Race Matters: The Relation between Race and General Campus Climate

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Race Matters: The Relation Between Race and General Campus Climate

LANDON D. REID
Colgate University

PHANIKIRAN RADHAKRISHNAN
Catalyst, Inc.

This study examined students' perceptions of racial and academic climate as possible mediators of racial differences in the perception of the university's general campus climate (GCC). African American (n = 182), Latino (n = 212), Asian American (n = 358), and White (n = 671) students evaluated their perception of racial, academic, and general campus climates. As expected, racial minority students, particularly African Americans, perceived more negative general campus, racial, and academic climates than White students. Somewhat contrary to prediction, results indicated that racial differences in the perception of GCC were more closely related to perceptions of the academic than racial climate for members of all racial groups at all educational levels. Students' academic and racial experiences were the best predictors of their perception of GCC.

• race • racial minority students • general campus climate • racial climate • academic climate

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• *Landon D. Reid, Department of Psychology, Colgate University; Phanikiran Radhakrishnan, Catalyst, Inc., Toronto, Ontario, Canada.*

Phanikiran Radhakrishnan is now with Terra Cognita Consulting, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Landon D. Reid, Department of Psychology, Colgate University, 13 Oak Drive, Hamilton, New York 13346. E-mail: lreid@mail.colgate.edu

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> From an observer's standpoint, the situations of . . . a Black student and a White student in any classroom are essentially the same. . . . Is it possible, then, that they could still experience the classroom differently, so differently in fact as to significantly affect their performance and achievement there?
>
> —Claude Steele (1997, p. 613)

The seemingly rhetorical question articulated by Claude Steele (1997) echoes one of the timeless gospels of race for students of color: Different individuals can—and do—experience the same school in dramatically different ways on the basis of race. Whether students are concerned about hate crimes on campus (Craig, 1999; Craig & Waldo, 1996; Morse, 1995) or feelings that university affirmative action policies disadvantage Whites (D'Souza, 1992), race matters (for an exposition, see West, 1994). Contemporary students of all races have reasons to perceive their university climates unfavorably. For racial minority students, these negative perceptions of the university environment or negative perceptions of university climate have been associated with aversive outcomes such as poor academic performance (Chang, 1999; Pfeifer & Schneider, 1974) and lower self-esteem (R. James, 1998). The question of *whether* race matters to students in university settings has been supplanted by the question of *how* race matters. The aim of the present study is to propose students' perceptions of racial and academic climate as mediators of the relation between students' race and their overall perception of general campus climate (GCC).

Climate

The term *climate* has long been used to describe how individuals perceive their environments (Lewin, Lippet, & White, 1939). In the present study, climate is defined by adapting Naylor, Pritchard, and Ilgen's (1980) conception of perceived climate. The perception of an organization's climate is the result of a judgment process aggregating the evaluations an individual makes about his or her environment at different levels of observation. For example, a student could describe his or her campus as "hostile" or "friendly." This global evaluation is the result of a number of specific observations such as hearing an instructor use a racist example in class or seeing that people on the campus greet fellow students as they pass by (Naylor et al., 1980; Reichers & Schneider, 1990). The concept of climate explains how environmental variables (i.e., observations of the environment) can affect psychological ones (i.e., perceptions of climate).

Campus Climate

General Campus Climate

Consistently, prior studies found that students of color perceive GCC more negatively than their White peers do (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Johnson-Durgans, 1994; Nettles & Johnson, 1987; Patterson, Sedlacek, & Perry, 1984). Compared with other students, African American (Davis, 1995; Fisher & Hartmann, 1995) and Latino (Hurtado & Carter, 1997) students reported the most negative perceptions of campus climate. Whereas the finding of racial differences in the perception of GCC has been well established by previous research, less well known are the factors that contributed to those racial differences. The present research examined students' perceptions of racial and academic climate as possible mediators of their perception of the GCC.

Racial Climate

Perhaps the most intuitively appealing explanation for racial differences in the perception of GCC is the existence of racial climate viewed as noxious by racial minority students. Racial climate is composed of students' observations of their experience as racial minorities on campus. These include everything from students' experiences with racism to the belief that the university is not

doing enough to support diversity. Prior research strongly supports the idea that racial minority students tend to perceive racial climate more negatively than their White peers (Pfeifer & Schneider, 1974). For example, they report perceiving more racial discrimination and prejudice on campus than White students (Nettles, 1990; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). The experience of more racism on campus may have contributed to the finding that racial minority students also perceived their universities as less committed to policies and practices that fostered racial diversity (Hurtado, 1992; for a different perspective, see Cuyjet, 1986).

Academic Climate

An alternative view is that different perceptions of GCC are related to different perceptions of the academic climate. Academic climate is composed of students' observations about their academic experience, such as treatment by instructors, being perceived as serious students by peers, and receiving academic mentoring. In one study, Graham and Gisi (2000) found that the instructional or academic climate was the best predictor of students' overall satisfaction with their institution. Prior research suggests that racial minority students are more likely to report a negative academic climate than White students (Allen, 1985; Allen & Haniff, 1991; Hurtado, 1994; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Nettles, Thoeny, & Gosman, 1986). Different perceptions of academic climate may be related to different perceptions of GCC because the academic climate is directly related to the purpose of attending university.

The Present Study

The present research examined perceptions of racial and academic climate as mediators of the perception of GCC in a racially diverse sample of university students. Using this approach, we distinguished between the effects of a student's race and the nonracial factors encountered by all students.

The present study built on previous work in a number of substantive ways. First, although much of the prior research documented racial differences in the perception of climate, few studies explicitly focused on explanatory factors other than race. Second, this study documented the perceptions of African American, Latino, Asian American, and White students, thereby replicating and extending the findings of previous research by examining multiple racial groups. Third, relatively few prior studies have differentiated between students' perceptions of the general campus, racial, and academic climates. Finally, little previous research has examined perceptions of climate for both undergraduate and graduate students. The inclusion of both of these student populations provided a more thorough understanding of campus climate.

A number of predictions emerged from prior research. First, members of racial minority groups at all levels were predicted to report more negative perceptions of every type of climate. Although no clear predictions emerged regarding the ordering of these groups, it was likely that African American and Latino students would report the most negative perceptions of climate compared with Asian American and then White students. Assuming racial differences in the perception of climate, perceptions of the racial climate were thought to better predict perceptions of GCC for racial minority undergraduate students, whereas perceptions of the academic climate were thought to better predict perceptions of GCC for White undergraduates. Academic climate was hypothesized as a better predictor of GCC for graduate students of all races, because of the centrality of academic concerns to the lives of graduate students. These predictions were tested in the present research.

Method

Participants

Participants in the present study were 920 undergraduate (mean age = 20.5 years, *SD* = 2.3) and 503 graduate (mean age = 27.8 years, *SD* = 5.9) students at a large, midwest-

ern state university. Undergraduate participants were 113 African American (68 women, 45 men), 142 Latino (82 women, 60 men), 239 Asian American (134 women, 105 men), and 426 White (228 women, 196 men) students. Graduate participants were 69 African American (31 women, 38 men), 70 Latino (36 women, 34 men), 119 Asian American (70 women, 49 men), and 245 White (126 women, 119 men) students.

Participants were chosen as part of a survey of campus climate sponsored by the university. White students were randomly selected from the university population by means of records of registered students obtained from the Office of Admissions and Records. Racial minority students were sampled using registration lists provided by the Office of Minority Student Affairs. Random sampling of minority students would have restricted the likelihood of obtaining sufficient data from minority students. As a result, racial minority survey participants were oversampled in relation to their numbers in the student population. For example, the racial composition of the survey sample compared with that of the university population was 13.0% versus 6.5% African American, 14.7% versus 4.7% Latino, 24.8% versus 11.1% Asian American, and 47.4% versus 77.5% White. The final sample provided an accurate cross-section of the minority student population across disciplines and educational levels.

Procedure

Participants were mailed the survey containing the scales of interest during the second semester of the academic year. A cover letter from the university's provost informed participants that they were chosen to provide their impressions of various aspects of the campus climate and that the results would help to improve students' educational experiences at the university. The mailing of questionnaires during the second semester ensured that first-year students were able to generate valid impressions of the university. To maximize the response rate, we sent a follow-up postcard to all participants. Two weeks later, a second survey was mailed to nonrespondents. Survey response rates, by percentage, for undergraduate/graduate students were African American (28%/31%), Latino (32%/50%), Asian American (54%/55%), and White (48%/27%). These rates were commensurate with those of prior research (Hurtado, 1992; Nettles et al., 1986).

Measures

Climate was assessed by a number of subscales that measured racial and academic climate. Items were developed and selected for inclusion in the present study that reflected aspects of either racial or academic climate examined in, or proposed by, prior research (e.g., Patterson et al., 1984; Pfeifer & Schneider, 1974). From these two item pools, subscales were created using principal-components analysis with varimax rotation. Items were retained with loadings greater than .45. Subscale items and component loadings for the general campus and academic climate subscales for undergraduates and graduates are presented in Appendixes A and B, respectively. Subscales for GCC and academic climate were developed separately for undergraduate and graduate students to account for differences in their university experience. Scale content, though, was similar across both groups. Items on the racial climate scale were identical for undergraduate and graduate students. Participants indicated their agreement with each item by using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = *strong agreement* and 7 = *strong disagreement.* Items were recoded so that higher numbers indicated more positive perceptions of climate. Intercorrelations of the subscales for undergraduate and graduate students are presented in Table 1.

GENERAL CAMPUS CLIMATE. The GCC subscale for undergraduates ($\alpha = .72$) consisted of four items that assessed students' overall evaluation of the university (see Appendix A). The GCC scale for graduate students ($\alpha = .79$) was similar to the undergraduate scale with the addition of items pertaining to

TABLE 1 Intercorrelations Between Climate Subscales for Undergraduate and Graduate Students

Variable	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
Undergraduate students (n = 920)						
1. General campus climate	—					
2. Instructor	.53	—				
3. Seriousness	.47	.55	—			
4. Respect	.38	.46	.41	—		
5. Racial experience	.40	.29	.28	.29	—	
6. University perceptions	.24	.19	.19	.17	.27	—
Graduate students (n = 503)						
1. General campus climate	—					
2. Mentoring	.68	—				
3. Self-confidence	.56	.55	—			
4. Seriousness	.59	.47	.56	—		
5. Racial experience	.39	.22	.18	.33	—	
6. University perceptions	.36	.23	.12	.22	.39	—

Note. All correlations significant, $p < .01$.

fair treatment and faculty sensitivity (see Appendix B).

ACADEMIC CLIMATE. Several subscales were used to measure academic climate for undergraduates. Each subscale reflected constructs previously proposed elsewhere (e.g., Allen, 1985; Hurtado, 1994; Nettles et al., 1986). The first subscale measured the impact of instructors on the academic climate (α = .75). The second subscale pertained to students' perceptions of whether they were seen as serious students by instructors and peers (α = .75). The last subscale pertained to undergraduates students' perceptions of social and intellectual respect (α = .68).

Academic climate for graduate students was also measured by three subscales. The first reflected the centrality of mentoring and advising in the life of a graduate student (α = .90). The second subscale described students' perceptions of their academic self-confidence (α = .72). The last subscale was concerned with the extent that graduate students felt they were perceived as serious students (α = .70).

RACIAL CLIMATE. Racial climate was assessed by two subscales that reflected constructs proposed in prior research, such as experiences with racism (e.g., Nettles, 1990; Nora & Cabrera, 1996) and students' views about their university's commitment to diversity (e.g., Hurtado, 1992). These subscales were Racial Experiences (α = .70 undergraduate, α = .72 graduate) and University Perceptions (α = .76 undergraduate, α = .79 graduate). Items for each subscale are shown in Appendix C. The Racial Experiences subscale reflected the negative interracial experiences encountered by students, such as hearing racist remarks used by instructors or other students. The University Perceptions subscale reflected students' beliefs that the university administration creates and maintains a climate supportive of diversity.

Results

Racial Differences in the Perception of Climate

Racial minority students, most notably African Americans and Latinos, were predicted to report more negative perceptions of general campus, racial, and academic climate than White students. All differences were tested using one-way analysis of variance.

GENERAL CAMPUS CLIMATE. For undergraduates, students of color perceived a more negative GCC than White students (see Table 2). Post hoc tests suggested no significant differences among African American, Latino, and Asian American students. The perceptions of these students did, however, differ from White students. For graduate students, all groups reported similar perceptions of the general climate except African American students, who reported more negative perceptions of the GCC than all of the other groups (see Table 2).

RACIAL CLIMATE. Undergraduate perceptions of racial climate varied by subscale, but as predicted, students of color reported more negative experiences with racism than White students. As shown in Table 2, African American students reported more negative

TABLE 2 Mean Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate by Undergraduate and Graduate Student Race

Type of climate	*African American*	*Latino/Latina*	*Asian American*	*White*	F^a
		Undergraduate students			
General campus	4.39_a (1.27)	4.50_a (1.33)	4.57_a (1.12)	5.13_b (1.06)	23.04
Academic					
Instructor	4.56_a (1.08)	4.72_{ab} (1.02)	4.52_a (0.93)	4.85_b (1.00)	6.47
Seriousness	4.60_a (1.07)	4.63_a (1.09)	4.66_a (0.97)	5.16_b (0.93)	20.85
Respect	4.69_a (0.92)	4.65_a (1.08)	4.66_a (0.89)	4.94_b (0.95)	6.55
Racial					
Experiences	3.41_a (1.02)	4.03_b (1.15)	4.10_b (0.97)	4.48_c (1.01)	34.69
University	4.51_{ab} (0.95)	4.55_{ab} (0.96)	4.37_a (0.86)	4.64_b (0.79)	5.34
		Graduate students			
General campus	4.24_a (1.19)	4.97_b (1.21)	4.96_b (0.96)	4.92_b (1.13)	7.91
Academic					
Mentoring	4.27_a (1.44)	5.02_b (1.23)	4.93_b (1.02)	4.84_b (1.24)	5.60
Seriousness	5.20_a (1.07)	5.75_c (0.77)	5.36_{ab} (0.85)	5.48_b (0.96)	4.49
Self-confidence	4.76_a (1.51)	4.69_a (1.26)	4.67_a (1.19)	4.70_a (1.24)	0.07†
Racial					
Experiences	3.39_a (1.30)	4.52_b (1.26)	4.42_b (1.17)	4.85_c (0.99)	30.63
University	4.03_a (1.00)	4.57_b (1.18)	4.42_b (0.86)	4.56_b (0.83)	6.47

Note. Standard deviations are in parentheses. Higher numbers indicate more positive perceptions of climate. Values with different subscripts are significantly different, $p < .01$.

[a]All Fs significant at $p < .01$ except † = *ns*. For undergraduate students, dfs = 3, 919; for graduate students, dfs = 3, 502.

racial experiences than Latino and Asian American students, who reported more negative experiences than White students. Students' perceptions of the university's role in supporting a positive racial climate, though, showed a different pattern. Here, Asian American students perceived that the university could do a better job supporting racial diversity than White students. Contrary to hypotheses, African and Asian American students' perceptions did not differ from those of White students.

The racial experiences of graduate students were similar to those of undergraduates. African American students reported experiencing more negative racial experiences than Latino and Asian students who, in turn, reported more negative experiences than White graduate students (see Table 2). Similarly, African Americans reported more negative perceptions of the university's role in maintaining a positive racial climate than did members of all other groups.

ACADEMIC CLIMATE. Generally, undergraduates' perceptions of academic climate followed a pattern in which the perceptions of racial minority students differed from White students but not from each other. As described in Table 2, post hoc tests suggested no differences among African American, Latino, and Asian American students for the Seriousness and Respect subscales. These groups did, though, differ significantly from White students. The pattern for the Instructor subscale was similar, with the exception that Latino students' perceptions were not significantly different from those of White students.

For graduate students, the general pattern of results shown in Table 2 suggests that African American students reported more negative perceptions of academic climate than members of other groups. This was true for the Mentoring and Seriousness subscales. Racial group differences were not found for students' perceptions of self-

confidence. For the Seriousness subscale, both African American and Asian American graduate students reported feeling they were taken less seriously as students.

Racial and Academic Climate as Predictors of General Campus Climate

Different hypotheses were made regarding the effects of racial versus academic climate as predictors of GCC. For racial minority undergraduates, racial climate was hypothesized to be a better predictor of GCC than academic climate. For White undergraduates, academic climate was hypothesized as the better predictor of GCC. For graduate students of all races, academic climate was hypothesized as the best predictor of GCC. To test these hypotheses, we entered the subscales of academic and racial climate alone in an ordinary least squares regression to predict GCC. Regression analyses were performed separately for the members of each undergraduate and graduate racial group.

Findings reported in Table 3 demonstrate partial support of the predictions made for undergraduates. For the members of all racial groups, perceptions of academic climate were better predictors of GCC than perceptions of racial climate. This general result was qualified by the finding that for African American and Latino undergraduates, GCC was also predicted by racial climate, albeit to a lesser extent. For Asian American students, perceptions of academic and racial climate predicted less variance in GCC than for other racial minority students. For White students, though, the prediction was in the expected direction. Perceptions of academic climate explained variance in GCC, whereas perceptions of racial climate explained almost none. More specifically, students' perceptions of treatment by their instructors were the best academic predictors of GCC for all groups except Latinos, for whom being viewed as serious students was the best. For racial climate, racial experiences were the best predictors of GCC for all racial groups.

TABLE 3 Undergraduate Student Perceptions of Academic and Racial Climate as Predictors of General Campus Climate by Racial Group

Race and subscale	β	R^2_A	$R^2_{difference}$
African American			
Instructor	.47**	.43	.09
Serious	.17*		
Respect	.14		
Racial Experience	.46**	.34	
University Perceptions	.24**		
Latino/Latina			
Instructor	.28**	.45	.16
Serious	.31**		
Respect	.17*		
Racial Experience	.46**	.29	
University Perceptions	.12		
Asian American			
Instructor	.34**	.21	.06
Serious	.10		
Respect	.12		
Racial Experience	.35**	.15	
University Perceptions	.09		
White			
Instructor	.39**	.31	.26
Serious	.20**		
Respect	.07		
Racial Experience	.20**	.05	
University Perceptions	.08		

Note. R^2_A indicates the variance accounted for by regression models where either academic or racial climate is entered alone as predictor. $R^2_{difference}$ indicates difference in variance accounted for between academic and racial climate.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Results presented in Table 4 support the hypothesis that perceptions of academic climate were the best predictors of GCC for graduate students. For the members of all racial groups, perceptions of academic climate explained more than half of the variance in GCC. Perceptions of racial climate did, however, predict substantial variance in GCC, particularly for racial minority graduate students. Specifically, graduate students' perceptions of mentoring were the best predictors of GCC except for Latinos, for whom self-confidence was most important. The members of the racial groups did, however, vary regarding the particular subscales of racial climate that best predicted GCC. For Af-

TABLE 4 Graduate Student Perceptions of Academic and Racial Climate as Predictors of General Campus Climate by Racial Group

Race and subscale	β	R^2_A	$R^2_{difference}$
African American			
Mentoring	.53**	.61	.37
Self-confidence	–.05		
Serious	.38**		
Racial Experience	.21	.24	
University Perceptions	.37**		
Latino/Latina			
Mentoring	.28**	.56	.23
Self-confidence	.36**		
Serious	.22		
Racial Experience	.33**	.33	
University Perceptions	.31*		
Asian American			
Mentoring	.46**	.54	.36
Self-confidence	.33**		
Serious	.12		
Racial Experience	.31**	.18	
University Perceptions	.26**		
White			
Mentoring	.42**	.58	.47
Self-confidence	.22**		
Serious	.27**		
Racial Experience	.25**	.11	
University Perceptions	.15*		

Note. R^2_A indicates the variance accounted for by regression models where either academic or racial climate is entered alone as predictor. $R^2_{difference}$ indicates difference in variance accounted for between academic and racial climate.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

rican American graduate students, perceptions of the university's commitment to racial diversity were most important, whereas racial experiences were most important for Asian American and White graduate students. For Latino graduate students, both racial climate subscales were equally useful predictors of their perception of the GCC.

To compare their relative importance as predictors of GCC, we entered student race, along with aggregate measures of racial and academic climate, together in an ordinary least squares regression. For undergraduates (R^2 = .40), although participant race (β = .11, $p < .01$) significantly predicted GCC, it was a less effective predictor than perceptions of the racial climate (β = .20, $p < .01$) and a much less effective predictor than perceptions of the academic climate (β = .48, $p < .01$). A similar pattern emerged for graduate students (R^2 = .60). When entered with perceptions of racial climate (β = .24, $p < .01$) and perceptions of academic climate (β = .66, $p < .01$), student race (β = .03, *ns*) no longer predicted GCC at all.

Discussion

The results of this study indicated that racial differences in the perception of GCC are more likely mediated by perceptions of the academic as opposed to racial climate. Replicating previous findings, results of this study showed that racial minority students evaluated the general campus, racial, and academic climates of their university more negatively than did White students. Counter to prediction, academic climate better predicted perceptions of GCC than racial climate for the members of all undergraduate and graduate racial groups. Further, follow-up analyses suggested that students' perceptions of the academic and racial climates served as better indicators of a student's university experience than their race. Findings are discussed in relation to climate as a construct that explains how the fact of a student's race becomes a factor in his or her experience.

Race Matters

The results of the present research support the contention by West (1994) that race continues to matter on college campuses in a number of unexpected ways. The perception of academic climate was a better predictor of GCC than either a student's perception of the racial climate or the student's race. Race mattered most as a proxy for negative—ostensibly nonracial—academic experiences. This was counterintuitive given previous findings that a student's race was

one of the most important determinants of his or her university experience (Johnson-Durgans, 1994; Nettles & Johnson, 1987; Patterson et al., 1984). It was, therefore, unexpected to find that for racial minority students, overall satisfaction with the university was most related to academic concerns. This, however, did replicate the prior finding by Graham and Gisi (2000) that academic climate was a good predictor of students' institutional satisfaction. Different perceptions of the academic climate may explain the results of DeSousa and Kuh (1996), who found that African American students at historically Black institutions were more academically engaged than same-race peers at historically White institutions. These different levels of academic engagement were then associated with greater educational gains for students in the more academically hospitable climate at historically Black institutions.

Celebration of the waning importance of race on campus is, however, premature. In all areas, racial minority students perceived their university more negatively compared with their White peers. More specifically, the invidious effects of race were mediated by ostensibly nonracial academic concerns. Among other things, this indicated that racial minority students felt like they were not being taken seriously as students, did not receive the same level of advising or mentoring, and were less self-confident than White students. In effect, this suggested that how students were treated as racial minorities was less important than how students were treated as students.

The mere fact of race was necessary, but insufficient, as an explanation for racial differences. Results further indicated that a student's race explained less about the student's view of the university than his or her experiences. For example, students' experiences with racism, instructors, and advisors were among the best predictors of their perception of the GCC. The present findings attest to the importance of individual experience as a determinant of the ways students view their university environment. Further, the importance of experience refutes some popular claims (e.g., D'Souza, 1991) that some oversensitive racial minorities exaggerate claims about the existence of institutional racism. As a result, they tend to attribute their personal and academic shortcomings to the institution and not to their own behavior. Although racial minority students did not believe that their university was doing enough to support diversity, this was considerably less important as a predictor of GCC than their actual experiences with racism on campus.

The results of the present study challenge researchers to avoid simplistic racial categorizations. Somewhat different patterns emerged regarding the relative strength of the various predictors of GCC across racial groups. For example, although instructor/mentoring and racial experience were important predictors for all racial groups, the contributions of other factors varied. The addition of student status (undergraduate and graduate) to the analysis demonstrated how the effects of race may change further with age. Undergraduate racial minority students reported similar perceptions of climate, differing only from White students. For graduate students, the perceptions of climate were similar for members of all racial groups except for African American students.

Climate

By partitioning the effects of academic and racial climate from students' impressions of the general climate, this study was able to specify some of the mechanisms that make race such a salient aspect of the university experience. Institutions can engender and maintain a number of different climates (for reviews, see Field & Abelson, 1982; L. R. James & Jones, 1974; Reichers & Schneider, 1990). They can, for example, promote types of climate with respect to certain things or a subject referent climate (Schneider, 1975). Just as climates can exist for something, climates can also be conceptualized as existing for someone. Identity

referent climate describes how perceptions of climate can be shaped by individuals' identities as members of certain groups (Howe, 1977).

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The first limitation of the present study was the cross-sectional experimental design. Because of this design, little is known about how the university's climate affects students over time. Future research should examine how students' perceptions of climate develop longitudinally. This would further allow for the assessment of any administrative efforts to improve the institutional climate. A second limitation was the absence of academic and social outcome measures. For example, are students' perceptions of the different forms of climate (i.e., academic, racial, and general campus) related in similar ways to academic performance? Moreover, it remains unclear how perceiving a negative climate might affect other outcomes such as deciding to pursue graduate or professional school. Similarly, different perceptions of climate might also be related to social outcomes such as involvement in extracurricular activities. Future research should therefore clarify the specific effects of each type of climate on these academic and social outcomes.

The present study was also limited by the unavailability of data to examine within-group differences among the members of each racial group. More specifically, this study was unable to ascertain whether other demographic characteristics of the sample (e.g., socioeconomic status, political orientation) matched those of the overall student population. By oversampling racial minority students, however, the present research increased the probability that the complete range of demographic characteristics present in the university population were present in the final sample. Racial groups are not monolithic entities. The present research affirmed the importance of individual experience, a factor that also varies within racial groups. Future research in this area should examine the effect of individuals differences within racial groups on students' perceptions of climate, such as those relating to different personal histories with racism, socioeconomic status, and racial identification.

Challenges and Implications

The present findings serve as a caution for university administrators eager to deallocate resources or decrease services to racial minority students because of the declining significance of race. As long as these racial disparities in academic experience continue, racial minority students will likely continue perceiving more negative perceptions of GCC. Efforts to diversify campuses matter. In a recent national survey of colleges and universities conducted by Chang (1999), greater racial diversity on campus was positively associated with educational outcomes for students.

As the results reported by graduate students in the present study suggested, common academic concerns can minimize racial differences but not necessarily eliminate them. Individuals responsible for campus policy should therefore consider campus programming that focuses on interpersonal interactions as crucial interface points between the college or university and the student. Although the university's efforts to promote racial diversity at an institutional level did have a positive impact on how some students viewed their university, this impact was small in relation to the effect of hearing racist jokes from peers or having an advisor's intellectual respect. Progressive policies and practices that address these concerns could, in turn, exert a profound effect on academic performance and student retention.

College and university administrators and instructors should note that students of color still perceive that they are being treated differently than their White peers not only as racial minorities but also as students. One of the most profound challenges of the present study for institutional deci-

sion makers is to address the issue of sensitizing faculty and staff to the needs of students of color. More specifically, this entails making instructors aware of how specific behaviors (e.g., jokes, criticisms) might be affecting students of color differently compared with White students. By focusing training and retraining efforts at these key junctures, academic institutions can make the greatest strides in improving how students regard their campuses.

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APPENDIX A Items and Principal-Component Loadings for the General Campus and Academic Climate Subscales for Undergraduate Students

Subscale	*Item loading*
General Campus Climate	
In general, I fit in with other students here.	.71
If I had to do it all over again, I would still attend the university.	.65
I have found the atmosphere at this university to be very friendly.	.63
I feel left out of things here at the university.	.60
Instructor	
I feel my instructors show little interest in my opinions.	.67
In general, my instructors help me feel confident of my abilities.	.65
The advisors here are sensitive to student needs.	.63
My work is evaluated fairly.	.59
I feel comfortable approaching my instructors for advice and assistance.	.58
I feel free to participate in class by asking questions or making comments.	.47
Perceptions of Seriousness	
My instructors view me as a serious student.	.71
Other students view me as a serious student.	.70
I am progressing as well as the other students in my major.	.67
I feel somewhat out of place in the classroom.	.49
I am called on in class as often as other students.	.49
I feel less confident as a student now than I did in high school.	.48
Perceptions of Respect	
Other students make fun of me sometimes.	.59
I have had instructors encourage me to major in their field.	.55
When I try to speak up in class, I am sometimes interrupted or ignored.	.51
I have been treated unfairly on this campus.	.45

APPENDIX B Items and Principal-Component Loadings for the General Campus and Academic Climate Subscales for Graduate Students

Subscale	*Item loading*
General Campus Climate	
I have found the atmosphere at this university to be friendly.	.79
I have been treated fairly on this campus.	.65
The faculty here are sensitive to student needs.	.58
I fit in with the other graduate students here.	.48
My work is evaluated fairly.	.47
If I had to do it over again, I would still attend the university.	.45
Mentoring	
My advisor acts as a mentor to me.	.83
In general, my advisor(s) help(s) me feel confident in my abilities.	.79
My advisor sets aside sufficient time for me.	.72
My professors encourage me to pursue my own ideas.	.70
My advisor(s) encourage(s) me to attend scholarly conferences.	.67
I have had faculty encourage me to work with them.	.61
My faculty make certain that I get credit for my ideas.	.60
I feel that the faculty in my department are interested in my progress.	.59
My professors show little interest in my opinions.	.56
I receive little encouragement to pursue my field of study.	.53
Academic/Professional Self-Confidence	
I have lowered my career aspirations somewhat since coming to school here.	.74
I feel less confident as a student now than I did at my undergraduate institution.	.72
I rarely speak up in classes or meetings.	.53
Sometimes I feel a bit out of place in my department.	.51
I am progressing as well as the other graduate students in my department.	.50
Perceptions of Seriousness	
Other graduate students view me as a serious student.	.84
The faculty in my department view me as a serious student.	.64
Other graduate students have respect for my ideas.	.53
Other students make fun of me sometimes.	.50
When I try to speak up in classes or meetings, I am sometimes interrupted or ignored.	.52

APPENDIX C Items and Principal-Component Loadings for the Racial Climate Subscales for Undergraduate (U) and Graduate (G) Students

	Item loading	
Subscale	*U*	*G*
Racial Experiences		
I have experienced racial insensitivity from other students.	.79	.76
I have experienced racial insensitivity from faculty.	.84	.76
The interracial climate on this campus is tense.	.60	.54
In my opinion, this campus is more racist than most.	.45	.52
Students of other races or ethnic groups seem uncomfortable around me.	.50	.49
University Perceptions		
The university makes a genuine effort to recruit racial and ethnic minority students.	.75	.80
The university fosters respect for cultural differences.	.76	.72
The university has made a special effort to help racial and ethnic minority students feel like they "belong" on campus.	.83	.81
The [Native American] school mascot is an appropriate symbol for the university.	.65	.63