
Geography, Race, and Class: A Case Study of the Role of Geography at an Urban Public University

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San Antonio is the core of Mexican-American culture in Texas and economically underdeveloped south Texas. In the 1960s, the city was recognized as an underserved population with respect to public higher education. The result was the creation of the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). This article is a case study revealing the role of geography in aggravating race and class inequities among university students. It is shown that the spatial location of UTSA on the urban periphery contributes to various disparities in auxiliary educational costs for the very groups of students that the institution was established to serve.

San Antonio and Public Higher Education

In the past 30 years, economic aid programs to lower-income students and ethnic diversification policies designed to culturally broaden the student body have partially succeeded in making the university experience more accessible to a broader spectrum of the national population. Issues of lower-income and Latino access to the university experience are especially notable in south Texas. As seen in figure 1a, south Texas represents a discrete zone of economic underdevelopment within Texas. In fact, south Texas is rated forty-seventh in per capita income among the 47 major trading zones in the United States (*Commercial Atlas and Marketing Guide* 1996). As seen in figure 1b, south Texas represents the eastern extreme of the contiguous Latino cultural periphery of the southwest United States. Issues of class and race that encumber the higher education opportunities of the predominantly lower-income and Latino population of south Texas have recently surfaced in Texas courts. In

American Journal of Education 106 (February 1998)
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0195-6744/98/0602-0002\$02.00

September 1991, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) sued the state of Texas over inequality in the location and funding of comprehensive universities within the state (Jones and Kauffman 1994). Institutions of higher education were shown to be overwhelmingly located in Anglo-dominated and upper-income portions of the state while radically underserving students from lower-income and Latino-dominated regions, principally represented by south Texas. San Antonio is the overwhelmingly dominant urban center in south Texas and is what Daniel Arreola (1987) calls “the Mexican American cultural capital.” The regional inequity in public higher education has been recognized for three decades and was the basis for the creation of the leading public university of south Texas—the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). Using San Antonio as an example, this article extends the statewide investigation of spatial inequities in education undertaken by Richard Jones and Albert Kauffman (1994) to inequities resulting from a university’s location specifically within the urban environment.

In the 1960s, San Antonio was the largest city in Texas without a state-supported four-year college. Possessing a relatively low-wage economy at the time (and now), 75 percent of Bexar County (greater San Antonio) families could not afford to send their children to an out-of-town university. With only public two-year junior colleges servicing the local population, it was noted that “it was very difficult for a young man or woman to climb very far up the income ladder” (“The Leftouts” 1967, p. 22). The UTSA was proposed in House Bill 42 of the sixty-first Texas state legislature in June 1969 after years of contentions that the city and region were underserved by higher education. Critical among the underserved population were Latinos. The UTSA was projected to be “the leading center for Spanish-speaking students in the southwest” with, according to UTSA President Arleight Templeton, “specially designed programs [which] will allow Mexican American students to take half their degree requirements in Spanish” (“UTSA Emphasis to Be on Spanish-Speaking” 1970). Shortly thereafter, in front of the Alamo, Governor Preston Smith signed the bill creating the university, stating that it was a “new golden era of higher education for South Texas” (Bernal 1995, p. 10).

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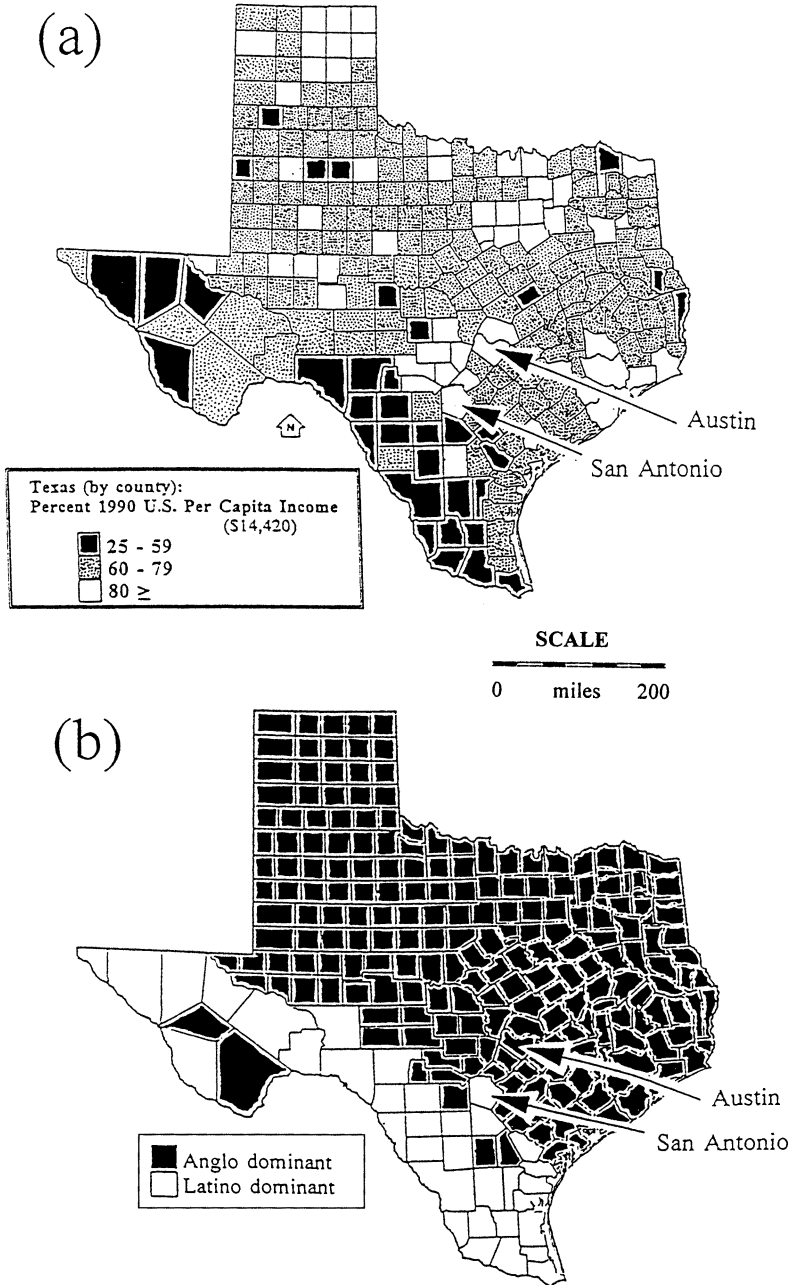


FIG. 1.—Texas counties: *a*, per capita income; and *b*, Anglo/non-Anglo dominant. Base data: U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990.

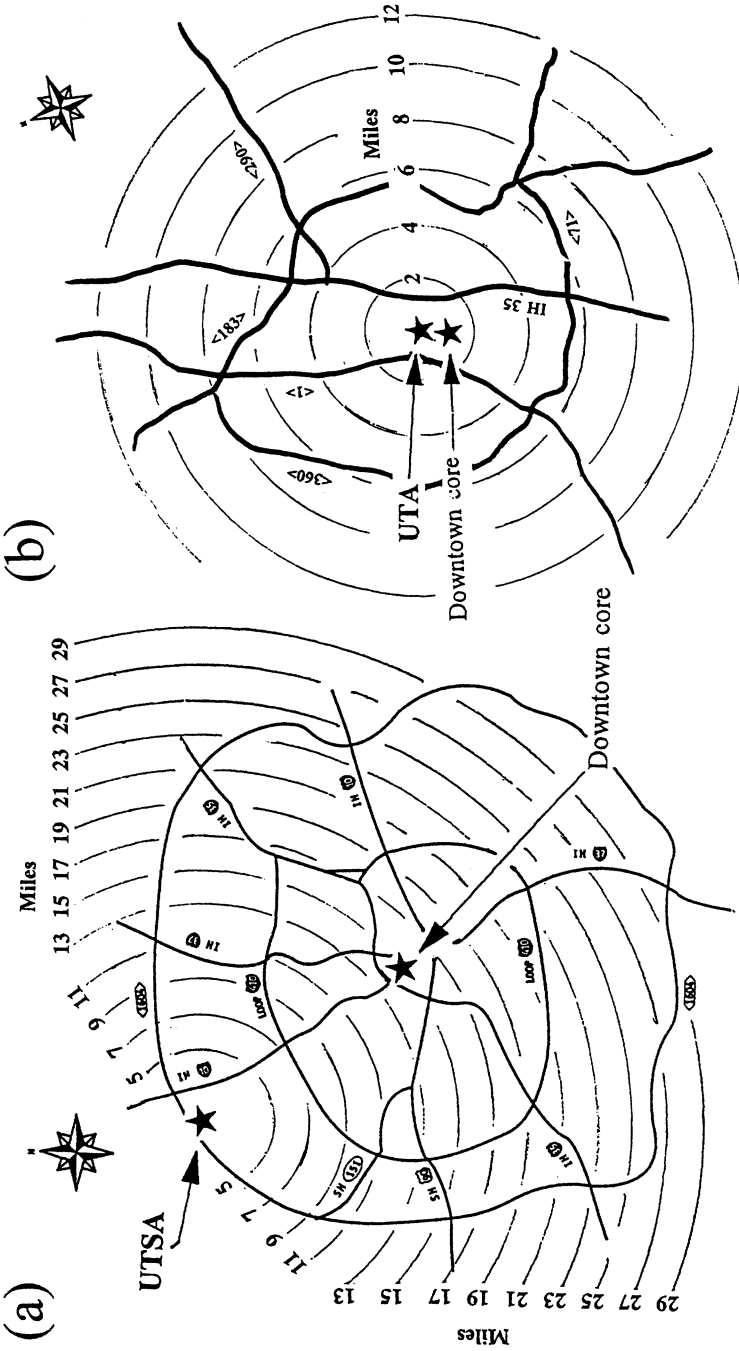


FIG. 2.—The peripheral urban location of UTSA (a) and the central urban location of UTA (b)

This article is a case study revealing the impact of geography on various aspects of the educational experience for different classes of students. The local social objectives that were the basis for UTSA's creation were compromised by the placement of the university. The result is economic inequalities of race and class associated with attending the area's only comprehensive public university. These inequalities result from the peripheral urban location of UTSA approximately 15 miles from the urban core of San Antonio; figure 2a reveals the peripheral location of UTSA within the urban zone of greater San Antonio.

The Politics of Site Selection

Having been established in 1969, the peripheral location of UTSA is not a result of organic, incremental urban growth over a long period of time. When considering the modest extent of San Antonio's suburban fringe in 1969, when compared with the present suburban fringe, the remoteness of the university's location when established becomes even more conspicuous. The penalizing of students from lower-income and non-Anglo areas of the city in terms of auxiliary costs of education finds its historical root with the very establishment of UTSA at its present location.

After formal approval for a public university in San Antonio, the University of Texas Board of Regents undertook to select a site for the institution from a pool of approximately 10 potential locations, ranging from the downtown core to sites well outside the city limits, including almost every quadrant in between. But, as Otis Singletary, vice-chancellor for student affairs, stated, "The point that is important is accessibility to the kind of student who needs to be served." Leon Tolle, a St. Mary's University professor interested in the establishment of the new university, added, "The overriding need of this institution is availability to people of modest means" (Diehl 1968). These sentiments were echoed by State Representative Frank Lombardino, who added, "We want to put the college where the people are, the needy people, on a site most convenient to all the people" (McCrary 1969). To many this meant a central location that was readily accessible and pivotal to the socioeconomically underprivileged populations of the inner city and the large non-Anglo zones immediately ringing the urban core. As stated by Ed Harllee, director of a San Antonio businessmen association, a "central location would provide for the greatest possible accessibility to all areas of the city, but especially to areas of increasing socio-economic and educational concern" ("New UTSA Site to Be Opposed" 1969). But the principal downtown

sites, represented by Hemisfair Plaza and San Antonio College, quickly succumbed to disputed concerns over space limitations. A third location of 378 acres was offered by Bexar County. Located 10 minutes from the downtown core in the Latino south side, the site (Southton) met with early approval by a University of Texas (UT) inspection team. The advantages of the site were accessibility to traffic from the entire county, existing on-site structures, attractive landscape features, and the appealing fact that the property was already off the county tax roles (unlike competing sites), which meant that the county's taxes would not be reduced by its selection. In addition, it was forecast that the selection of this site would contribute to the revitalization of the underdeveloped south side and enable it to support its share of the Bexar County tax load. Thus, if this site was chosen, the university would benefit the target population through education and community economic stimulation. It was the opinion of County Commissioner A. J. Ploch that "every person should be vitally interested in the selection of this site" ("UT System Team Eyes UTSA Sites" 1969). But ample space for the university was presented as a critical requirement for the future university, and more acreage than the south side site possessed was seen as desirable. An abundance of undeveloped acreage could be found on the urban periphery. The increase in projected acreage necessary for the university that mandated a peripheral location "gave room for people to question the motives of the UT Regents, especially [Regent] John Peace" (Bernal 1995, p. 11). The result was that the interests of large landholders on the urban periphery quickly challenged proximity to lower-income and non-Anglo urban populations as the pivotal factor in site selection. One leading candidate, a site called San Antonio Ranch, illustrates the differing conceptions of the university's future role held by some of the competing interests on the suburban fringe during the site selection process.

The San Antonio Ranch proposal envisioned the university to be an integral part of a new community replete with shops, elementary schools, restaurants, religious organizations, clinics, and laboratories. This new community was to be geographically separate from the San Antonio urban zone. On a rural site approximately 19 miles from downtown San Antonio, closest to the upper-income, Anglo-dominated northwest periphery of the city, the envisioned community was to be built so that the "university and the related town center [are] planned as a single, compact entity, principally oriented to the university population" (*San Antonio Ranch* 1970, pp. 15, 19). The projected size of this community was based on the calculation that four people would live in the new community for every student enrolled at UTSA. The population size was projected to grow to 93,800 by 1990 (*San Antonio Ranch* 1969). The nine-

person ownership of San Antonio Ranch would donate 500 acres (ultimately sweetened to 1,000 acres) of their 8,348-acre holding to UTSA, maintaining the remaining 7,348 acres in its control for the express purpose of accommodating “high density development . . . provided by rowhouses and townhouses [that] will allow the greatest number of people to live within the area of inclusion” (*San Antonio Ranch* 1969, p. 25). The project feasibility report oriented its findings to the impact of the university on the site as well as the impact on future San Antonio growth, while neglecting the impact on the target lower-income and non-Anglo areas of the city (*San Antonio Ranch* 1969).

The position of proponents for a more central location was summarized by State Representative Frank Lombardino who headed the successful effort to obtain a four-year state-supported college for San Antonio. Lombardino thought that the San Antonio Ranch site would “put the university too far from the students it is designed to serve . . . [and for whom] he wanted the school in the first place. . . . [It is imperative that] students who need a home-town college can reach it easily, [rather] than a 500-acre campus somewhere between here and Seguin or on a mountain-top near Bandera that only rich kids can get to” (“Downtown Four-Year S.A. College Pushed” 1968; McCrory 1969). The inequity was aggravated by the observation that relatively affluent north siders with the “University of Texas near San Antonio,” as some referred to it, being located in their “backyard . . . might still opt to send their sons and daughters to a ‘university of the first class’ at Austin or College Station,” leaving only a geographic obstacle of access for potential lower-income and non-Anglo students of the city (Bernal 1995, p. 11). The observation that the peripheral location of the San Antonio Ranch site might serve only commuters from San Antonio was received by supporters not as a negative feature of the location but rather a suggestion that it would be necessary to develop residential accommodations for students.

The site ultimately selected was a northwestern location on the distant periphery of greater San Antonio only three miles closer to the urban core than the San Antonio Ranch site. To extend the city’s jurisdiction over the site, referred to as the “Delevan property,” an annexation of 10–12 square miles would be undertaken to extend the city limits to the north. Haydon Head, one of the San Antonio Ranch owners, “pointed out that the Delevan site selected for UTSA was near the San Antonio Ranch and would have an effect on the future use of the ranch’s acreage” (“S.A. Ranch Development Still Due” 1970). This is confirmed by the fact that the territorial annexation extended past the immediate site of UTSA so as to control part of a projected “new town” still envisioned to be developed on the San Antonio Ranch (“Campus Mineral Rights”

1970; "Restriction-Free UTSA Deed Urged" 1970). The selection of the 600-acre site at the juncture of Interstate 10 and Farm Road 1604 to the distant northwest of the city surprised Mayor W. W. McAllister.¹ "Selection of this site caught me off guard," McAllister declared. "If I had been on the selection committee, someone would have had to show me why this location is better than Southwest Research site [a competing somewhat more central site bordering the Latino west side]. . . . We already have city services to that area" (Deal 1970).

Suspicious of covert machinations in the selection process, Precinct 1 County Commissioner Albert Peña, a proponent of the more central south side site, had predicted months prior to the final selection that the obscure Delevan property would be chosen. Peña stated, "If I had any money I would invest in land in the vicinity of Interstate 10 and Farm Road 1604. . . . In brief . . . the smart boys will be picking up their options. The Shivers-Connally-Bentsen machine takes care of their friends" ("Peña Says UTSA Forecast Came True" 1970). Concerns quickly surfaced over a mineral rights reservation attached to two-thirds of the Delevan property. Noting that the city will be responsible for supplying utilities to the distant site, Councilman Pete Torres stated that the city would be buying water from the mineral rights owners "in perpetuity." He added, "They'll make more money from the sale of water than they will from the land" ("Campus Mineral Rights" 1970). "A watchdog from Austin called for an investigation involving John Peace who as UT Regent was also an incorporator and director of a group called La Ventura Corporation, which was buying up land around the site which was finally selected" (Bernal 1995, p. 11).

The result of these events in the site selection process of UTSA is that the university, which Templeton projected would "put the Mexican-American into the mainstream of society" ("UTSA Emphasis to Be on Spanish-Speaking" 1970), does not geographically symbolize or facilitate this objective. This article reveals some of the contemporary impact of this geographical choice on the target non-Anglo and lower-income populations of San Antonio.

A Public University and the Undemocratic Costs of Private Access

The location of San Antonio's only public university within the metropolitan zone is not demographically neutral. The isolated location of UTSA in the lightly populated and largely rural periphery of the city has consequences that disproportionately impact students from non-Anglo and lower-income areas of the city. When looking strictly at Anglo/

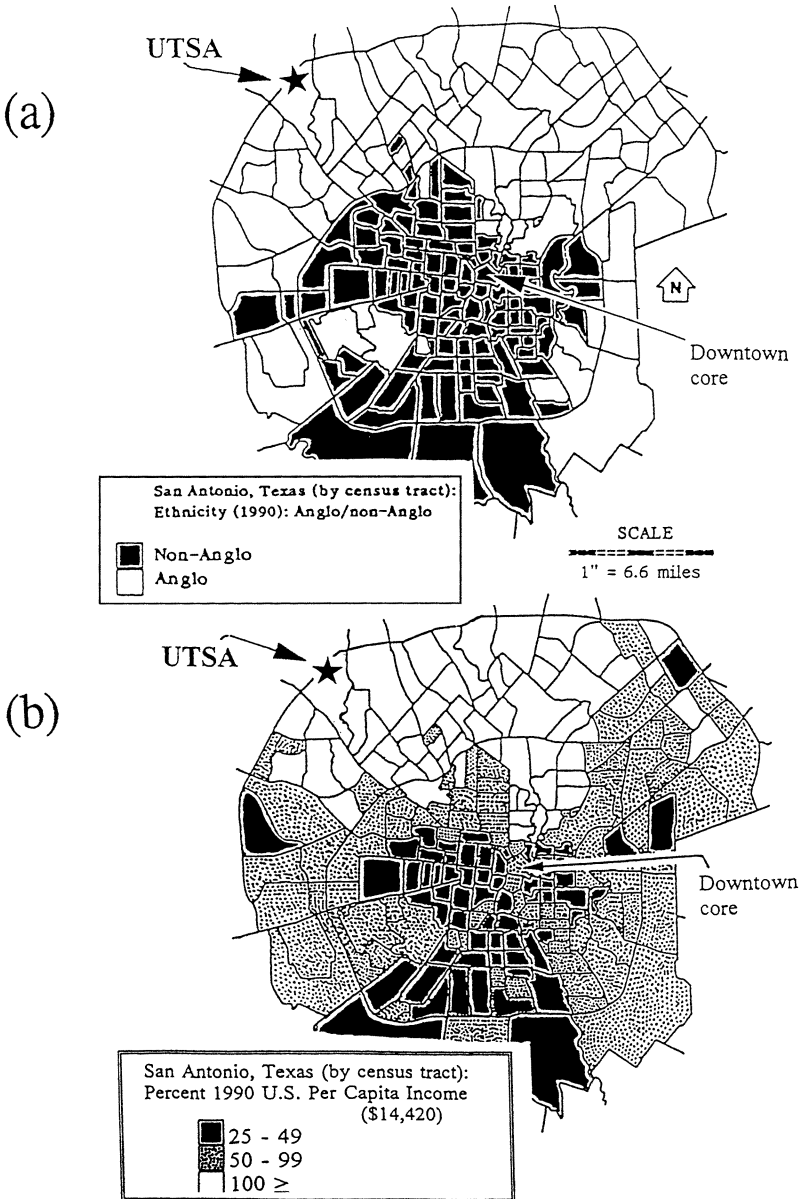


FIG. 3.—The proximity of UTSA to San Antonio's (a) Anglo/non-Anglo tracts and (b) economic class of census tracts.

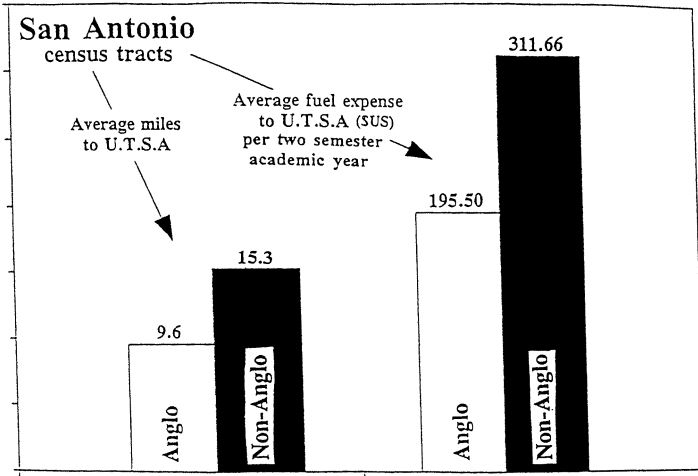
non-Anglo census tracts of the city, figure 3a shows that UTSA is definitively located within the Anglo-dominated portion of the city and distant from non-Anglo-dominated census tracts. The demographically biased location of the university is further amplified by figure 3b, which depicts economic class of San Antonio. Figure 3b reveals that the university's location is even more favorable to the highest-income census tracts located in the northwest periphery of the city. The result is a disproportionate burden in transportation costs for students traveling from non-Anglo and lower-income areas of the city.

Figure 4a reveals that the average distance (straight line) for students traveling from non-Anglo census tracts is 15.3 miles while it is 9.6 miles for Anglo-dominated census tracts. The result is that students from non-Anglo-dominated census tracts must travel a daily average of 11.4 miles farther than students traveling from Anglo-dominated census tracts. Therefore, students traveling from non-Anglo tracts must travel 1,710 additional miles each academic year (two semesters) over that traveled by students from Anglo tracts. The figure also depicts average gasoline costs for students traveling from non-Anglo tracts. The location of non-Anglo tracts results in a yearly fee \$116 higher than that paid by students traveling from Anglo-dominated tracts.² These are conservative estimations because they are based on a direct path to the university rather than the indirect path provided by surface transportation. In reality, the distance and cost for lower-income and non-Anglo areas of the city would be notably higher.

Figure 4b illustrates the distance and costs in gasoline transportation by class. Lower- and middle-income tracts average 14.5 miles and 15 miles from UTSA, respectively, as opposed to 6.5 miles for upper-income tracts. Thus, lower- and middle-income tracts must travel an average 16.5 miles farther every day to attend the university. The result is that the average annual costs in gasoline expense for middle- and lower-income tracts is \$295 and \$306, respectively, as opposed to \$132 for upper-income tracts. Thus, the location of the city's only public university results in approximately a \$168 fee on students traveling by car from middle- and lower-income tracts of San Antonio over students from upper-income tracts.

Given the additional costs of access to the university for students traveling by car from non-Anglo and lower-income tracts in San Antonio, public transportation might be considered a potential alternative mode of access. But the inequities resulting in automobile access to UTSA that handicap students from non-Anglo and lower-income areas of the city are reproduced in the public transportation system. Figure 5a depicts the service net of San Antonio's VIA public transportation. Out of a total of 100 lines, the map reveals that there are only three bus lines (dotted)

(a)



(b)

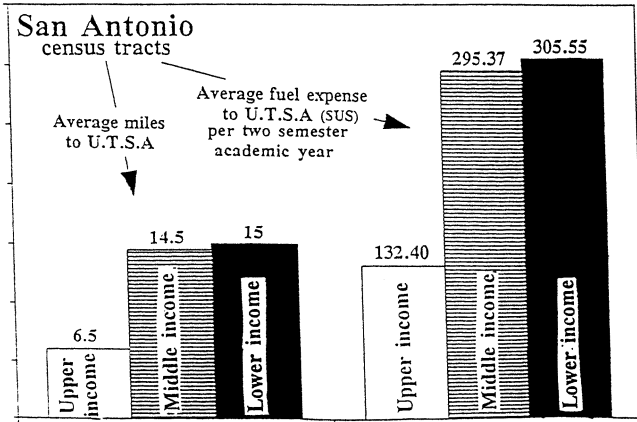


FIG. 4.—Average traveling distance and fuel costs to UTSA (a) by Anglo/non-Anglo dominant tracts and (b) by tracts of economic class.

that serve UTSA. The corresponding terminal points for two of these three lines are located in Anglo-dominated, upper-income areas relatively near the university. Students using these two lines pay the standard student fare of \$0.35 (an additional \$0.05 for a transfer). This leaves only one bus line serving the non-Anglo and lower-income tracts

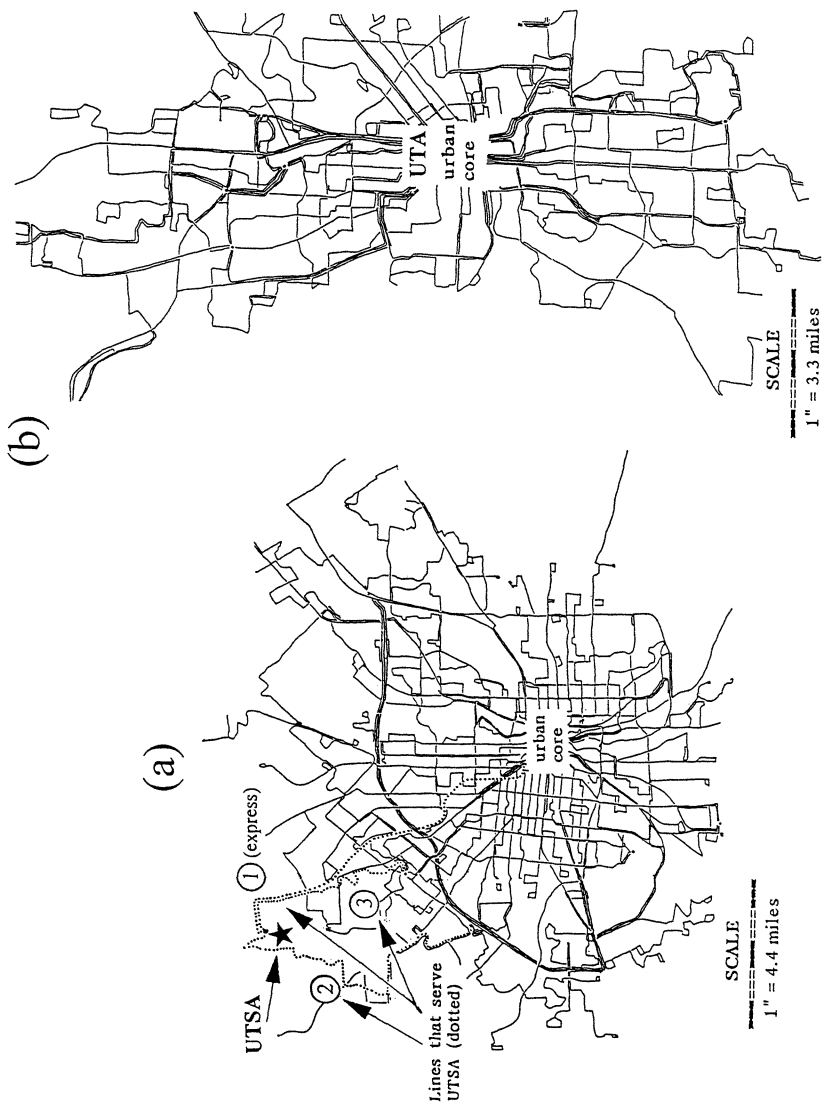


FIG. 5.—Public transportation net and service to local UT in (a) San Antonio and (b) Austin

of the remainder of the city. But the combination of the distant location of the university and the need for frequent and consistent service to accommodate class schedules mandates this line being designated an “express” line, making only one intermediate stop. Unlike other student fares, this sole line serving the urban core charges \$0.75 a ride (an additional \$0.05 for a transfer), representing a 114 percent increase in excess of student fares charged by the remaining two lines serving UTSA. On any given day, the express line constitutes approximately 62 percent of ridership to and from UTSA. Thus, students from the average non-Anglo and lower-income tracts opting to use public transportation will pay a sum of \$240 for public transportation over the academic year. The annual cost for a student using public transportation in the upper-income and Anglo tracts serviced by the remaining two UTSA lines is 50 percent (\$120) less than the cost for a student using the lines servicing lower-income and non-Anglo areas of the city.³ Thus, the demographic characteristics of UTSA’s location results in students traveling by public transportation from non-Anglo and lower-income tracts who were best served by the downtown express bus terminal being subject to a maximum additional cost of \$120 (100 percent increase) over students from upper-income and Anglo-dominated tracts. The generally humble economic status of express line commuters is evidenced by the fact that 61 percent of students who use the line earn less than \$10,000 a year, while 20 percent earn between \$10,001 and \$20,000 a year. The dependence of these commuters on this mode of access is indicated by 36 percent of express line students reporting that they could not make the trip if the bus line were unavailable (VIA Metropolitan Transit 1996*a*). An additional drawback of this line is that it does not run on weekends, isolating students from predominantly lower-income and non-Anglo areas from weekend access to university resources.⁴ To illustrate how this profile of transportation costs for different classes of students is not simply an endemic part of the university experience, a comparison/contrast with nearby Austin, possessing a centrally located public university, is useful.

Two Cities, Two Public Universities

Austin, Texas, and its primary public university provides an instructive contrast to San Antonio and its primary public university. Although UTSA and the University of Texas at Austin (UTA) are both members of the University of Texas system, it is their differences that provide cultural contrast. As seen in figure 2*b*, the spatial location of UTA is central to the greater urban zone of Austin, as opposed to that of San Antonio shown

in figure 2*a*. Although a mere 85 miles apart, as represented by figure 1, San Antonio and Austin are located in substantially different cultural and socioeconomic zones. Figure 1*b* indicates that San Antonio is predominantly non-Anglo (63.7 percent) while Austin is predominantly Anglo (61.7 percent). Although figure 1*a* indicates that both cities are located in the upper percentile of state per capita income, San Antonio has a 1990 per capita income of \$11,725 while Austin has a per capita income of \$14,285, 28.1 percent higher (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990). This difference is further aggravated by the fact that the majority Latino population in San Antonio has a per capita income of \$7,032 while the majority Anglo population in Austin has a per capita income of \$17,927. Additional data comparing the two institutions are revealed in table 1. Whereas both UTSA and UTA overwhelmingly draw their student bodies from within Texas (95.2 percent and 80.3 percent, respectively), UTSA's student body is overwhelmingly of local (county) origin (69.4 percent) while only a small fraction (16.8 percent) of UTA's student body is of local origin. While the percentage of both universities' student bodies that is Anglo is roughly comparable (UTSA, 54.2 percent; UTA, 65.6 percent), the economic resources available to each differ. The source population for UTSA (San Antonio metropolitan statistical area [MSA]) has a per capita income (\$11,865) that is 82 percent of the national average (\$14,420) while the source population of UTA, which is of local origin (Austin MSA), has a per capita income that is 101 percent (\$14,521) of the national standard.⁵ The contrasting social and economic differences between Austin and San Antonio provide a degree of insight into the relevance of race and class factors associated with the peripheral urban location of UTSA that result in additional costs in attending university for lower-income and non-Anglo students. It must be noted that tuition and fees at UTSA are lower than all other institutions in the University of Texas system. This might be interpreted as a factor that mitigates the additional costs of geography for students emanating from non-Anglo and lower-income tracts of the city. But low tuition and fees applied to all students at UTSA do not address subsequent inequities resulting from the university's location that penalizes students from lower-income and non-Anglo areas within the city—especially given the fact that 69.4 percent of all UTSA students are of local origin.⁶ In addition, it must be emphasized that the comparison of UTSA and UTA is based solely on the impact of each institution's urban location with respect to race and class factors, and not on any other criteria (e.g., curriculum, administration practices, admission policies). It is also important to note that Austin and San Antonio are two distinct locations whose primary universities developed in different demographic zones,

TABLE 1

Comparison of Various Demographic Characteristics of the University of Texas at San Antonio and the University of Texas at Austin

	Per Capita Income of Host City (\$US)	Anglo Population of Host City (%)	Anglo Population of Student Body (%)	Per Capita Income of Students of Local Origin (\$US) (Local MSA)	Student Body of Texas Origin (%)	Student Body of Local Origin (County) (%)	Total Student Body That Is Part-Time (%)	Student Population (1995)
UTSA	11,725	36.3	54.2	11,865	95.2	69.4	19.4	17,389
UTA	14,285	61.7	65.6	14,521	80.3	16.8	16.5	47,905

different eras, and with different missions. Undoubtedly, this would generate different patterns of development. Nevertheless, these different pedigrees, as the LULAC suit against the state of Texas has illustrated, are permeated with the dynamics of class and race treated in this article. However interesting, my purposes are limited to the effects of location on present populations, irrespective of how these institutions spatially and demographically arrived where they are. This is particularly important when noting that UTSA had the option to be like UTA with respect to being located downtown, but chose otherwise.

Unlike the geographic position of UTSA with respect to San Antonio's non-Anglo populations, figure 6*a* illustrates the central location of UTA to the non-Anglo-dominated census tracts of the greater Austin area located near the urban core. The more democratic location of the university within the greater urban area is duplicated with respect to class. In contrast to UTSA, figure 6*b* reveals that UTA is also centrally located with respect to class. Given the differing geographic size of greater San Antonio and Austin primarily resulting from the differing size of the population of each city's urbanized area (San Antonio: 1,128,966; Austin: 563,025), it is problematic to directly compare the costs that students traveling from different classes of census tracts in each city must pay to travel to a fixed point like a university. To do so would surely reveal that the costs of travel for the larger city are greater for students traveling from all classes of census tracts. But the differing costs of travel between areas within each city can be compared by proportion. Using distance and fuel costs for travel from the average distance Anglo-dominated census tract in each city as a standard (100 percent) to compare against non-Anglo tracts, figure 7*a* reveals that students traveling from non-Anglo tracts in San Antonio pay 159 percent of the costs paid by those from Anglo tracts. While students traveling from non-Anglo-dominated tracts in Austin pay less (84 percent) than that paid by students traveling from Anglo-dominated tracts.

When breaking down distance and fuel costs by class, the differences for students trying to reach the local UT in San Antonio and Austin are even more profound. Figure 7*b* reveals that students traveling from middle-income tracts in San Antonio pay an average 223 percent of the costs of those from the upper-income tracts, while students from lower-income tracts pay an average 230 percent of that of upper-income tracts. This contrasts with Austin where students from middle-income tracts pay an average 108 percent of the costs of the upper-income tracts, while students from lower-income tracts pay an average of only 50 percent of costs paid by upper-income tracts. Thus, the location of UTSA within its urban area substantially penalizes students from non-Anglo and lower-income

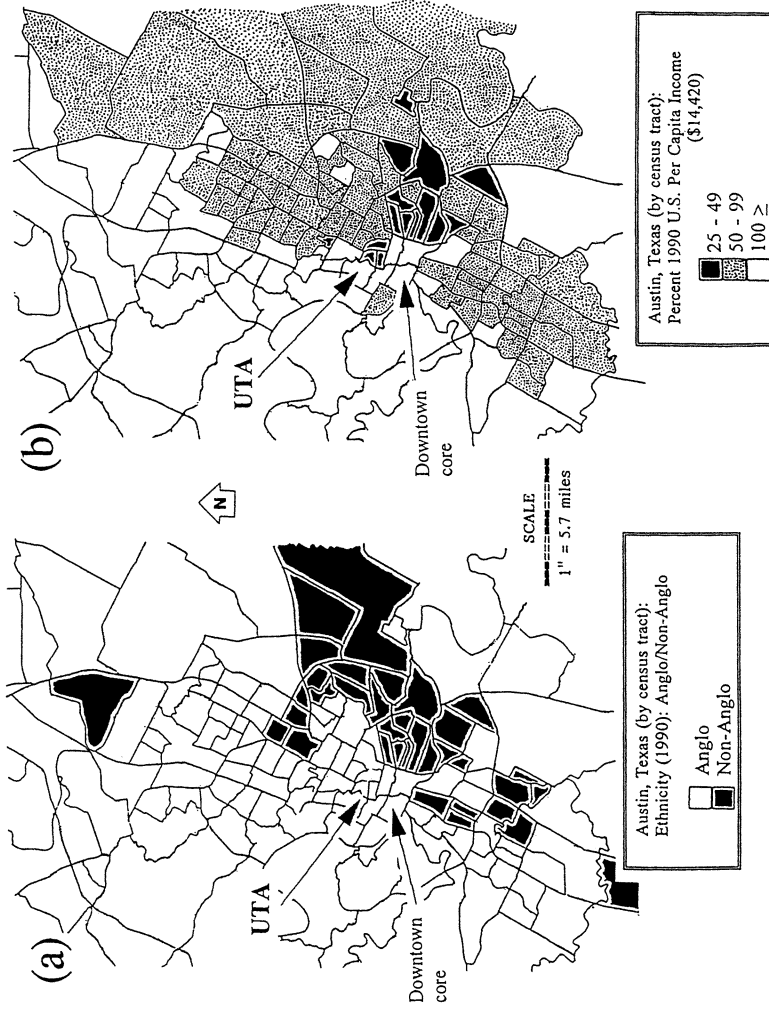


FIG. 6.—The proximity of UTA to Austin's (a) Anglo/non-Anglo tracts and (b) economic class of census tracts.

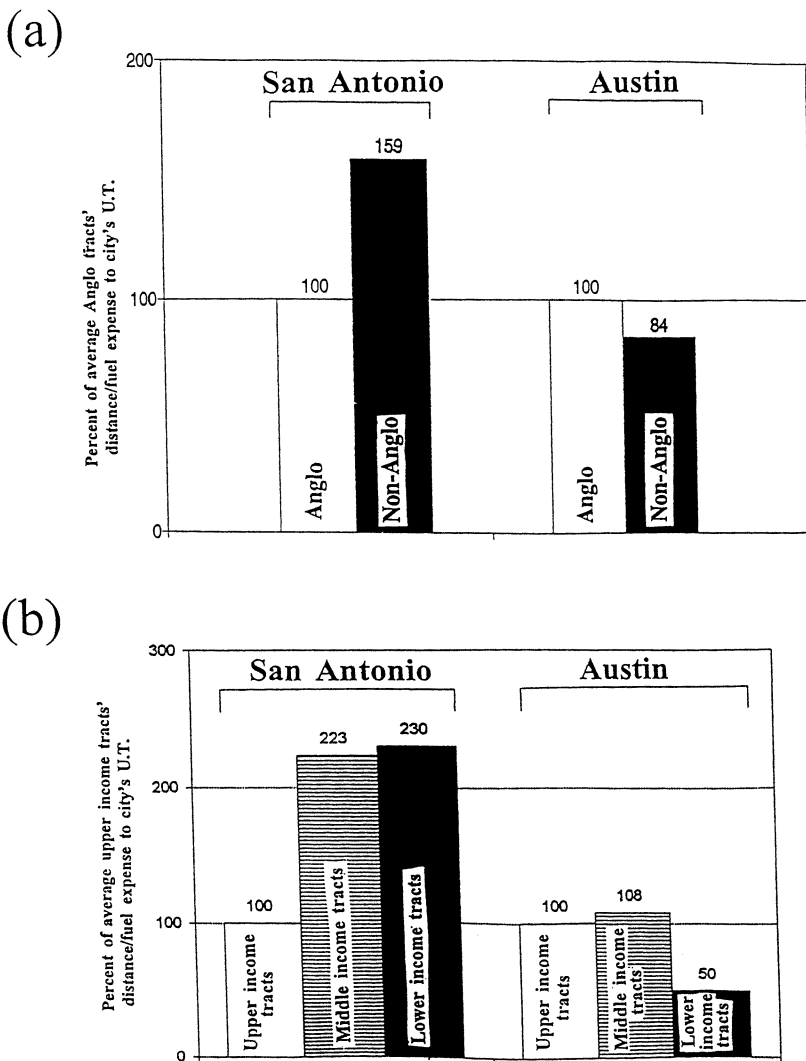


FIG. 7.—Percentage of (a) Anglo tracts' and (b) upper-income tracts' distance and fuel costs to local UT paid by non-Anglo and middle-/ lower-income tracts for San Antonio and Austin.

areas through travel time and fuel costs when compared with students from Anglo and upper-income areas of the city. This inequitable profile of economic costs contrasts with UTA, whose location within its urban area results in a notably more balanced distribution of costs for students traveling from different economic and racial zones of the city.

University Centrality and Public Transportation

The location of UTA, with respect to greater Austin, reveals the advantageous character of urban centrality as well as the metropolitan benefits accruing to a wealthier, predominantly Anglo city and university. Figure 5*b* depicts the central location of UTA within the Capitol Metro transportation net of Austin. The stark contrast to UTSA is clearly indicated as UTA represents part of the axis area for almost all bus lines. The educational utility of Austin's public transportation is further contrasted with San Antonio when considering that there are no ethnic or class differences in access to UTA by areal tracts within the city. Not only does UTA provide an extensive system of free shuttle service for students, faculty, staff, and their dependents, but all students may also use the metropolitan bus system free of charge.

The differences in centrality between UTSA and UTA, coupled with the existence of student fares in San Antonio, as well as the increased fares for non-Anglo and lower-income areas of San Antonio, where the strongest candidates to use public transportation live, result in a radical difference in ridership between the two cities. Austin's Capital Metro bus service handles approximately 50,000 different rides per weekday during the school year, of which students comprise about 50 percent of the ridership.⁷ San Antonio's VIA system provides 147,626 rides on the average weekday and the ridership to UTSA comprises less than 1 percent (VIA Metropolitan Transit 1996*a*, 1996*b*). The dramatically greater percentage of student ridership in Austin makes the public transportation system's free student fares more impressive, as opposed to the minuscule student ridership in San Antonio's public transportation system, which could more easily absorb a free student fare policy.

A result of the remote location of the public university in San Antonio is that students traveling from non-Anglo and lower-income tracts are disproportionately prompted to use automobile transport. Despite an automobile fuel expense of \$312 for students from the average non-Anglo tract and an average expense of \$295 and \$306 for middle- and lower-income tracts, respectively, the overall utility and flexibility of the automobile is more attractive than the humble savings that would occur if inflexible public transportation were utilized at an average cost of \$240. In addition, the notion that a problematic public transportation system can effectively accommodate the contemporary timetable of students of humble socioeconomic circumstance is ambitious—especially when considering approximately one in five students at UTSA is a part-time student with extraeducational responsibilities. Thus, the lower-

income students who must work to support their education are hindered both by economic costs of public transportation and by the logistical difficulties in merging these responsibilities with the public transportation system's limited access to UTSA.

One potential advantage of a university on the urban periphery with an abundance of space is the capacity to serve commuting students with free parking. In fact, proponents for the Shavano Ranch site during the UTSA selection process cited free parking as an advantage over downtown locations due to the ample space on the suburban fringe ("Land Offered to SA" 1968). Allowing the parking advantages inherent in the location on the urban periphery would seem to be a modest economic compensation especially to the target lower-income and Latino population for whom the remoteness of the university provides additional economic incentive to drive and who can least afford to do so. But the additional economic burden that the university's geography disproportionately places on non-Anglo and lower-income zones of the city is not recognized in student parking fees. Despite the rural nature of the urban periphery and the availability of large tracts of undeveloped land owned by the university, no space is provided for free student parking regardless of distance from the university core. A standard annual (two-semester) student fee of \$62 (1995–96) is charged to all students at UTSA irrespective of distinct disparities in costs of access ("UTSA Parking and Traffic Regulations" 1995). The geographic centrality of UTA in Austin coupled with the free student use of public transportation decreases student automobile use. But even in central Austin, where the premium on space far exceeds that of rural UTSA, at \$52 the general student parking fee is less than that of UTSA ("UTA Parking and Traffic" 1995). Only the negatives of UTSA's peripheral location are manifested in student transportation-related expenses and not the positives inherent in the site.

Geography and the Costs of University Franchise Food

The geographic isolation of a commercial enterprise serving a relatively isolated market does not provide the competitive commercial dynamics that maintains lower prices. The geographical isolation of UTSA manifests itself in an additional economic burden to its students through higher prices of on-campus franchise products. There are only a handful of commercial enterprises near UTSA, none of which are within convenient walking distance of students on campus. This leaves the private on-campus franchises sponsored by the university as options for students not wishing or unable to venture far from the university. Food services are the primary trade of these franchises. The fact that these franchises

are allowed to operate on public university property mandates the acquiescence of the university administration with respect to pricing policies.⁸ This leads to some interesting questions: Does the public service role of the university take precedence over market pricing dynamics of capitalism related to the deliberately chosen geographic isolation of the university? Or is the potential price augmentation related to the university's location allowed to take precedence over a student body of relatively humble socioeconomic status whose circumstances represent the rationale for the institution's creation?

Franchises such as Burger King and Subway at UTSA were compared with the prices of off-campus Burger Kings and Subways in San Antonio to see if any variation occurred. Figure 8 depicts the percentage increase of UTSA on-campus franchises compared to affiliated franchises off campus. The figure reveals that on-campus franchises average a 3 percent increase in pricing over identical off-campus franchises. The modest overall increase of on-campus prices is somewhat misleading considering that prices were averaged across the full spectrum of items offered on the menu. Items that were particularly popular among students were disproportionately higher in price than less popular items on the menu. For example, an on-campus Whopper costs \$1.99 compared to \$0.99 off campus, while a six-inch Hot Subway Melt costs \$3.99 on campus compared to \$3.09 off campus. Acknowledging these price variances from

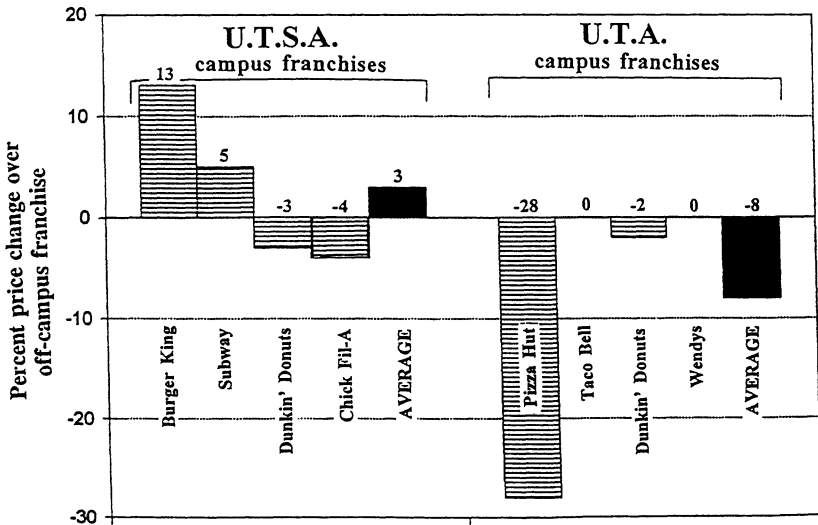


FIG. 8.—Percentage price change of on-campus franchises with respect to affiliated off-campus franchises for UTSA and UTA.

personal experience, students consistently exhibit spirited disapproval when the subject is raised (Heske 1996).

It is difficult to definitively attribute franchise price increases to the geographical isolation of the university. Inquiries as to the rationale for product prices are consistently met with confused resignation. But a comparison of UTSA and UTA franchise prices clearly suggests the role of geography in pricing. In contrast to UTSA, the urban centrality of UTA results in the university being immediately surrounded by numerous enterprises that can serve as an alternative to the offerings of campus franchises. The immediate geographical presence of competing enterprises has a dramatic effect on the profile of prices of UTA franchise operations. Figure 8 also depicts the percentage increase of UTA on-campus franchises compared to affiliated franchises off campus. The figure clearly reveals that unlike UTSA, in no instance does the price of items offered at UTA on-campus franchises exceed that of identical franchises off campus. All franchise items on campus were either the same price as or less expensive than the same items at off-campus franchises. Prices at UTA franchises average 8 percent cheaper than those at off campus franchises.

Geography and the Costs of Student Supplies

This section examines the relationship between prices of on-campus students' personal and educational supplies and the peripheral urban location of UTSA. The prices of UTSA student supplies were compared to prices of identical articles sold at the city's largest mass-market, off-campus retailer (HEB supermarkets).

Like UTA, UTSA has privatized its university bookstore operation. The university bookstore sells an array of merchandise ranging from education-related items such as classroom texts and binders, to aspirin, university logo apparel, and candy. The x-axis of figure 9 depicts an array of common student articles and supplies sold at UTSA's on-campus bookstore. The black bars of the graph reveal that there is an average price increase of 74 percent for items when compared with identical items off campus. A consequence of UTSA's isolated peripheral urban location is suggested when looking at equivalent indicators for the centrally located primary bookstore of UTA. Unlike the primary bookstore of UTSA, UTA's primary bookstore experiences substantial local competition. When comparing identical commodities of UTA's primary bookstore with Austin's largest mass-market, off-campus retailer (also HEB), the striped bars in figure 9 reveal that there is an average price increase

of 54 percent for bookstore commodities.⁹ As established, with respect to transportation costs and on-campus franchises, the geographical isolation of UTSA, in contrast to the central location of UTA, plays a significant role in generating higher student expenses. In this instance, the comparison with UTA suggests that UTSA's isolation results in a 20 percent increase (final pairing in fig. 9) in student supplies over prices that are charged at a centrally located university like UTA.

Profit and Principle

The LULAC suit addressing regional inequities of access to higher education at the state level in Texas revealed a geographic pattern that hindered the predominantly non-Anglo and lower-income regions of south Texas. Within the cultural and urban capital of this region, the location of UTSA at a point furthest from the neediest populations reveals an equivalent relationship of the statewide inequity. The urban placement of a university that penalizes the very population whose needs ostensibly prompted the institution's creation is contrary to its stated objectives. The levying of a substantially increased transportation fee (as well as associated cost hikes in various campus commodities) on students traveling from lower-income and non-Anglo tracts is particularly regressive when considering that the per capita income of Latinos in San Antonio's urban core is \$7,032, of which 30.8 percent are below the poverty line. This contrasts with the predominantly Anglo urban fringe having a per capita income of \$18,743, of which only 5.2 percent are below the poverty line.

The increase in on-campus auxiliary costs ranging from franchise prices and bookstore articles to parking fees, falls on all UTSA students regardless of class or race. But such additional costs weigh more heavily on a predominantly Latino population with a per capita income (\$14,420) that is only 49 percent of the national average (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990), and a Latino population whose inequitable circumstances represented much of the rationale for the university's creation. As demonstrated by Jones and Kauffman (1994) at the state level, these inequities in San Antonio represent institutional discrimination based on race and class. The primacy of suburban, upper-income interests disproportionately disposed toward Anglos over lower-income interests disproportionately represented by non-Anglos is a reflection of the traditional cultural hierarchy of a capitalist society. The higher auxiliary costs of attending university for lower-income and non-Anglo students is a direct consequence and continuation of the inequitable social

Student supplies/commodities

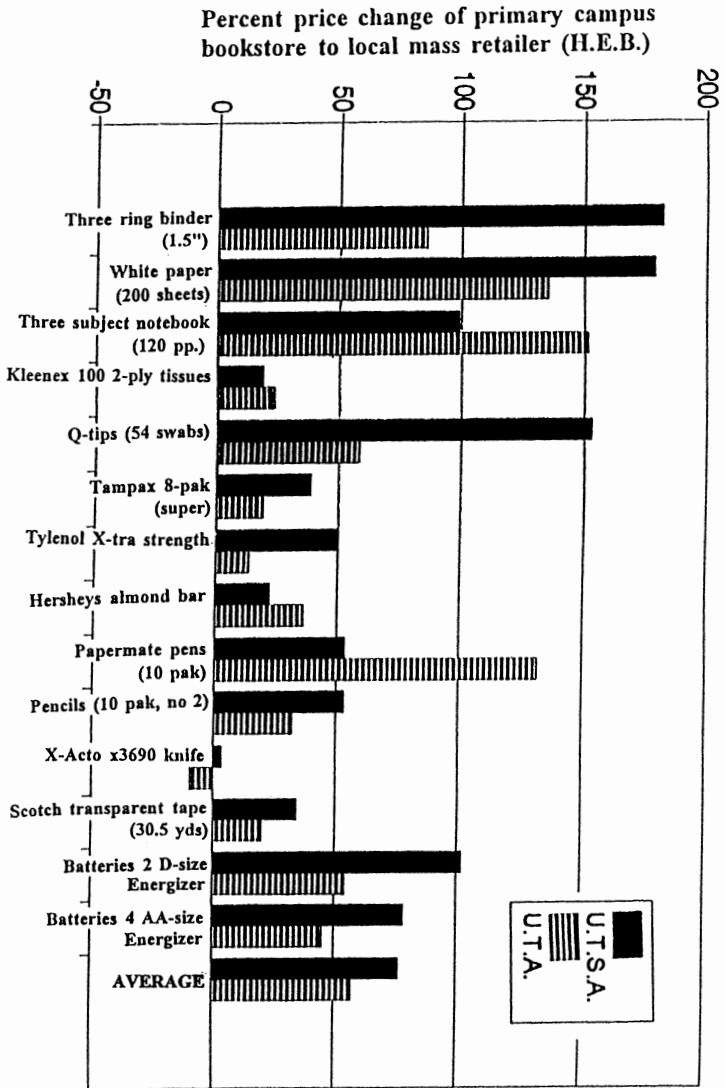


FIG. 9.—Percentage price change of an array of student articles and supplies at the primary university bookstore of U.T.S.A. and U.T.A. compared to the largest mass-market retailer for both cities (H.E.B.).

relations that redirected the site selection process away from the target populations and brought the university to its present location.

The University of Texas at San Antonio has constructed a new \$20 million campus on an 11-acre site that opened in July 1997. The geography of the new campus represents the rationale for its creation. As Jesse Zapata, associate provost for the new campus, states, "We're building our campus right in the heart of San Antonio."¹⁰ The principal objective of the new downtown campus is, as UTSA President Sam Kirkpatrick states, to provide "degree programs for historically underserved areas" ("UTSA Downtown" 1995, p. 3). This was the stated objective for the main campus's creation 27 years ago. High school seniors from the surrounding lower-income and Latino-dominated areas are being aggressively recruited to attend the new campus. But the new campus will not alleviate exorbitant transportation expenses disproportionately incurred by the newly retargeted lower-income and non-Anglo populations. In fact, the new campus has the strong potential to aggravate the problem. This is because the new campus is substantially smaller than the main campus and, although the downtown campus envisions offering full-degree programs immediately on opening, the fact remains, as stated in the strategic initiative ("UTSA Downtown" 1995, p. 11), that UTSA "is currently one of the most underfunded public universities in the state in terms of general revenue tax support per student. The citizens of San Antonio expect and deserve funding for their public university that will ensure quality programs, wherever these programs are offered."¹¹ Reservations about the downtown campus's capacity to offer full-degree programs are underlined by the fact that, upon the opening of the downtown campus in the summer of 1997, the state had not approved funding for staffing and instruction, nor had it approved funding for the third structure on the site.¹² Thus, the plan to offer equivalent full-degree programs at both campuses is seen by many as rather ambitious, since consistent and sufficient future funding is highly suspect. This is coupled with the reality that, at present, most departments are insufficiently large or flexible (with respect to class schedule) to offer two full programs at both campuses that can be completed in a conventional length of time in the foreseeable future. The lack of personnel funding for the new campus not only forecasts difficulties in maintaining the instructional capacity for a degree program, but the problem is compounded by a growing undercurrent among some professors at the main campus whose participation in downtown instruction is voluntary but who do not find the transportation costs, commuting inconvenience, and downtown environment attractive. Nor are significant resources of the main campus effectively duplicated at the downtown campus. The

lack of an equivalent library (the downtown campus library will be based on electronic access), athletic facilities, and technical research and instructional resources limits the independence of the downtown campus, as well as its capacity to offer a broad spectrum of full-degree programs. Thus, regular communication by students with the main campus will be essential. This problem is presently insinuated by Cypress Tower (a temporary downtown facility opened in 1994 that hosts a modest array of courses), where students infrequently forewarn professors of consistent late arrivals and early exits so as to travel between both campuses. The result is greater costs in fuel and greater logistical difficulties in the daily university experience that must be disproportionately borne by students from lower-income and non-Anglo areas of the city as they periodically add the commute back and forth between campuses to their itinerary.

Notes

1. The tract includes 400 acres donated by Mary Anne Smothers Bruni, 100 acres donated by Servtex Materials Co. of New Braunfels, and 100 acres donated by Charles A. Kuper of San Antonio. The debate over UTSA's location repeated the controversy around the establishment of the medical school 10 years earlier. The medical school had been established on San Antonio's northern periphery, much to the chagrin of many who wished a more central location. Advocates for a downtown location for the medical school argued that "medically indigent people would have better access to the school's teaching hospital if it were located in the downtown area" (Bernal 1995, p. 11). Ironically, the location of the medical school was presented as a justification for a nearby UTSA. But, in reality, there are few data to suggest a functional connection between the two institutions. This is clearly evident from the fact that the two complexes are not spatially proximate. They are approximately six miles apart. The mutual relevance (or lack thereof) of the two institutions is indicated by the fact that, at the time of this writing, only nine persons attend both UTSA and the UT Health Science Center in the medical center complex (Allied Health Registrar 1997).

2. Gas expense estimations are based on a student attending university five days a week for two semesters (150 days). The average miles per gallon for an automobile under city driving conditions in Texas is 16.2 (*World Almanac and Book of Facts* 1996). At the time of this writing the average price per gallon of regular unleaded gasoline in San Antonio is \$1.10.

3. These expenses are based on a student attending university five days a week for two semesters (150 days or 300 rides). Included in the cost of each ride is one transfer (additional \$0.05) to arrive at the terminal point for bus service. VIA offers a monthly pass for \$30, but there is no discount for students on this pass, thus making this option less economical than the daily rate.

4. Since the university's creation, the university has sporadically appealed to VIA bus service to provide more routes to UTSA. VIA has been resistant to the university's efforts, insisting that they must follow a strict mathematical formula

with respect to ridership primarily on the current downtown line. Presently, total ridership to the university averages between 600 and 800 different riders per month. VIA's position is that when ridership to the university reaches a certain standard, more routes will be provided. The university's position is that if more routes were provided, ridership would increase. The quandary has stifled the establishment of additional transportation service. It is unfortunate that the authorities who situated the city's public university on the distant periphery did not contract with public transportation to mitigate or subsidize the consequences of their choice on distant urban populations.

5. Since this article addresses the spatial access of "local" populations in census tract irrespective of population density, only the student population of local origin was utilized for both universities. Thus, per capita income was based on the local per capita income (metropolitan statistical area) for both universities. The use of metropolitan statistical areas best approximates the greater San Antonio and Austin areas shown in this article's urban maps. Nevertheless, unlike UTSA, a large percentage of UTA's student population is not of local origin—although 82 percent of UTA's student population does originate from within the state of Texas. But even if the scale of the state of Texas was used to determine per capita income for the source area of UTA's student body, the per capita income figures for either scale (Austin MSA or the state level) are not appreciably different (\$14,521 and \$14,629, respectively).

6. Tuition and fees at UTSA for an undergraduate in-state resident taking 15 hours for fall and spring semesters in 1995–96 are \$841. Equivalent tuition at other UT institutions follows: Austin (\$2,612), Arlington (\$1,748), El Paso (\$1,897), Pan American (\$1,568), Dallas (\$2,333), and Tyler (\$1,682).

7. Catherine Albee, public relations officer, Capital Metro Transit, interview by author, August 10, 1996.

8. The university's food service provider, ARAMARK, has a contract with UTSA that began August 1, 1992, and runs until July 31, 2004. The contract allows the corporation to request price increases when it can cite exceptional circumstances. According to the director of general services, ARAMARK has filed a request for a price increase based on the new higher minimum wage recently passed by the U.S. Congress (Heskew 1996).

9. HEB supermarkets represent a standardizing baseline to compare the differing prices for identical commodities at UTSA and UTA since the prices for identical commodities at HEB's in Austin and San Antonio are the same (August 15–23, 1996). The most critical bookstore commodity for students, textbooks, cannot effectively be measured by price variance since, outside of the immediate environment of the campus, there are no off-campus suppliers available to compete with local university bookstores. Thus, the role of geography on price is difficult to ascertain. In addition, directly comparing specific text prices between UTSA and UTA would be distorted by the much larger number of students at UTA (see table 1).

10. *Roadrunner* (University of Texas at San Antonio newsletter), October 7, 1996.

11. The UTSA expects to offer more than 300 courses to as many as 3,000 students when the new campus opens in 1997. At the present time, Cypress Tower, a temporary downtown facility, offers 117 courses to 1,411 full- and part-time students (*Roadrunner*, October 7, 1996).

12. The university requested \$11 million for staffing and instruction at the downtown campus. In keeping with the state's expectations, the new campus

opened in the summer of 1997. But when the downtown campus opened on schedule the state had not approved funding, forcing the downtown campus to open using reserves. It would not be until the beginning of fall semester, 1997, that the state approved the reduced sum of \$4,189,349 for staffing and instruction. At present, funding for the third structure remains unapproved.

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