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Nolan L Cabrera

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Racial Politics and Racial Self-Identification: A Case Study of Arizona, 2010-2011

Nolan L. Cabrera[1] and Matthew R. Holliday[2]

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between Arizona's anti-Latina/o policies and changing patterns of racial self-identification for students at the University of Arizona. Using institutional data and the university's Entering Student Survey, we explored trends in racial/ethnic self-identification between two cohorts of students: one before and one after the summer of 2010 (passage of SB1070, HB2281, and Proposition 107). Descriptive analyses revealed that both White and Latina/o students declined to state a racial/ethnic background at substantially higher rates after the passages of the bills. After the passage of the legislation, Latina/os used "Mexican" identifiers at substantially lower rates and "White" identifiers at substantially higher rates. Implications are discussed for racial/ethnic self-identification and higher education practice.

Keywords

racial identification, White identity, Latina/o identity, racial politics, Arizona, SB1070, HB2281, Proposition 107

[1]The University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA
[2]University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

Corresponding Author:
Nolan L. Cabrera, Department of Educational Policy Studies & Practice, College of Education, The University of Arizona, Room 327B, P.O. Box 210069, Tucson, AZ 85721-0069, USA.
Email: ncabrera@email.arizona.edu, @chicanostocracy

The year 2010 saw the passage of Arizona's SB1070 (the anti-immigrant "show me your papers" law), HB2281 (anti–Mexican American studies), and Proposition 107 (anti-affirmative action). These laws made headlines throughout the country and continue to be the subject of court battles. A large part of the reason these bills were able to pass was the force of anti-immigrant and anti-Latina/o sentiment in the state, coupled with a recession that further heightened xenophobia (Cabrera, 2012a; Campbell, 2011; Santa Ana & González de Bustamante, 2012). Within this evolving, overt, and oppressive structure of Arizona racial politics, little is known about how they can affect individual conceptions of the racial/ethnic self.

Most racial identity theories posit that dissonance can push students from one developmental stage to another (e.g., Cross, 1971; Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Helms, 1990, 1997; Torres, 2003). However, racial identity theories tend to frame development as a linear process, and also fail to specifically articulate what can cause a person to move between stages. If we conceptualize the racial politics of Arizona as a type of "state-endorsed racial dissonance," it is likely that the racial politics would change how White and Latina/o students racially/ethnically self-identify. We would expect it for both racial/ethnic groups because, in order for the bills to gain traction, a large proportion of White people in Arizona had to see Latina/os as a societal threat (Santa Ana & González de Bustamante, 2012). Conversely, the bills convey the message that Arizona, as state policy, is hostile to Latina/os (Campbell, 2011; O'Leary, Romero, Cabrera, & Rascon, 2012; Santa Ana & González de Bustamante, 2012). Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate how, if at all, racial/ethnic self-identification patterns change for White and Latina/o students at the University of Arizona (UA) in a post-1070/2281/107 environment.

Relevant Literature, Theory, and Terminology

Racial/ethnic self-identification is difficult to assess because it is a constantly moving target. As students enter into new environments, they are constantly reformulating their sense of self in relation to these evolving conditions (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). Both the seminal and cutting edge texts on racial identity development focus on cross-racial interactions, and how responses to these interactions affect identity development (Cross, 1971, 1978, 1985; Helms, 1990, 1997; Torres, 2003; Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). Racial identity theorists agree that people (1) tend to begin their development in a state of relative racial ignorance, (2) are taken out of this ignorance via contact with the racial other, and (3) can progressively move toward a healthy racial identity that is racially cognizant, self-assured, without hatred

of the racial other (Helms, 1990; Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). This process looks slightly different for White people versus People of Color because of their different relationships to historical and contemporary racism. Helms's (1990) five stages of White racial identity development focus on working through unconscious racism. Within these stages, White people begin from a generally color-blind worldview (contact), move toward racial awareness coupled with a rejection of responsibility (disintegration), begin to idealize Whiteness and denigrate Blackness (reintegration), start to accept responsibility for racism (pseudoindependence), and finally develop a White, antiracist identity (autonomy; Helms, 1997).

Much of the higher education literature on White racial identity focuses on White students who adopt an antiracist identity and work toward becoming racial justice allies (Bishop, 2002; Kordesh, Spanierman, & Neville, 2013; Reason, Roosa Millar, & Scales, 2005; Yeung, Spanierman, & Landrum-Brown, 2013). Racial justice allies, as the name implies, are White people who acknowledge their own White privilege and work with antiracist People of Color toward the eradication of systemic racism (Broido, 2000; Broido & Reason, 2005; Cabrera, 2012b). Although racial justice ally is closely related to Helms's (1990) antiracist identity, it does differ in that it is more explicitly linked to antiracist action as opposed to being exclusively a social identity. Specifically, racial justice allies become allies when they take action against White supremacy while acknowledging their own racial privilege within a larger antiracism movement (Cabrera, 2012b; O'Brien, 2001; Warren, 2010).

Latina/o identity development is complicated by the interplay between race and ethnicity. Ethnicity describes a person's native culture and the social customs, language, and practices associated with the group (Davis & Harrison, 2013). Race relates to racism, or the systematic, oppressive stratification of society along the color line, which places Whites above People of Color (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Within this context, White represents a race but not an ethnicity, although more specific identities such as "Jewish" fit the definition of ethnicity (Steinberg, 2007). Conversely, Latina/o is a panethnic identity that can include any racial group (Golash-Boza & Darity, 2008). In the 2010 U.S. Census, 53% of Latina/os identified as White, followed by some other race (36.7%), two or more races (6.0%), Black or African American (2.5%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (1.4%; Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011).

The model for Latina/o identity development has not been as thoroughly tested or theorized as White and Black models of development. It currently is similar to the Black model: Moving from a racially denigrated view of being Latina/o to one that is both self-secure and not hateful of Whites (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Torres, 1999, 2003).However, Latina/o identity development

is frequently understood as a series of orientations as opposed to steps in a larger progression (Torres, 2003). For example, Ferdman and Gallegos (2001) do not describe movement from orientation-to-orientation, but they do highlight how Latina/os come from many different racial identities ranging from a preference for White culture (White identified), color-blind (undifferentiated), unaware of their cultural background (Latina/o as "Other"), a strong connection to a national origin subgroup but no connection to other Latina/os (subgroup identification), preferring Latina/os and denigrating Whites (Latina/o identified), to self-assured in Latina/o identity and not denigrating Whites (Latino integrated).

An alternative model for Latina/o identity development among college students is Torres's (1999, 2003) bicultural orientation model (BOM). This framework examines Latina/o students' comfort between their culture of origin and the dominant culture, and offers four orientations. Students who display comfort and acceptance of both cultures adopt the bicultural orientation, whereas Latino/Hispanic orientation refers to individuals who indicate greater comfort with their culture of origin (Torres, 1999). The third orientation, Anglo orientation, indicates a greater comfort with the majority (White) culture. Finally, the marginal orientation is associated with rejection of both cultures, which could suggest conflict within the individual (Torres, 1999). Consistent with Ferdman and Gallegos (2001), the BOM does not suggest sequential advancement through orientations. Instead, Torres (2003) posits individual placement is based on acculturation (i.e., choices made about the majority culture), and ethnic identity (i.e., the maintenance of the culture of origin). Specific factors which can affect racial identification for Latina/o students include family dynamics (e.g., marriage, childbearing, and generational differences), experiences with discrimination, self-perception of one's status in society, and environmental changes (e.g., entering graduate school; Golash-Boza & Darity, 2008; Martinez et al., 2012; Torres, 2003; Torres et al., 2012).

Most of the racial identity theorizing focuses on the Black/White binary as the study of Latina/o identity development is still emerging. There is little consideration of the Latina/o/White binary, which is particularly relevant in the Arizona context. In addition, the work on identity tends to focus on individual psychological processes. While some authors (e.g., Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012; Mendez & Cabrera, 2015) give credence to the idea that major political events can affect identity development (e.g., SB1070), there is little empirical evidence to support this hypothesis. Golash-Boza and Darity (2008) did demonstrate that when Latina/os experience discrimination, they are less likely to identify as White when controlling for nation of origin, education, age, marital status, language preference, and

skin color. Finally, racial identity development is frequently misinterpreted as a linear process where people progress from one stage to the subsequent stage (Cabrera, 2012b), moving closer to a more enlightened racial self. Instead, Latina/o identity is likely cyclical; individuals reevaluate their identity in response to changes in their environment and major life circumstances (e.g., job location, marriage; Torres et al., 2012). Consistent with the research literature, most factors that affect Latina/o racial identification focus on unique life situations that will vary by each individual. There is little examination of whether or not macroevents, such as the racial politics of Arizona in 2010, can inform patterns of racial self-identification. While most agree that some type of dissonance promotes movement from one stage of racial identity to another (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010; Helms, 1990; Torres et al., 2012) there is little understanding of what types of outcomes this might produce.

Previously in some states where racial politics have become overt, especially surrounding affirmative action, an interesting and unexplored phenomenon has occurred. The year after the elimination of an affirmative action program has seen a decline in the number of self-identified White students enrolling in the flagship institutions with a concurrent increase in the number of students declining to state a race/ethnicity (Brown & Hirschman, 2006; Santos, Cabrera, & Fosnacht, 2010). The reasons for this are currently unexplained. It could indicate that the more White students are made racially cognizant amid a climate of intense racial politics, the less likely they are to racially self-identify. Within this context, we compared patterns in racial/ethnic self-identification in two cohorts of first-time, full-time students at the UA; one before and one after the passage of 1070/2281/107. We sought to explore the following questions:

- Did the students who enrolled in the UA after the passage of 1070/2281/107 display any unique patterns of racial/ethnic self-identification relative to the preceding cohort?
- Specifically, did students in the post-1070/2281/107 cohort increasingly self-identifying as multiracial or decline to state their racial/ethnic background relative to the pre-1070/2281/107 cohort?
- If differences do exist, what does this mean in terms of racial/ethnic self-identification in relation to racial politics?

We focus on racial self-identification as opposed to racial identity development because we are not tracking students longitudinally. Rather, we measured how two cohorts of students racially/ethnically self-identified and examined whether or not there were substantial differences between them.

Therefore, when we apply terms such as *change*, *shift*, *decrease*, or *increase*, they describe comparisons between trends in the two cohorts and not how individual students' racial/ethnic self-identification evolved over time. Finally, we offer a brief note on terminology. As some racially White individuals can also have an ethnic identity and Latina/os can come from any racial group, we will use the term *racial/ethnic self-identification*. This describes the onetime measurement we use for the analysis (self-identification) while describing the interplay between race and ethnicity (racial/ethnic).

Method

This research utilizes a combination of survey data and institutional data to run descriptive analyses of first-time, full-time racial/ethnic self-identification amid intense Arizona racial politics. Specifically, we focused on the cohort that enrolled at the UA prior to the racial politics of the summer of 2010 and the year after. The racial politics of Arizona during this time set up a type of natural social experiment. SB1070 was signed into law on April 23, 2010, and this date was after the overwhelming majority (>98%) of students in the 2010-2011 entering freshman class submitted their applications for admission and registered for classes. Thus, their racial/ethnic self-identification would not have been affected by the racial politics, but this might have been an issue for the next entering classes.

Data

The data for this research were derived from two separate sources. First, the Office of Institutional Research Planning and Support (OIRPS) houses student records including demographic characteristics and high school/college academic performance. The demographic data derive from student applications to the UA. Students were first asked if they are Hispanic/Latino, then they were offered the option of selecting their racial background (American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, African American or Black, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or White). Students were allowed to select as many as they chose, and could also not report their racial/ethnic background (see Appendix A).

Second, there is a university-wide survey that all first-time, full-time students are able to complete before they begin their studies at the UA. The survey is offered online via DatStat Illume™, and students completed it while registering for classes. While the survey covered a great breadth of information (e.g., college choice process and goals/aspirations), the focus of this analysis is the survey item specifically asking students how they racially/

Table 1. OIRPS and Entering Student Survey Participants by Race/Ethnicity.

	2010-2011				2011-2012			
	OIRPS (*N* = 7,010)		Survey (*n* = 4,807)		OIRPS (*N* = 7,308)		Survey (*n* = 4,612)	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
African American/Black	258	3.7	181	3.8	276	3.8	167	3.6
Asian American/Pacific Islander	394	5.6	301	6.3	443	6.0	230	5.0
Native American/American Indian	87	1.2	68	1.4	82	1.1	39	0.8
Hispanic/Latina/o	1,569	22.4	877	18.2	1,754	24.0	851	18.5
White/Caucasian	4,073	58.1	2,460	51.2	4,153	56.8	2,174	47.1
Other[a]	NA		81	1.7	NA		63	1.4
Multiracial	283	4.0	464	9.7	297	4.1	449	9.7
Decline to state/did not identify	135	1.9	375	7.8	54	0.7	639	13.9
Nonresident alien[a]	211	3.0	NA		249	3.4	NA	

Note. OIRPS data did not offer an "Other" category, and the survey data did not offer a "Nonresident Alien" category. Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding. OIRPS = Office of Institutional Research Planning and Support.

ethnically self-identified. For this construct, students were given the options of selecting: African American/Black, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Native American/American Indian, Hispanic/Latino, White Caucasian, and Other. Students were instructed to mark all that applied and given the option of describing further if they chose (see Appendix B). While participation was voluntary, the year preceding the racial politics of 1070/2281/107 (2010-2011) saw 69% of the incoming class complete at least the racial/ethnic self-identification component of the survey (n = 4,807). Similarly, 63% of the 2011-2012 entering completed the racial/ethnic self-identification component of the survey (n = 4,612; see Table 1).

When students completed these surveys, they also entered their NETID which allows us to merge their individual responses with their institutional records contained within OIRPS. This is important for three reasons. First, OIRPS data for racial/ethnic self-identification are more complete than the survey data (98% complete in 2010-2011; 99% complete in 2011-2012). Second, these data allow us to examine whether students of different backgrounds were more or less likely to self-identify as multiracial or decline to state in the OIRPS data. Third, these data allowed us to examine whether

trends in racial/ethnic self-identification changed after the implementation of 1070/2281/107.

We would have liked to run a chi-square test to see whether the data are truly representative of the UA as a whole. The problem with this approach is we have multiple methods of asking for racial/ethnic self-identification. In addition, we want to explore changes in how students racially/ethnically self-identify in relation to a changing policy environment. Therefore, there are too many "moving targets" to make a chi-square test useful. Instead, we had to rely on descriptive statistics to assess how closely the survey data mirrored the demographic breakdown of the general student population in OIRPS.

Analysis

Our analytical strategy was threefold: First, we examined racial/ethnic self-identification among first-time, full-time UA students in the OIRPS data and how it shifted between the two cohorts. Second, we analyzed trends in how these students racially/ethnically self-identified as operationalized by which "boxes they check" on a university-wide survey which offered substantially more options (see Appendices A and B). We were specifically interested in changing trends between the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 cohorts. Additionally, using the OIRPS data, we were able to create a profile of the students who declined to state their racial/ethnic self-identification to see whether this group is largely comprised of White students as previous research would predict (Brown & Hirschman, 2006; Santos et al., 2010). Third, we analyzed shifts in how students described their racial/ethnic self-identification when they took advantage of the chance to "describe further" option on the university-wide survey.

Results

Beginning with the OIRPS data, the racial/ethnic composition of the two classes (2010-2011, 2011-2012) was relatively stable. Both classes were comparable in size (7,010 and 7,308 students respectively), and in 2011-2012, there was a 1.3% drop in White students with a 1.6% increase in Latina/os (see Table 1). This is counterintuitive given that part of the racial politics in 2010 saw an elimination of affirmative action in undergraduate admissions due to Proposition 107, and this usually ushers in a substantial decline in the representation of Students of Color at public flagship institutions (Brown & Hirschman, 2006; Hurtado & Cade, 2001; Santos et al., 2010; Tienda & Niu, 2006).

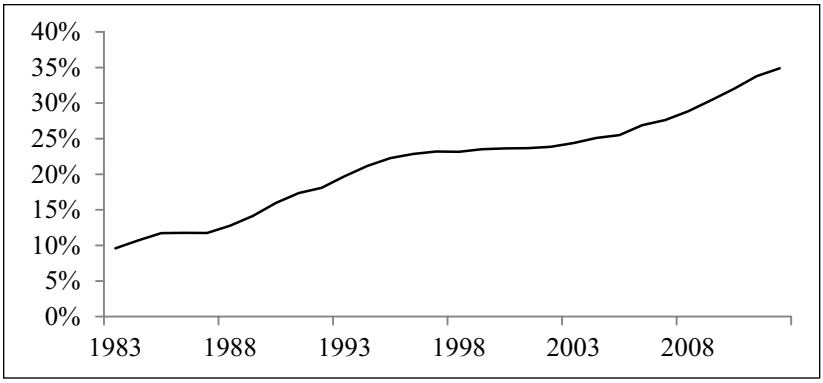


Figure 1. Percent racial minority enrollment, 1983-2012.

This is likely a function of two issues concurrently. First, admissions into the UA are not nearly as competitive as, for example, University of Texas at Austin or University of California, Los Angeles. Thus, the elimination of race-conscious admissions would have few effects on the racial/ethnic composition of incoming freshmen classes. The second issue was the decline in the proportion of students identifying as White, and this trend was consistent with some analyses of postaffirmative action access to public flagship institutions (e.g., Brown & Hirschman, 2006; Santos et al., 2010). Upon closer examination, however, the decreasing White proportion of the undergraduate student population has been consistent over the last 30 years (see Figure 1). There has been a 0.5 to 2.0 percentage point annual increase in minority student enrollment since 1983, and thus, 2011-2012 appears to be part of the overall trend as opposed to a function of the state politics. Regardless, the racial/ethnic composition of the UA entering freshmen class was relatively stable between these two periods. Where there were changes, they tended to fit within existing enrollment trends (i.e., slightly lower proportion of White students and a slightly higher proportion of Students of Color, especially Latina/os).

Turning to the survey data, the trend is slightly different. When offered a broader range of options for racial/ethnic self-identification, the results change substantially. As expected, the proportion of students in the monoracial categories declines relative to OIRPS data. For Latina/o students in 2010-2011, the decline was 4.2 percentage points and for White students, it was 6.9 percentage points. This trend was even more pronounced in 2011-2012 where Latina/o students experienced a 5.5 percentage point decrease

between OIRPS and survey data while White students saw a 9.7 percentage point decrease. These decreases corresponded to students in the survey data increasingly reporting a multiracial identity or declining to state on the Entering Student Survey (see Table 1). In 2010-2011, 5.7% more students self-identified as multiracial than they did in the OIRPS data, and 5.9% more declined to state their race relative to OIRPS data. In 2011-2012, the trend was almost identical for multiracial students; 5.6% more students self-identified as multiracial than in the OIRPS data. However, missing data/decline to state were almost nonexistent in the OIRPS data this year as only 54 students selected this option out of an incoming class of 7,308 (0.7%). In the survey data, however, 13.9% declined to state their racial/ethnic background, which was by far the largest change of any category. This represented a 6.1 percentage point increase from the previous year, a 78% relative increase from 2010-2011.

The large decreases in students self-identifying as White were expected, but the decline in students identifying as Latina/o was not predicted in existent literature (Brown & Hirschman, 2006; Golash-Boza & Darity, 2008; Santos et al., 2010). Arizona state policies were frequently targeting Latina/os (O'Leary et al., 2012; Santa Ana & González de Bustamante, 2012), and few people want to be racially targeted which might contribute to the decline in students racially/ethnically self-identifying as Latina/o. To further examine this trend, we took a ratio of students in the survey data in relation to those in the OIRPS database to examine whether or not a similar proportion of students are changing their racial/ethnic identity classification within each cohort. If we assume that the proportion of students identifying as "mixed race" and "decline to state" was evenly distributed across the monoracial categories, we would expect the proportion of survey respondents in each category to drop at approximately the same rate in the survey data. We generated a series of ratios ($\%_{Survey}$ / $\%_{OIRPS}$; see Table 2) because this allowed for comparisons across years that would not be confounded by the slightly lower response rate in the 2011-2012 survey. This approach also allowed us to examine the magnitude of relative declines in monoracial classification within specific years instead of simply describing absolute percent declines.

The proportion of students identifying as Black, Latina/o, or White was relatively consistent (see Table 2), between 84% and 88% each. Native American students were underrepresented in the Entering Student Survey data, but this was more likely a function of the historically low survey response rate for this student population (Sax, Gilmartin, & Bryant, 2003) as opposed to a reclassification of racial/ethnic identity. While racial minorities as a whole tend to have significantly lower response rates than their White peers, this was not the case for other racial ethnic groups in the survey because

Table 2. Ratio of Racial/Ethnic Self-Identification, Entering Student Survey Responses to OIRPS by Cohort.

	2010-2011 (%)	2011-2012 (%)
African American/Black	84	80
Asian American/Pacific Islander	95	63
Native American/American Indian	45	35
Hispanic/Latina/o	86	80
White/Caucasian	88	82
Multiracial	242	237
Decline to state/did not identify	411	1,986

Note. OIRPS = Office of Institutional Research Planning and Support.

it was initially developed to assess the impacts of the New Start Summer Program and the Arizona Assurance Scholars, both of which tend to serve low-income, racial minority, and first generation college students. Additional waves email reminders were sent to these students which is likely the reason that racial minorities had proportional response rates similar to those of their White peers. Returning to the results, a disproportionately high number of Entering Student Survey participants relative to OIRPS data identified as multiracial (242% increase) as well as those declining to state a racial/ethnic background (411% increase) in the 2010-2011 cohort.

In the post-1070/2281/107 environment, students increasingly avoided monoracial categories. Latina/os dropped from 86% in 2010-2011 to 80% in 2011-2012 while Whites declined a similar percent (88% in 2010-2011; 82% in 2011-2012). This same trend was consistent across racial/ethnic groups as there was a movement away from monoracial self-identification. This did not correspond to an increase in multiracial self-identification as we initially hypothesized; those proportions stayed relatively constant (242% in 2010-2011; 237% in 2011-2012). It did correspond to a massive proportional increase in the student declining to state their racial/ethnic self-identification. This proportion went from 411% in 2010-2011 to 1,986% in 2011-2012.

We were able to match the survey and OIRPS records for 445 out of the 629 (70.7%) of the students declining to state their race/ethnicity for the 2011-2012 year (see Table 3). There did not appear to be a disproportionate number of one group declining to state their race/ethnicity more than any other.

Approximately 60% of the students were White and 20% were Latina/o according to their responses to the OIRPS survey, and this closely mirrored

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Students Declining to State Their Racial/Ethnic Background on the Entering Student Survey.

	2011-2012 (*n* = 445)	
	n	%
African American/Black	21	4.7
Asian American/Pacific Islander	34	7.6
Native American/American Indian	4	0.9
Hispanic/Latina/o	89	20.0
White/Caucasian	268	60.2
Other	3	0.7
Multiracial	16	3.6
Nonresident alien	9	0.3

their representation in the overall student population. Thus, the advent of 1070/2281/107 seemed to lead students to be less willing to identify their racial/ethnic background, and this was generally consistent within the entering student populations. The reasons for those declining to state, however, differed between White and Latina/o students.

We then examined trends in the "describe" option in the Entering Student Survey data, and this provided an interesting nuance to the analysis. White students were remarkably consistent between the 2 years. In 2010-2011, 19% described their racial/ethnic self-identity compared with 18% in 2011-2012, and the content did not substantially differ. There were some students who used this as an opportunity to describe themselves as "American" or "Human," but this was an extreme minority in each cohort (less than 2%). The majority used the "describe further" option to describe their ethnic heritage (e.g., Italian or German).

This was different when examining the trends for Latina/o students. There was a 26% increase of participants who wrote a variation of "half-White, half-Hispanic," from 47 in 2010-2011 to 59 in 2011-2012. The number of participants who wrote "Mexican" dropped by 20%, from 182 (2010-2011) to 146 (2011-2012). Finally, the term "Mexican American" decreased as a self-identifier by 30%, from 124 to 87. These shifts are even more pronounced because there were 185 more Latina/o students in entering class of 2011-2012 than 2010-2011, and these declines still occurred despite the increasing representation of Latina/o students on campus. Thus, it appears that Latina/o students at the UA were increasingly reporting to be of partially White descent while fewer identified explicitly with their Mexican heritage.

Discussion

After the racial politics of 1070/2281/107, substantially more White and Latina/o students refused to racially/ethnically self-identify. Additionally, many Latina/os increasingly avoided labels such as "Mexican" or "Mexican American" while increasingly adding "White" as a descriptor. These findings are descriptive in nature, and do not have the power of inferential statistics to establish cause and effect. It is possible that these shifts in racial/ethnic self-identification are a function of differences in the changing composition of the respective classes. While this is a possibility, it is highly unlikely as the OIRPS data tend to be very stable year-to-year, and changes tend to be consistent (i.e., the drop in the proportion of White students since the 1980s; see Figure 1). Thus, the descriptive findings of this study indicate that the racial politics of Arizona affected the racial/ethnic self-identification for Latina/o and White students, and future analyses need to explore similar contexts before and after the rise of anti-Latina/o politics (e.g., Georgia, South Carolina, and Alabama, who all adopted derivatives of SB1070).

This study provoked a number of questions. First, what about the different methods of asking about race/ethnicity triggered such varied responses between the survey and OIRPS? There were very few differences between the two, the primary one being the option for students to describe their racial/ethnic self-identification in the survey data (see Appendices A and B). This small difference might have sent a signal to the students taking the survey that the construct really wants them to consider how they identify whereas the OIRPS items were more of the "check box" variety. This could have been why there was a substantial rise in the proportion of students in both cohorts who identified as multiracial in the Entering Student Survey relative to the OIRPS data. This point can only be speculative given the current data available. It was, however, interesting to note that the proportion of students in the Entering Student Survey and OIRPS data identifying as multiracial was consistent across both cohorts. We hypothesized that there would be an increase in the proportion of White students identifying as multiracial, especially in the wake of an affirmative action referendum (Proposition 107). Instead, the largest change occurred in those declining to state their racial/ethnic background.

Second, it is understandable why Latina/o students would be less likely to identify as Latina/o in a post-1070/2281/107 environment as they are members of a targeted group (Santa Ana & González de Bustamante, 2012). What is less clear is why White students in a post-1070/2281/107 environment increasingly decline to state their racial/ethnic background. None of these policies target White populations, and in the case of Proposition 107, it could actually increase their educational opportunities relative to Communities of Color. There are likely multiple processes at work here. Each of these initiatives played upon White fears to

become enacted (Santa Ana & González de Bustamante, 2012). For SB1070 and HB2281 to pass, the White populace of the state had to feel under attack from migrants and students taking Mexican American studies (Campbell, 2011; O'Leary et al., 2012; Santa Ana & González de Bustamante, 2012). While there have been few empirical investigations of Proposition 107, many antiaffirmative action initiatives have passed because of White fears that their educational and economic opportunities would be hindered if affirmative action continued (Cabrera, in press; Crosby, 2004; Pusser, 2004). If the politics surrounding Proposition 107 followed a similar pattern, then this was an additional means of stoking White fears. Thus, it could be that White students increasingly declining to state their racial background is a remnant of the White fear that was so endemic in the state during the summer of 2010. Again, given the data available, these are only speculative points that require further investigation in the future.

This research has many implications for theory and practice. The results highlight how macroprocesses such as the overtly anti-Latina/o policies of Arizona can affect racial/ethnic self-identification, moving it beyond the microprocesses of individual interactions and views of the self. This is critically important because racial identity development theory, as applied to college students, tends to focus on the individual student processes with little attention given to the student's sociopolitical context (e.g., Cabrera, Watson, & Franklin, 2016; Evans et al., 2010; Torres, 2003; Yeung et al., 2013). The policy environment affecting identity has been theoretically argued but not empirically demonstrated (Hurtado et al., 2012; Renn, 2003, 2004)

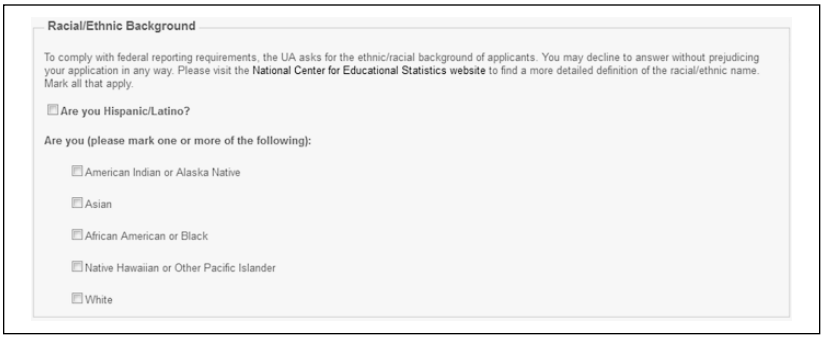
In terms of practice, Helms (1990) argues that it is imperative for counselors to understand where their clients are in terms of racial identity development, the same can be said for student affairs practitioners (Evans et al., 2010). The support needed for Latina/o students will be dramatically different than those who are White. In this instance, Latina/o students are increasingly shunning their racial/ethnic roots, and therefore, the support needs to come in the form of demonstrating that being Latina/o is nothing to be ashamed of. This is difficult when the racial politics of the state specifically target Latina/os (Cabrera, 2012a; Campbell, 2011; O'Leary et al., 2012; Santa Ana & González de Bustamante, 2012), but this sociopolitical context makes the work all the more necessary. With respect to the White students, their heightened racial awareness could pose an opportunity for constructive engagement. While many have argued that color blindness is a form of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), the White students can no longer claim racial ignorance, and a heightened racial cognizance is the first step in working through Whiteness (Cabrera, 2012b; Reason & Evans, 2007). Regardless, it becomes increasingly critical that student affairs practitioners take account of the larger sociopolitical context in which student development occurs. While this

is not a new argument (Evans et al., 2010; Hurtado et al., 2012; Renn, 2003, 2004), it is one that to date, has had more theoretical than empirical support.

Conclusion

This exploratory study found support for the idea that racial politics influenced racial/ethnic self-identification. Future studies need to track students over time to move the analysis from patterns of racial/ethnic self-identification toward examinations of racial identity development. In addition, interview-based research would provide a more nuanced and thorough understanding of how students immersed in caustic racial politics experience their changing sense of their racial/ethnic selves. This is especially important for the targeted group because there is the possibility that students can internalize racist messages about themselves (Bivens, 1995). The challenge therefore becomes maintaining concurrent focus on students and the public policy which contextualizes their growth, supporting positive student development amid oppressive state politics (O'Leary et al., 2012; Santa Ana & González de Bustamante, 2012).

Appendix A



Racial/Ethnic Background

To comply with federal reporting requirements, the UA asks for the ethnic/racial background of applicants. You may decline to answer without prejudicing your application in any way. Please visit the **National Center for Educational Statistics website** to find a more detailed definition of the racial/ethnic name. Mark all that apply.

☐ **Are you Hispanic/Latino?**

Are you (please mark one or more of the following):

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native

☐ Asian

☐ African American or Black

☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

☐ White

Figure A1. OIRPS survey items regarding race/ethnicity.
Note. OIRPS = Office of Institutional Research Planning and Support.

Appendix B

9. How do you identify yourself racially/ethnically? (select all that apply and describe further if necessary)

☐ African American/Black, describe

☐ Asian American/Pacific Islander (includes the Indian subcontinent), describe

☐ Native American/American Indian, describe

☐ Hispanic/Latino, describe

☐ White/Caucasian (not of Hispanic origin; origins in Europe, North Africa, or the middle East), describe

☐ Other, describe

Figure B1. Entering Student Survey items regarding race/ethnicity.

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Author Biographies

Nolan L. Cabrera, PhD, is an associate professor in the Center for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Arizona. His research focuses on the college campus racial dynamics with a focus on Whiteness and White racism. He is also deeply involved in the controversy and on-going court cases about Mexican American studies in Tucson Unified School District. He earned his PhD from University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and was the only academic featured in the *MTV* documentary *White People*. His scholarly articles have been published in the *American Educational Research Journal, Journal of Higher Education, Review of Higher Education, Research in Higher Education*, and *Race Ethnicity and Education*, and he recently completed a monograph for the Association for the Study of Higher Education entitled *Whiteness in Higher Education: The Invisible Missing Link in Diversity and Racial Analyses*.

Matthew R. Holliday, PhD, is the learning specialist at the University of Michigan Medical School. He teaches coursework on learning theory, and his research focuses on higher education, resilience, and racial identity development. He received his doctorate in educational psychology from the University of Arizona, and master's degree in higher and postsecondary education from Arizona State University. He has held applied data analyst positions in offices of institutional research and academic services. In 2013, he was awarded a grant from the National Science Foundation and the New Zealand Royal Society to research teacher expectations in Auckland, New Zealand.