to describe nontraditional students in the Education Index since the 1950s. Terms have varied from a focus on acculturation in the 1950s, to disadvantaged in the 1960s, to culture-specific differences in the 1970s, to multicultural in the 1980s. Diversity could be added as the term for the 1990s. Although these terms may suggest different approaches to the groups discussed, operationally, the same people may be being discussed: those with cultural experiences different from those of White middle-class heterosexual men of European descent, those with less power to control

their lives, and those who experience discrimination in the United States. Does it make sense however, to include such variables as sex, sexual orientation, or athletic status as aspects of cultural experience?

Sedlacek (1996) suggested that those who receive prejudice and show their abilities in less traditional ways through noncognitive variables can be operationally defined as the focus of diversity programs. Groups as different as athletes and older people may show their diversity in different ways but there are likely some similarities in the variables underlying their problems and in the ways they cope with a traditional system that was not designed for them. A key goal is to design diversity programs that will result in positive effects for students in different groups. It does appear that simply bringing students with different cultural backgrounds and experiences together and letting them work it out is unlikely to produce positive results. Lessons from social psychology suggest that contact among different groups requires several conditions before it will be likely to produce positive results (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986). First, all groups have to perceive the value of diversity. The programs can't be just for one group, e.g., students of color. Second, there must be equal power relationships among the groups. This is often difficult since one of the primary components of racism is that one group has more power than others to influence the environment (Sedlacek, 1988).

Third, diversity programs should be developed employing prior research and be assessed as to program effectiveness. Too often, well intended diversity programs are assumed to be good at face value. Sedlacek (1995) in an evaluation of diversity programs at

40 colleges and universities concluded that lack of clearly stated program goals was a common problem. In fact, many schools reported examples where well intended programs actually had the opposite effect; they made things worse. Additionally, appraisals of the campus climate for diversity were not common, either before, during or after programs. Sedlacek (1995) further noted that students from different racial/cultural backgrounds may have very different needs and perceptions of diversity.

Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn & Terenzini (in press) studied first year students at eighteen institutions on the impact of diversity initiatives and concluded that the overall climate of the institution as well as reaction to that climate were important in determining the impact of diversity initiatives. They also emphasized that students from different backgrounds experience the environment in different ways. Additional studies across institutions concluded that participation in a racial or cultural awareness workshop developed favorable attitudes toward diversity (Springer, Palmer, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Nora, 1995; Musil, Garcia, Moses and Smith, 1995).

In their summary of the impact of diversity on students, Appel, Cartwright, Smith & Wolf (1996) concluded that diversity initiatives are likely to have an impact on "minority and majority students which is positive but can also be negative". They also felt that a common problem in diversity programs was to focus on minority students, thus alienating majority students. Sedlacek (1995) also found that unsuccessful diversity programs tended to do this. While Appel et al felt that diversity research results were encouraging, more research was

needed to address many unanswered questions, including reactions of different groups to diversity initiatives.

Method

The purpose of the present study was to determine the relationship of perceptions of diversity to overall campus satisfaction by race at an institution engaged in many diversity initiatives.

The anonymous 100 item questionnaire on cultural attitudes and climate was mailed to first and third year students at a large eastern university. A stratified random sample was employed to insure sufficient numbers. Anonymous questionnaires were returned separately from postcards identifying respondents. Mail and phone call follow-ups resulted in an overall return rate of 60%. Table 1 shows participants by race, class and gender. Respondents were able to indicate their race, class and gender on the questionnaire to verify information on student records. Graduate students in education and psychology made the phone calls. The study was conducted as part of the program of the campus diversity evaluation committee. The university studied had had extensive diversity programming in academic and nonacademic areas for several years. Overall, the university student body was approximately 14% African American, 12% Asian American, 6% Hispanic and 54% female.

Results were factor analyzed using principal axis factor analysis and varimax rotation. Factor scores were calculated and Pearson correlations among factors were calculated. Of particular interest were the correlations of a factor labeled "Overall Satisfaction" with your university" with other factors by race.

Results

The coefficient alpha reliability of the questionnaire was .81. Eleven factors were identified which accounted for 48% of the total variance. The factors were labeled Racial Tension, Cross-Cultural Comfort, Diversity Awareness, Racial Pressures, Residence Hall Tension, Fair Treatment, Faculty Racism, Respect for Other Cultures, Lack of Support, Comfort with Own Culture, and Overall Satisfaction. Table 2 shows the items under each factor and scale reliabilities.

The results show some consistent patterns of perceptions across races in correlations with overall satisfaction with their university (Table 3). That there was fair treatment by students and teachers positively correlated the highest with overall satisfaction across all races. Comfort in Cross-Cultural situations was also positively correlated with overall satisfaction (highest for Hispanic Americans and lowest for Whites) for all groups as was Respect for Other Cultures.

Racial Tension and Lack of Support were negatively correlated with overall satisfaction for all groups, although the values were not significant for Hispanic Americans, possibly because of a smaller sample size. Thus the more racial tension and lack of support from faculty, students and teaching assistants perceived, the lower the perceived overall satisfaction.

The more Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans and Whites were aware of diversity and changing their behavior accordingly, the less satisfied they were with their school. Awareness of diversity was not related to overall satisfaction for African Americans.

Asian Americans who were most satisfied overall, tended to feel that there was racial tension in the residence halls, but that it was being handled by police and residence hall staff. No other racial group showed any significant correlation of overall satisfaction, with this factor. How comfortable African Americans and Hispanic Americans were with their own culture correlated positively with their overall satisfaction while the relationship was not significant for Asian Americans or Whites.

African Americans and Asian Americans who felt faculty were racist in and out of class were likely to be dissatisfied with their school overall while there was no significant relationship for Hispanic Americans and Whites. While all racial groups reported that if they felt race-related pressures or expectancies they tended to be less satisfied, overall the correlations were significant only for African Americans and Whites.

Discussion

It is clear that student perceptions of diversity issues were related to their overall satisfaction with their institution. It is also clear those relationships differed by racial groups.

One point worth discussing is that how comfortable Whites and Asians were with their own culture was not related to their overall satisfaction. For Whites, it is likely that they do not see the relevance of their culture for diversity issues since the overall culture on campus has been, and continues to be, designed for them. This perception is the foundation for the racism that nonwhite students face (Sedlacek, 1988, Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976). White students need to be exposed to programs that focus on their role in a healthy multiucultural society and the advantages to them of learning to deal with diversity. Sedlacek (1993) has

shown that the ability to negotiate a complex and diverse system is a correlate of academic success for all students, including Whites.

Asian Americans may not see themselves as similar to other nontraditional groups and may identify more with White students (Wang, Sedlacek, & Westbook, 1991). Also in a study comparing Latino American and Asian Pacific Americans, Sedlacek & Liu (1996) concluded that Asian Pacific Americans were more likely to stay within their group than were Latino Americans. However, Fuertes, Sedlacek & Liu (1994) found that handling racism was an important predictor of success for Asian American students. Since Asian Americans were also the only group in the present study to relate residence hall tensions to overall satisfaction it may be important to have programs on handling racism for Asian American students conducted through residence halls. Using culturally relevant examples and including racial identity issues (Helms, 1992) may be called for with Asian Americans.

Interestingly, awareness and sensitivity to diversity issues was negatively related to overall satisfaction for all groups except African Americans. In other words, the more Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans and Whites dealt with diversity issues the less satisfied they were. This may be a result of self concept and diversity experience.

African Americans have been shown to be conscious of race and its implications in a number of previous studies (Sedlacek, 1987). Recent evidence indicates that Blacks who perceive racial discrimination have tended to have higher blood pressure than those Blacks who do not perceive discrimination (Krieger & Sidney, 1996). Thus, there is a tradition among African Americans to be dealing with race-related issues so it is nothing new or

unexpected on a campus. Therefore, awareness of diversity issues does not correlate with overall satisfaction for African Americans. As previously noted, Asian Americans and Whites may be less focused on diversity than African Americans. For Hispanic Americans the stress in dealing with diversity can be deciding how Latino to be (Fuertes, Sedlacek, & Westbrook, 1993). Should they speak Spanish? Should they join an Hispanic group or a general group? This difficulty may be showing itself in the correlation. Whites have been shown to resent all the attention focused on others along with their lack of a racial focus for their own issues.

Here is where we might need to use some models or theories to interpret these results. Helms (1992) has developed a stage model of racial identity for African Americans and Whites. Individuals move from a "contact" stage where they are unaware of racial differences and the assumption is made that others want to assimilate into the White or "only viable" culture. Individuals then move through "disintegration" which involves guilty and confusion at how others are treated to "reintegration" where the existence of racism is rejected and hostility is directed toward people of color. A state of denial exists during this phase. In the pseudo-independence stage some few Whites other than themselves are seen as responsible for racism. In the "immersion-emersion" stage individuals take more responsibility for racism and eventually in the "autonomy" stage attempts are made to engage in positive interactions with people from other races.

Another possible model to understand diversity programming is one developed by Sedlacek & Brooks (1976). In their stages individuals or organizations move through an appreciation of differences in others, understanding racism, understanding their own attitudes

and the sources of those attitudes before they can develop goals and strategies related to diversity.

A key issue in the Helms and Sedlacek and Brooks models is that progress does not always mean feeling more positive at each stage. Before an individual or organization can reach the later stages they must go through doubt, anger and frustration. In the early stages ignorance or lack of experience is "bliss".

Thus, in developing programs for students, faculty or staff one can assess where people are in the stages of each model and plan accordingly. It is particularly important that diversity programmers not get discouraged if they encounter negativity. The negativity may be a sign of progress if the individual or organization is at a certain stage.

Lack of support was seen by all groups as related to overall dissatisfaction although it was not a significant correlation for Hispanic Americans, possibly due to small sample size. This finding combined with faculty racism being a source of dissatisfaction for African American and Asian American is worth further discussion. Sedlacek (1995) concluded that faculty issues were some of the most important but most difficult problems to address in diversity programming. Sedlacek (1995) concluded that most faculty did not see a role for themselves on diversity issues, even in their classrooms. Diversity was someone else's concern.

Faculty, as other with others, must be approached in their terms in ways that are meaningful to them. Faculty commonly do not want to be seen as a social change agents, they want to teach and do research as scholars. The use of noncognitive variables to teach

(Sedlacek, 1983) and advise (Sedlacek, 1991) have been used to raise the issue of diversity with faculty. A system based on research and logic is the appeal.

It is hoped that the results of this study can be used by those concerned with diversity programming on our campuses. Use of these research results can help focus our efforts and increase the chances that colleges and universities can provide positive and developmental experiences for all students.

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Table 1

Study Participants by Race, Gender and Class

African American (N = 131)				Asian American (N = 127)				Hispanic American (N = 76)				White N = (232)			
Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
FR	JR	FR	JR	FR	JR	FR	JR	FR	JR	FR	JR	FR	JR	FR	JR
28	14	44	45	45	27	31	24	19	15	22	20	50	54	63	65

Table 2

Items on Each Factor and Alpha Reliability

Factor - Racial Tension (Alpha r = .73)

There is racial conflict on campus.
There is racial/ethnic separation on campus.
There are interracial tensions in the classroom.
I have been exposed to a racist atmosphere in the classroom.
I have been exposed to a racist atmosphere outside the classroom.
Students are resentful of others whose race/ethnicity is different from their own.

Factor - Cross-Cultural Comfort (Alpha r = .73)

I am comfortable going to see a faculty member of my own race/ethnicity.
I am comfortable speaking with others about my racial/ethnic background.
I am comfortable being in situations where I am the only person of my racial/ethnic group.
I am comfortable saying what I think about racial/ethnic issues.
I am comfortable being with people whose racial/ethnic backgrounds are different from my own.
I am comfortable being with people whose racial/ethnic backgrounds are the same as my own.

Factor - Diversity Awareness (Alpha r = .67)

I now recognize culturally-based behavior I had not previously identified.
I now discuss topics related to cultural awareness with friends.
I now stop myself from using language that may offensive to others.
I now handle negative language used by another in such a way as to try to educate the other person.
I now initiate contact with people who are not of my culture or ethnic background.
My experiences since coming to the university have led me to become more understanding of racial/ethnic differences.

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Table 2 (Continued)

Factor - Racial Pressures (Alpha r = .60)

I feel there are expectations about my academic performance because of my race/ethnicity.
I feel pressured to participate in ethnic activities at the university.
I feel I need to minimize various characteristics of my racial/ethnic culture (e.g., language, dress) to be able to fit in at the university.
I feel I am expected to represent my race or ethnic group in discussions in class.

Factor - Residence Hall Tension (Alpha r = .69)

There are interracial tensions in residence halls.
University police treat me fairly.
Residence hall personnel treat me fairly.
I have been exposed to activities and programs in residence halls about the history, culture and/or social issues of racial and ethnic groups other than whites.
I have been exposed to other university programs or activities about the history, culture and/or social issues of racial and ethnic groups other than whites.

Factor - Fair Treatment (Alpha r = .74)

Faculty treat me fairly.
Teaching assistants treat me fairly.
Students treat me fairly.

Factor - Faculty Racism (Alpha r = 77)

I have often been exposed to a racist atmosphere created by faculty in the classroom.
I have often been exposed to racist atmosphere created by faculty outside the classroom.

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Table 2 (Continued)

Factor - Respect for Other Cultures (Alpha r = .62)

Faculty respect students of different racial and ethnic groups.
Students respect other students of different racial and ethnic groups.
There is great deal of friendships between students of different racial and ethnic groups.

Factor - Lack of Support (Alpha r = .63)

I often have difficulty getting help or support from faculty.
I often have difficulty getting help or support from students.
I often have difficulty getting help or support from teaching assistants.

Factor - Comfort With Own Culture (Alpha r = .55)

I am comfortable speaking with others about my racial/ethnic background.
I am comfortable being in a situation where I am the only person of my racial/ethnic group.

Factor - Overall Satisfaction (Alpha r = .78)

This university provides an environment for the free and open expression of ideas, opinions, and beliefs.
Overall, my educational experience at this university has been a rewarding one.
I would recommend this university to siblings or friends as a good place to go to college.
The overall quality of academic programs at this university is excellent.
I feel as though I belong in the university community.

Table 3

Pearson Correlations of Diversity Factors with Overall

Satisfaction Factor By Race

	Whites (N = 232)	African Americans (N = 131)	Asian Americans (N = 127)	Hispanic Americans (N = 70)
Racial Tension	-.33*	-.20*	-.33*	-.15
Cross-Culture Comfort	.18*	.29*	.31*	.52*
Diversity Awareness	-.18*	-.05	-.24*	-.23*
Racial Pressures	-.17*	-.27*	-.15	-.22
Residence Halls Tension	-.01	.06	.23*	.10
Fair Treatment	.38*	.37*	.45*	.52*
Faculty Racism	-.12	-.19*	-.19*	-.03
Respect for Other Cultures	.37*	.21*	.46*	.32*
Lack of Support	-.19*	-.23*	-.36*	-.16
Comfort with Own Culture	.03	.26*	.14	.33*

* sig .05

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