Targets but not victims: Latina/o College Students and Arizona’s Racial Politics

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Targets but not Victims: 
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Abstract
This study examines the experiences of 18 Latina/o students attending the University of Arizona in the wake of SB 1070 (anti-immigrant) and HB 2281 (anti-Mexican American Studies). Students experienced a hostile campus climate; however, many channeled their frustrations into political engagement. Findings indicate that despite anti-Latina/o legislation and a hostile campus racial climate, students do not necessarily become racial victims. Practitioners should create opportunities for students to engage in dialogue, which critically analyzes racial policies.

Resumen
Este estudio examina las experiencias de 18 estudiantes latinas/os en la Universidad de Arizona al despertar de SB 1070 (contra inmigrantes) y HB 2281 (contra Estudios México-Americanos.) Estudiantes experimentaron un clima universitario de hostilidad; sin embargo, muchos canalizaron sus frustraciones comprometiéndose políticamente. Hallazgos indican que a pesar de la ley contra-latina/o y un clima hostil racial universitario, estudiantes no se vuelven necesariamente víctimas raciales. Practicantes deberán crear oportunidades para que estudiantes se comprometan en diálogo para analizar criticamente políticas racistas.

Keywords 
campus racial climate, multicontexual model for diverse learning environments, Latina/o students, racial politics, Arizona, SB 1070, HB 2281

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In the summer of 2010, the racial politics of Arizona went from covert to overt with the passage of both Senate Bill (SB) 1070 (“papers please”—anti-immigrant law) and House Bill (HB) 2281 (anti-ethnic studies; Santa Ana & González de Bustamante, 2012). Although these laws specifically targeted undocumented people and the Tucson Unified School District’s (TUSD) Mexican American Studies (MAS) program, most scholarship on the subject argues they are a form of state-sponsored anti-Latina/o racism (e.g., N. L. Cabrera, 2012; Nill, 2011; O’Leary, Romero, Cabrera, & Rascon, 2012; Santa Ana & González de Bustamante, 2012). Opponents of SB 1070 argue that the bill authorizes and even requires racial profiling (Chin & Miller, 2011). With regard to HB 2281, O’Leary et al. (2012) argue, “Legislative policies such as HB 2281—not Mexican American Studies courses—create racial division and feelings of resentment in Arizona” (p. 111).

SB 1070 and HB 2281 were created in a socio-political state context that has been increasingly anti-Latina/o. Bilingual education was previously banned (Proposition 203), English Language Learners (ELLs) were segregated from the general student population (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010), and teachers working with ELLs were reassigned or fired if they had “heavy accents” (Jordan, 2010). What is relatively unexplored within the Arizona context is the relationship between the racial/political climate of the state and the university campus racial climate. While there is a theoretical basis for linking state politics and the campus climate (Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012), there is little empirical evidence aside from some research regarding affirmative action and financial aid policy. Within this context, our study seeks to examine the relationship between Arizona’s racial politics and the campus racial climate, especially the interpersonal climate, for Latina/o students at the University of Arizona (UA).

**Literature and Theory Guiding the Study**

Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1998) provided one of the original frameworks for understanding the campus racial climate by conducting a critical synthesis of the existing empirical literature on the subject. They argued the campus racial climate consisted of four interrelated dimensions:

- An institution’s historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion,
- Its structural diversity (i.e., the representation of racial/ethnic minorities among students, faculty, and staff),
- The behavioral dimension (i.e., frequency and quality of interactions between social identity groups on campus), and
- The psychological dimension (i.e., perceptions of the environment, views of intergroup relations, and perceptions of racial or discriminatory conflict within the institutional context). (Hurtado et al., 2012, p. 7)
Milem, Chang, and Antonio (2005) updated the framework and added a fifth dimension: the organizational/structural dimension of campus racial climate. This dimension encompasses the curriculum, reward structures, hiring and admission practices, and tenure decisions (Milem & Cabrera, 2012). Milem et al. (2005) also renamed “structural diversity” as “compositional diversity” to differentiate it from the organizational dimension.

Further building off this literature base, Hurtado et al. (2012) developed the Multicontextual Model for Diverse Learning Environments (MMDLE) to further elucidate elements influencing institutional climate for diversity (i.e., community contexts and external commitments). Although the internal dimensions of the campus climate remained unchanged (e.g., psychological dimension), the MMDLE model offered explicit connections between the campus climate and larger external contexts (e.g., racial politics). For the purposes of our study, we focus on the link between the policy context, the behavioral dimension, and the psychological dimension of the campus racial climate. Given that institutions of higher education are situated within state and federal policies, it is important to explore how these external elements shape or constrain core dimensions of the campus racial climate (Hurtado et al., 2012). To this end, we briefly review the literature on these three components of the MMDLE model with a specific focus on how Latina/o students experience them.

**Latina/o Students and the Policy Context**

The bulk of the literature linking the policy context and the campus climate focuses on the relationship between the elimination of affirmative action and declining institutional compositional diversity. For example, Proposition 209 eliminated the consideration of race in college admissions processes in the state of California, which led to a precipitous decline in minority University of California (UC) enrollments, especially at the flagship institutions (Contreras, 2005; Santos, Cabrera, & Fosnacht, 2010). Texas experienced similar declines in Black and Latina/o enrollments in the wake of the 1996 *Hopwood* decision (Long & Tienda, 2008). Some analyses have also linked financial aid policy to compositional diversity. The Middle Income Assistance Act shifted federal support for post-secondary education from grants to loans. Given that finances are an important factor in choosing to attend college for low-income students, this, along with increased tuition rates, may have reduced the number of underrepresented minority students attending college (Baker & Velez, 1996; Heller, 2001).

These studies demonstrate a clear connection between compositional diversity and the policy context; however, the link between policy and other dimensions of the campus racial climate (e.g., behavioral) are unclear. Hurtado and Ruiz (2012) highlighted how underrepresented minorities experience higher rates of racial discrimination and exclusion at low compositional diversity institutions relative to their counterparts at more diverse institutions. Thus, a ban on affirmative action, which decreases compositional diversity, could correspond to an increase in instances of racial discrimination.
Latina/o Students and the Behavioral Dimension

The college campus is one of the most diverse environments in the country, and thus, it is also the site of interpersonal racial conflict (Hurtado et al., 2012; Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012). For example, Rankin and Reason (2005) found that Students of Color experienced higher rates of harassment than their White peers. The bulk of this harassment in the scholarly literature focuses on issues of microaggressions. Microaggressions are “subtle, innocuous, preconscious, or unconscious degradations, and putdowns, often kinetic but capable of being verbal” (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009, p. 660). Yosso et al. (2009) demonstrated that for Latina/o students, being the target of microaggressions caused immense stress, especially when they confronted or responded to microaggressions. Similarly, Solórzano, Allen, and Carroll (2002) demonstrated that Latina/o students at the University of California, Berkeley, experienced a series of racial microaggressions in the form of having their academic preparedness constantly questioned. Experiencing microaggressions increases perceptions that the campus racial climate is hostile (Hurtado et al., 2012; Solórzano et al., 2002). This can lead to “racial battle fatigue” (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007) while also depressing student development (Hurtado et al., 2012).

Latina/o Students and the Psychological Dimension

Closely related to the behavioral dimension of climate is the psychological dimension. Studies have indicated that Students of Color are more likely than their White peers to perceive the college campus as racist, more hostile, and less accepting of racial minorities (Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). González (2002) illustrated that the dominant White culture at a university communicated a message to Chicano students that they were not valued and did not belong. Other studies indicated that Latina/o students often feel excluded or unwelcome by their peers but benefit from interacting with their Latina/o student peer groups by drawing from cultural resources to alleviate racial barriers created by the culture of predominantly White institutions (Orozco, 2003; Villalpando, 2003). Studies also indicate that perceptions of a hostile campus climate can negatively affect Latina/o students’ academic and intellectual development, cause distress, and make college adjustment difficult (A. F. Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002).

Method

To explore how anti-Latina/o Arizona policies are associated with how Latina/o students at the UA experience the campus racial climate, we conducted semi-structured interviews with undergraduates during the spring and summer of 2011. Participants were purposefully recruited (Babbie, 2007) through their involvement in student campus organizations such as Latina/o Greeks, Chicano/Hispano Student Affairs (CHSA), and MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanos de Aztlán). To be eligible, participants had to (a) be enrolled at the UA and (b) self-identify as Latina/o or a closely related
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social identity such as Chicana/o, Hispanic, or Mexican American. Once initial interviews were conducted, students were asked whether they had any friends who met the criteria and might be interested. This snowball method (Babbie, 2007), while only serving to recruit 4 participants, was important in maintaining a gender balance. In total, 18 students participated in the interviews with 9 women and 9 men in the sample.

The interviews asked participants to describe how they experienced the campus racial climate at the UA primarily along the lines of perceptual and behavioral dimensions of climate (Hurtado et al., 1998; Milem et al., 2005). Additional questions were added to the semi-structured protocol to explore both student views on SB 1070 and HB 2281, and how these policies contextualized the students’ living/learning experiences. The interviews lasted approximately 45 min, were transcribed verbatim, and were thematically coded line-by-line using a primarily deductive method (Babbie, 2007) in relation to literature on the campus racial climate (Hurtado et al., 2012). Names of participants were replaced with pseudonyms.

Findings

Two interrelated themes illuminated how participants experienced and perceived the campus racial climate at the UA following the passages of SB 1070 and HB 2281: (a) racial tension, stress, and fear; and (b) political awareness leading to engagement and activism.

Racial Tension, Stress, and Fear

Racial tension. Several participants stated how the campus climate became more tense and hostile since the passages of SB 1070 and HB 2281. Salvador stated, “There is like so much heat, so much anger on both sides. People could hate on you because you’re a certain color whereas before you know everyone was silent about it, but now it’s out there.” Salvador did not consider himself a political person, but he could not escape these issues as campus tensions were at a boiling point.

In addition to a general sense of campus tensions, several participants experienced microaggressions related to the targets of the legislation (e.g., undocumented immigrants). For instance, Bernice stated,

One time these two White guys, one of them asked me if I was an anchor baby. I was like “what’s that? I have never heard that phrase” and they were laughing . . . Another kid goes, “It means your parents came to this country and like then had you here so they could stay.” And I was so mad . . . I was so offended by that . . . I take great offense to it.

It was unclear whether or not this incident would have occurred without SB 1070 being in existence. It is possible that the students would have called Bernice an “anchor baby” regardless of the legislative context. Regardless, several students described anti-immigrant racial microaggressions such as this occurring on a regular basis.
The controversies surrounding SB 1070 and HB 2281 also became frequent points of discussion within classrooms, which were also racially tense. Angela recounted a debate in class over the passage of HB 2281:

I have noticed the hostility created with other people in the university because they don’t agree . . . there was this debate going on within the classroom that they were saying we whine too much like why are we complaining about [Mexican American Studies] being taken away and we are always going to find something to complain about . . . You know I could have gone off too and I just told them, “We have the right to learn. If we don’t learn about this in higher education, we have a right to learn about this in secondary.”

Although Angela was passionate about Latino/a students’ “right to learn,” her argument was devalued by classmates and regarded as “whining” and “complaining.” Heated exchanges such as this were commonplace after the passages of SB 1070 and HB 2281.

**Stress.** Several students reported stress, anxiety, and worry stemming from SB 1070 and HB 2281. Julio described his peers’ emotional state and how it also affected him:

I’ve met people here at college and I just feel like the tension and stress that people have to go through to fight for what they believe in, I know it affects them. If everyone is not happy or content, then I kinda’ feel the pressure inside of me.

The students Julio described were the ones actively engaged in fighting against SB 1070 and HB 2281. The stress other Latina/o students feel as they worked to protest SB 1070 and HB 2281 were felt by Julio even though he was not involved directly. In addition, participants choosing to fight against SB 1070 and HB 2281 were forced to balance political activism with college coursework, thereby creating an additional layer of stress. Jasmine stated,

I have class every day for this program. It’s an intense program and I just didn’t want to do anything, like all I wanted to do is stay online and read all these articles about what was going on and what I needed to do to help. I think I contacted the UNIDOS group and I was like tell me what you want me to do . . . I feel so frustrated . . . .

Many students had difficulty finding balance between wanting to be involved in local struggles and simply being students.

SB 1070 in particular also created feelings of stress among the participants via familial responsibilities. For instance, Fernando’s father was undocumented, and the passage of SB 1070 changed his daily routine dramatically. Fernando stated, “So my dad’s kinda’ scared to drive around during the day now . . . and because I’m a U.S citizen he would rather just have me drive him around. I didn’t mind, but it’s kinda’ become a hassle.” None of the participants were undocumented, but several of their family members were. The participants highlighted how, after the passage of SB 1070, their undocumented family members’ lives consisted of going to work and going
home. When students like Fernando were called on to help, they did so without question even though it pulled them away from the demands of school.

**Fear.** Several students reported feeling that they could be targeted by the bills, primarily SB 1070, although none were undocumented. Felicia stated, “I just feel like I’m being targeted myself like I always have to carry an I.D. with me . . . just like not being able to go somewhere without an I.D.” Since the passage of SB 1070, Felicia feared her status as an American citizen would be questioned. Therefore, she made sure to have her identification on her at all times to prove her status if questioned. Many participants reported being very cautious, always carrying identification and constantly feeling they might be deported unless they could prove they were citizens.

Feelings of fear were exacerbated by Arizona being a border state. Jasmine recalled a situation regarding Border Patrol’s presence on the UA campus:

> For some reason there was a Border Patrol car outside of [CHSA]. We alerted people so that in case they didn’t want to come to the center because that car was there and 1070 was happening. The center knew and informed students and they went to go check up on their people . . . My stomach just dropped . . .

CHSA was supposed to be a safe space for Latina/o students (Patton, 2010), and that perception of safety was destabilized. The incident scared many students with the potential that border patrol agents were targeting students on campus.

Jimena offered her own views regarding community fear: “I have noticed the fear. I mean in the community, where I work, in my neighborhood. People are scared of being deported. So it’s impacted me and then as a person I find myself at first getting especially angry.” Although SB 1070 is still being contested in court, local police are already collaborating with border patrol (Herreras, 2013), and therefore, the fear was warranted. Although Jimena did not feel personally threatened by the law, she was angry that her community had to live in fear. While the participants described being individually and collectively targeted, their narratives also highlighted a sense of agency development in this process.

**Political Awareness Leading to Engagement and Activism**

*Opportunity for dialogue and engagement.* The passing of SB 1070 and HB 2281 sparked political conversations among many students at the UA, especially those who previously considered themselves “apolitical.” Salvador explained,

> We would talk about [the legislation] . . . me and my roommates . . . we would do little debates . . . we would talk about how much we hated it, but we would also talk about why others wanted to implement it.

Salvador was no political activist, but he and his roommates found themselves increasingly becoming politically engaged. They spent time building their arguments for why the laws are immoral but also analyzed arguments of opponents who support the bill. Erica stated that she went through similar changes:
I feel like I’ve always had a passive demeanor, like never really speaking out on opinions, but when this happens you have to defend yourself for the sake of educating people around you. That’s when you have to be more outspoken . . . I’m a lot more aware of where I am and the people around me . . . and that’s just from learning how much police forces can get away with in this state.

Erica was usually a quiet person, but she said she could no longer be silent for the sake of defending herself and her community.

In addition, participants encouraged family members and their community to become aware of policies affecting the Latina/o community. Jimena described her family’s response to her arrest protesting attacks on Mexican American Studies:

It’s definitely a turning point for my family to always be aware of what’s going on because before May 12th when I had gotten arrested with some professors here, I remember telling my family to watch the news for the first time and then from that day forth it was watch the news all the time.

Jimena was engaged in political activism, and her activism affected her family. They were no longer unaware of this issue, and it became a politicizing moment for Jimena’s family members. Many other participants described engaging in direct political activism in response to these pieces of legislation.

Political activism. In addition to becoming more politically aware via dialogue, several participants reported becoming political activists in response to SB 1070 and HB 2281. “Becoming” was critically important because few described themselves as activists before the laws were passed. In fact, the majority, even the MEChistas,² described these laws as the reason for their activism. Bernice recounted her first memory of engaging in political activism:

When SB 1070 passed, it killed my day. I was in CSHA and this girl came out and said, “We are going to go protest and take this to the courts.” I was like, “You can do that?” This was before I had any political experience and so me and my friend went downtown and we were out there. I want to defend my people, and I want to protect them and represent them in a place we’re not represented. It fed my desire to want to do this kind of work, so that’s when I started it . . . 1070 really made me mad.

Bernice’s desire to fight against SB 1070 was fueled by the anger she felt from the law’s implications on her community. As a Latina/o student, she felt the need to defend it.

Other participants reported feeling a sense of responsibility to their community in actively protesting SB 1070 and HB 2281. Manuel stated,

Because I am a Latino and I’m in college, I feel like I need to do something to step up and these events have allowed me to kind of look at the United States differently and wonder what their true intensions are as far as the government and what they are doing and what I’m doing as a student to alleviate these things.
As an educated Latina/o student, Manuel felt the need to think critically about the implications of Arizona’s policies and legislations, to question the agendas of his political leaders, and to determine what he could do to make change.

In addition, several participants discussed choosing to engage in political activism despite taking arduous college classes or heavy course loads. Nicole stated,

I remember last semester taking 18 units and well you have all these crazy board meetings happening [within TUSD regarding HB2281] . . . I have to attend school because I mean if I don’t attend school, how do I expect to do something. But then when my community is being attacked, I go. How do I find this balance? Like I have a good friend who has dedicated all her time to activism and she doesn’t have time to be a scholar. And it makes me sad and I also see that she is not happy about it, but why does it have to be that choice?

The passage of SB 1070 and HB 2281 made participants feel the need to become politically active. While Nicole recognized the demands and importance of college, she and her friend chose to make time for activism as well because they felt obligated to protect their community from legislations negatively affecting Latina/os.

**Discussion**

In the wake of SB 1070 and HB 2281, several participants reported feeling more racial tension on campus and experienced multiple situations where the UA became a hostile environment. In addition, some students reported feeling they could be targeted by the new laws, which led them to act more cautiously and have photo ID on their persons at all times. Moreover, the Arizona Border Patrol’s presence outside of CHSA offices not only furthered this sense of racial targeting but also made them question the security of their “safe space.” These experiences sparked feelings of racial tension, stress, and fear among participants, which has previously been shown to negatively affect Latina/o students’ academic and intellectual development (A. F. Cabrera et al., 1999; Hurtado & Carter, 1997) and cause distress, thereby inhibiting student engagement within the campus community and reducing retention (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, & Cuellar, 2008).

Research has empirically demonstrated there is a connection between governmental policies (e.g., affirmative action) and decreases in compositional diversity (Long & Tienda, 2008; Santos et al., 2010). Although these studies represent an indirect link between the policy context and the behavioral and psychological dimensions of the campus racial climate (Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012), our study demonstrates a more direct connection. Our findings indicate that participants experienced a tense campus climate in a post-SB 1070 and HB 2281 environment. While we cannot imply that these legislations directly caused some of our participants’ experiences and perceptions (e.g., being called an anchor baby), participants tended to believe that the campus racial climate was much more hostile within this historical time period. In addition, we highlight that several participants stated that there were direct cause and effect relationships between their tense experiences and the passing of these legislations (e.g., tense
class debate regarding Mexican American Studies or having to carry ID at all times). Furthermore, the negative effects these laws had on participants’ lives offered additional nuances to the climate literature. Many students’ families, friends, and neighbors were affected by the laws, and currently, the MMDLE does not have a theoretical mechanism for understanding the intersection of racial politics, students, and their families/communities.

Although many participants were adversely affected by the passage of SB 1070 and HB 2281, they developed a sense of agency in response. Some reported that before the passages of SB 1070 and HB 2281, they knew little about politics or were passive. In response to these laws, many became more politically aware and active, while engaging in dialogue with peers, family, and community members. These actions were frequently rooted in a sense of responsibility the students felt for being educated members of the Latino/a community. This was promising because Latina/o students who are able to channel racial stress into forms of civic engagement often report higher levels of psychological well-being (O’Leary & Romero, 2011; Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2010). However, students did report that they struggled to balance college coursework and heavy course loads with political activism. Hence, although some students felt a need to actively speak out and protest against SB 1070 and HB 2281, it did take time away from studying and preparation for classes. Nonetheless, many still chose to take on more responsibilities in actively fighting against racial policies to protect their families and community.

A limitation within our study is that our participants were recruited via participation in Latina/o campus organizations. Historically, minority student organizations on a college campus are rooted in a history of student resistance and ethnic revitalization (Patton, 2010). Therefore, we cannot generalize that Latina/o students who did not participate in these organizations shared the same experiences or reacted the same way to the passing of these legislations. However, as previously mentioned, it is important to note that many of our participants stated that they did not consider themselves political activists or even engage in political dialogue prior to the passing of these laws. This would indicate that prior to SB 1070 and HB 2281, participants had little knowledge or interest in political issues affecting the Latina/o community despite participating in these clubs and organizations. Furthermore, participating in Latina/o campus organizations had no relation to some of the negative experiences participants encountered (e.g., fear of being deported despite being a U.S. citizen). It is possible however, that participation in these organizations became a catalyst for political activism and engagement. While Latina/o students in general may have faced a hostile climate, those participating in these organizations may have been more likely to translate their frustrations into political activism.

While research shows Latina/o college students are particularly at-risk of dropping out of college (Nora, 2003), policies such as SB 1070 and HB 2281 may add to this trend by contributing to a hostile racial climate on campus. Future research needs to consider how institutions of higher education can support students during times of political racial turmoil. For the students in this research, institutional support was either nonexistent or happenstance. Sometimes, the institution itself contributed to the
hostility (e.g., Border Patrol at CHSA). Providing institutional support for improving interpersonal relations among different social identity groups is important because studies have demonstrated a positive campus racial climate can increase cognitive development (e.g., active thinking), social development (e.g., racial/cultural engagement), and civic mindedness for all students (Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004). For example, counseling strategies implemented by student affairs professionals may include increasing students’ ability to effectively respond to racial/ethnic stereotyping and discrimination to reduce its negative impact (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000).

Furthermore, Villalpando (2004) argued that student services practitioners should work to undo the effects of racism on campus to help Latina/o students receive equitable educational opportunities. First, practitioners must make engaging social justice a priority on college campuses. Next, university personnel should attempt to integrate the experiential knowledge of Latina/o college students into the process of implementing more responsive and culturally relevant programs and services. According to Villalpando, support services that build on these experiences reflect an understanding that Latina/o students have experienced oppression, which combats the notion that these experiences do not exist or are unrelated to students’ academic success. Last, student services practitioners should work to acquire a better understanding of the historical and current experiences of the communities from which Latina/o students come.

All too often, university representatives (faculty, administration, and student affairs professionals) are removed from student activism and are frequently the targets of organized protests (Rhoads, 1998). Kezar (2010) instead argues that faculty engagement with student activists not only can promote positive social change but also serve as an avenue for student development. This type of engagement can be daunting given repressive state politics such as SB 1070 and HB 2281; however, it is this political context that makes these collaborations even more necessary. To this end, administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals, need to recognize that promoting social justice is not just a convenient add-on to higher education research and practice, but rather, it is integral if providing students equitable educational opportunities is an institutional priority (Davis & Harrison, 2013).

To transform structures, cultures, and political contexts that marginalize People of Color, it is also important for individuals to be engaged in understanding and deconstructing why inequality exists; however, students often lack these opportunities (Rodriguez & Brown, 2009). Although the participants within this study were able to express their opposition to SB 1070 and HB 2281 through dialogue and activism, at times, they were discouraged or even punished for expressing their concerns. Institutions of higher education should create opportunities for students to engage in political dialogue, which critically analyze the effects of these laws. One promising educational practice stems from intergroup dialogue. Nagda and Zúñiga (2003) assessed the effectiveness of 7-week peer-facilitated intergroup dialogues that brought together college students from different racial/ethnic groups. They found that White and Students of Color who appreciated the learning process of intergroup dialogues were more likely to engage in conversations about promoting racial awareness, talk
about race and racism with other racial/ethnic groups, and had more of a desire to create racial bridges. This is difficult to achieve because intergroup dialogues can also become a form of verbal violence against Students of Color (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). However, it is a pedagogical approach that offers some of the best potential in terms of improving the behavioral and psychological dimensions of the campus racial climate (Hurtado et al., 2012).

**Conclusion**

After the passage of SB 1070, “copycat” bills emerged in Alabama, South Carolina, Indiana, and Georgia. In addition, controversies about curriculum arise constantly. Recently, Former Indiana Governor and current Purdue University President Mitch Daniels sought to ban the writings of Howard Zinn (Ohlheiser, 2013). Thus, the implications of this research stretch well beyond the state of Arizona. Policies may influence the ways that students interact with each other on a daily basis, and it is therefore critically important that there are intentional strategies available so students can develop a sense of social agency in response to repressive legislation. It is not possible to completely avoid racial targeting, but this does not mean Latina/o students have to be racial victims.

**Acknowledgment**

The authors would like to thank Victor B. Sáenz for his insightful comments and critiques of an earlier draft.

**Authors’ Note**

A previous version of this article was presented at the 2013 annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, St. Louis, Missouri.

**Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Funding**

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Notes**

1. United Non-Discriminatory Individuals Demanding Our Studies (UNIDOS) represents the youth movement in the fight over ethnic studies in Tucson Unified School District (TUSD). For more information, please visit http://unidostucson.wordpress.com/
2. MEChistas are students who participate in the activist student group MEChA, and they are frequently some of the most politically active Latina/o students on campus.
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