

INVOLVEMENT AND CAMPUS CLIMATE ON THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF  
BLACK COLLEGE STUDENTS

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## Abstract

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There has been an increasing number of Black students entering into higher education, but they continue to have disparities in academic achievement when compared to White students. An institution's campus climate has been found to influence student success. This study seeks to examine the factor of campus climate, specifically negative campus racial climate (NCRC), as it relates to the GPA and university satisfaction of Black students at a rural institution. The study adds to the literature by exploring the degree to which involvement (Faculty (FOI) and Club/Organization Involvement (COI)) may act as a moderating force within the relationship.

Three surveys were administered to 56 students, *Racial Climate scale*, *Student-Faculty Involvement scale (SFI)*, and the *College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ)*. Students reported basic demographics, current GPA, and answered open-ended questions regarding involvement and university satisfaction. Regression analyses were conducted to assess the role of campus climate on student success, examining involvement as a potential moderator of this relationship.

Participants were between ages 18 and 45 ( $M = 22.77$ ,  $SD = 4.94$ ), reported an average GPA of 3.23 ( $SD = .30$ ), and were mostly of Junior ( $n = 19$ , 33.93%) and Senior

( $n = 23$ , 41.07%) status, Freshman ( $n = 8$ , 14.29%) and Sophomore ( $n = 6$ , 10.71%) being the least represented. Results from the regression analysis for Hypothesis 1 indicated NCRC was not significant predictor of GPA, ( $F(1, 21) = 4.28$ ,  $\beta = .41$ ,  $p = .05$ ). For Hypothesis 2, NCRC was found to be a significant predictor of university satisfaction ( $F(1, 22) = 21.03$ ,  $\beta = -.70$ ,  $p = .0001$ ). Moderation results for hypothesis 3-6 indicated that SFI was not a significant predictor of

GPA,  $\beta = .07$ ,  $t(22) = .32$ ,  $p = .75$ , nor university satisfaction,  $\beta = -.01$ ,  $t(23) = -.03$ ,  $p = .98$ . COI was not a significant predictor of GPA,  $\beta = -.23$ ,  $t(22) = -1.07$ ,  $p = .30$ , nor University Satisfaction,  $\beta = -.14$ ,  $t(23) = -.75$ ,  $p = .46$ . NCRC X Involvement interaction terms were not significant.

The results indicated that greater NCRC was associated with lower university satisfaction. The moderating role of involvement was not significant in the current study. Looking forward, future research should utilize a larger sample to obtain a clearer idea of the relationship that exists between NCRC and student success. Future studies could also include multiple observations over time, providing more information about how these variables might be related to student success over time.

*Keywords:* Campus Climate, GPA, Black students, Involvement, Satisfaction

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### **Introduction**

Almost half of the Black population who are of the age to attend college are not doing so (NCES Status of Education, 2007). Without this education, they lose out on the many benefits associated with a college degree, including increased wages and job security (Smith, 1995). Academic disparities do exist for students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds, but after narrowing the research to look at Black students specifically, we see that even if they begin college, Black students graduate at a rate that is 20% lower than White students (Porter, 1990). In 2010, 19.8% of Black and 13.9% of Latinx individuals 25 years of age and older had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 30.3% of Whites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This problem is still very relevant and has been found to be more prominent in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Black students attending PWIs are less likely to graduate after five years and have lower overall retention rates than Black students attending Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCUs) (Hamilton, 2009). Black students have also been found to have lower GPAs in PWIs than HBCUs, although this may be partially due to the fact that many HBCUs attract high achieving Black students (Allen, 1992).

An additional area that is lacking in the literature is regarding the academic success of Black students at rural institutions. Rural institutions generally have smaller student populations than institutions in urban or city areas and may have less diverse faculty and staff (NCES Status of Education, 2007). Black students may be faced with unique stressors while attending a rural institution. The literature is lacking research on

the factors that aid in the academic success of Black students at rural institutions. It is possible that small populations of Black students at rural institutions or general lack of diversity in research have led to research in this domain to be neglected. The scarcity of this subject matter within the literature stresses the need for research to expand within this area of study. Previous research has assessed many of these factors related to student success at larger, urban institutions; this study will add to the literature by exploring the relationship of these factors at a rural institution.

Other factors may also contribute to this achievement gap at PWIs and HBCUs. With the student outcomes at PWIs and HBCUs being so divergent, research has begun to look at factors that can help to explain this difference. One factor that has been examined is campus climate, essentially everything that goes into the students' experience while attending an institution. Campus climate can be defined as the general perception an individual has about an institution, including its policies, practices, and the perception of the people that work at and attend the institution (Prasad, 2010). Unfortunately, there are negative aspects of campus climate that have been found to be detrimental to the GPA and retention of Black students. Campus racial climate has been examined in the literature in a number of ways. Commonly, it is defined as an intolerance of a minority subculture, specifically with experiences prejudice and discrimination on campus and in classrooms, perceptions of how much an institution values diversity, and perceptions of equal treatment of students (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Feagin, 1992; Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Owens, 2010). In the present study, we refer to a campus climate characterized by

these factors as 'negative campus racial climate' (NCRC). NCRC has been found to be associated with a wide range of negative outcomes for Black students including a lower sense of belonging on campus, which is the degree in which students feel welcomed and engaged in their campus (Cabrera et al., 1999; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993), lower GPA for college students (Cabrera et al., 1999; Brown, Morning, & Watkins, 2005; Feagin, 1992; Hamilton, 2009; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Owens, 2010), and lower satisfaction with the university (Cabrera, 1999; D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Museus et al., 2008; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

Given the many negative outcomes associated with NCRC, researchers are studying protective factors that may help students who experience a NCRC be successful (Fischer, 2009; Patton, Bridges, & Flowers, 2011; Williamson, 1999). Studies have begun to look at involvement as a factor that may support Black student success (Astin, 1999; Hawkins, 2015; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Solorzano et al., 2000.). Student involvement is the amount of physical and psychological energy a student uses during their college experience, and also reflects the efforts that institutions put forth in engaging students in campus activities. In the literature, student involvement has typically been measured as club affiliation and relationships with faculty (Astin, 1999, Kuh, 2009).

Involvement has consistently been found to have a positive relationship to the university satisfaction, GPA, and retention of Black college students (Astin, 1993; Davis, 1994; Fischer, 2009). This is consistent with research among White and Latino students, which has found that students report a more positive academic experience if they have a

good relationship with faculty and their academic environment (Davis, 1994; Kuh & Hu, 2001). Involvement helps student to have more confidence in their academic abilities (Astin, 1999; Kim & Sax, 2009; Kuh & Hu, 2001), feel more adjusted and involved on campus (Astin, 1999; Davis, 1994; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Rooney 1984), and encourages commitment at the university/institution, which means the students will be more likely to remain at the institution until graduation (Bryant, Banta, & Bradley, 1995; Chebator 1996; Hawkins, 2015; Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010; Patton et al., 2011; Williamson, 1999).

Many of the references used for assessing the achievement gap in Black student success throughout this study are fairly dated, over a decade in some cases. The research on academic success for Black students specifically is something that is greatly lacking within the literature; this creates substantial gaps in the collection of research concerning the topic. Although the literature is scarce concerning Black student success, we have seen that perceptions of a NCRC have been related to negative academic outcomes for Black college students (Astin, 1993; Cabrera et al., 1999; Davis, 1994; Fischer, 2009; Hamilton, 2009; Solorzano et al., 2000). Research on Black student involvement has found a strong positive relationship between level of involvement and academic success and satisfaction (Bryant et al., 1995; Chebator 1996; Davis, 1994; Fischer, 2009; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Patton et al., 2011; Rooney 1984; Williamson, 1999). We postulate that involvement may act as a buffer in allowing students to do well even if they perceive a NCRC.

The current study seeks to examine whether student involvement (club/organization engagement and supportive faculty interactions) can moderate the effect of NCRC on academic success and satisfaction among Black university students. Based on previous research on the subject, it is hypothesized that more involvement in clubs/organizations and positive experiences with faculty will relate to higher academic success and satisfaction for Black college students, even if they report experiencing a NCRC. To the author's knowledge, there have been no studies that have looked at how both involvement and NCRC influence academic success and satisfaction for Black college students. The current study will expand on the literature by examining the effects of NCRC on the academic success and satisfaction of Black students while exploring the degree to which involvement may act as a moderating force within the relationship.

This study will be a unique addition to this area of research by assessing the influence of involvement on the relationship between perceptions of campus climate and the academic success and satisfaction among Black students at a rural institution. The study will be composed of students attending rural university in Northern California. The university is not a Predominately White Institution (PWI). The literature defines PWIs as being an institution in which over half of the student body is composed of White students (Brown & Dancy, 2009). Examining data over the past five years, White students have comprised 55.1% of the population in 2011 to 43.7% of the population in 2016 (Humboldt-Fast Facts, n.d.). Although the university no longer meets the definition of a PWI, the school environment may still present some of the same challenges for Black students attending PWIs. The university is located in a predominately White, rural

community, “Census-Population estimates,” 2015). The county has even less diversity than the school population, with most residents being White (83.6%) and the remaining being non-White residents, only 1.4% of which are Black residents (Census-Population estimates, 2015). The population diversity in rural communities, like the one in this study, are vastly different to the level of diversity seen in more urban areas where many Black university students may come from and find more familiar.

Black student retention is lower at the university than other racial/ethnic groups. In 2010, the percentage of Black students at the university graduating within 6-years was 23.4%, compared to White students at 52.2% and Hispanic students at 37.3% (Pine.Humboldt, 2016). Given that Black students may be faced with unique stressors that can affect academic success, it is important to examine how involvement and campus climate may influence academic outcomes for Black students attending rural institutions.

When looking at the demographics of the school and the county the school is located in, it is apparent that NCRC may present a challenge for the Black students attending the university. The current research will be a unique addition to the literature by looking at the relationship between perceptions of NCRC on academic success and satisfaction of Black students at a rural institution. This study will also highlight how these factors of involvement (clubs/organizations and faculty interactions) may moderate the effect of perceptions of a NCRC on the academic success and satisfaction of Black students.

## Literature Review

### Black Achievement in College

In 2008 there were 12 million Black students attending college, but only half of the students actually earned a degree (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010). There has been a steady increase of Black students in higher education in recent decades. However, Black students continue to experience lower retention rates and lower GPAs (Allen, 1992; Hamilton, 2009). This presents a need to examine the factors that may potentially contribute to the problem.

There is an association between socioeconomic status (SES) and GPA/retention, but when SES is controlled for in studies examining retention gaps between students, the retention gap between Black and White students still exists; this gives some indication that SES does not account for the large academic disparities in the Black student population (Reason, 2009). The disparity in academics is apparent in Black students across all SES levels. Similarly, when looking at standardized tests in relation to future academic success for Black and White students, it was found that even when both scored the same on the standardized test, Black students still did not achieve as well as White students in college (Hess, 2004). This suggests that there is something other than college preparedness that is influencing the academic success of Black students. Black students continue to have the highest college dropout rate out of all racial/ethnic groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Researchers have looked at the differences between Black students that attend a HBCU or a PWI and found that Black students attending HBCUs performed better and had higher retention rates than Black students attending PWIs (Allen, 1992; Davis, 1994). There has been an increasing number of Black students enrolled in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs); these universities are in greater abundance and may provide students with opportunities not offered at HBCUs, which may be related to the increase. With the increase of Black students in PWIs, the retention gap between Black and White students becomes more apparent (Williams, 2014).

Various factors have been studied as a means of potentially explaining the achievement gap between Black and White students. Research indicates that SES and college preparedness does not explain this achievement gap (Allen, 1992; Hamilton, 2009; Reason, 2009). The current paper will examine the factor of campus climate, which is a component of the college student experience that needs to be considered when looking at the academic achievement gap among students.

### **Campus Climate and Well-Being**

Campus climate may be defined as the way an individual views their college or institution, which can include its policies and practices, as well as the students and faculty that make up the college/institution's population (Prasad, 2010). Campus climate is related to how well students do academically and how they experience their institution while attending (Feagin, 1992). One aspect of campus climate that has gained attention for its possible influence on student outcomes is the campus racial climate. Negative

campus racial climate (NCRC) includes experiences of prejudice and/or discrimination at an institution, perceptions of how much an institution values diversity, and perceptions of equal treatment of students (Cabrera et al., 1999; Feagin, 1992). The intolerance of a minority students' subculture can lead to disengagement, feelings of alienation, marginalization, lower levels of satisfaction, and isolation on campus (Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Museus et al., 2008).

Growing research indicates that NCRC, specifically experiences with prejudice and discrimination on campus, negatively influence adjustment and sense of belonging at the university for both White students and students of color (Cabrera et al., 1999; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2006; Smedley et al., 1993). Additional research has indicated that experiences of racism and/or discrimination generate feelings of self-doubt and isolation, (Brown et al., 2005; Cabrera et al., 1999; Solorzano et al., 2000).

The research has demonstrated that experiences of racism and discrimination negatively influence student well-being. The negative impacts of a NCRC are also strongly related to lower GPA and institutional withdrawal for both White and Black students (Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2006; Smedley et al., 1993; Solorzano et al., 2000). Black students consistently report more instances of racism, microaggressions, and discrimination on campus than White students attending the same institution (Brown et al., 2005; Davis, 1994; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2006). These differences in the experiences of racism and/or discrimination may be a significant factor in explaining some of the academic disparities that exists between White and Black students.

## **Campus Climate, Academic Success, and University Satisfaction**

### **Retention.**

Not only is NCRC linked to poorer well-being among Black students, but it is also linked to lower retention. Various studies have been conducted to assess the relationship between perceptions of a NCRC and retention for Black college students. The research has found that when a NCRC is perceived, Black students have greater feelings of wanting to withdraw from the institution and are less likely to actually remain at the institution (Museus et al., 2008; Solorzano et al., 2000).

Research has found that Black students more frequently report experiences of racism and/or discrimination on campus, when compared to White students. Perceptions of a NCRC, for both Black and White students, are related to lower retention (Cabrera et al., 1999; Fischer, 2009; Furr & Elling, 2002; Museus et al., 2008; Owens, 2010). Contrary research has indicated that Black students will stay at an institution despite perceiving a racially hostile campus environment, which gives some indication that other factors may influence retention of Black students at the institution. D'Augelli and Hershberger (1993) administered several surveys to 146 undergraduate students (73 African American and 73 White). The surveys were intended to gather levels of social support, experiences with student life events (e.g. “worry about school performance” “grade poorer than expected”), general level of well-being, background information, and general/personal experiences with minority issues. The researchers indicate that there were more differences in the individual's' upbringing, rather than issues specifically

related to academic and social constructs on campus, which may be the reason for the results (D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993). Although other factors influencing Black student retention may be at play, the majority of the research has found that NCRC is a factor strongly related to lower retention for Black students (Brown et al., 2005; Cabrera et al., 1999; Furr & Elling, 2002; Fischer, 2009; Museus et al., 2008; Owens, 2010; Solorzano et al., 2000).

### **University Satisfaction.**

The presence of a NCRC pervades multiple aspects of the student experience at a university, including the degree of satisfaction students have while attending. Research has indicated the importance of university satisfaction when it comes to the retention and academic success of students attending an institution. University satisfaction has been defined and measured in multiple ways throughout the literature, but within this study, university satisfaction will be defined as the students' overall impression of the university, including its academic services and the individuals that make up the university environment (Kao, 2007). The satisfaction a student has at their institution is related to the students' commitment to the university and overall academic well-being (Alderman, 2009; Astin, 1999; Kao, 2007; Kim & Sax, 2009; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Patton et al., 2011; Vogt, 2008). Studying the degree to which students are satisfied at their university can give insight into additional factors that may influence retention and academic well-being of students attending.

**GPA.**

NCRC has consistently been found to be associated with lower GPA among Black students. Perceived NCRC has been found to be related to lower GPA for Black students at both PWIs and HBCUs (Brown et al., 2005; Hamilton, 2009; Smedley et al., 1993). This means that NCRC has a negative relationship to GPA for Black students at both types of institutions. Black students at HBCUs have higher grades and lower perceptions of a NCRC compared to those attending PWIs (Brown et al., 2005; Davis, 1994; Hamilton, 2009). Campus climate may be a factor that helps to explain this academic achievement gap that exists between Black and White students at PWIs vs. HBCUs.

The research presented demonstrates how campus climate has a clear relation to the GPA, retention, and overall satisfaction Black students have while attending their university. This study seeks to look at the effects of NCRC on the GPA and satisfaction of Black students, while examining involvement as a moderator of the effect of campus climate on Black student success. There are many factors of involvement that have been studied in the literature, but the ones that are most widely researched are club affiliation and student-faculty engagement; for this reason, the current research will focus on the role that these two factors may play in the GPA and retention of Black college students.

**Involvement, Academic Success, and University Satisfaction**

Much research has examined the role of involvement with the campus environment in student retention and achievement. Involvement can be in both social and academic domains and is seen as being an essential part of the college student experience

(Kuh & Hu, 2001). Student involvement is the amount of physical and psychological energy a student uses while attending an institution, and reflects, in part, the efforts that institutions put forth in engaging students in campus activities (Astin, 1999, Kuh, 2009). Astin's theory of involvement suggests that the more a student is involved in their campus, the greater their academic success and overall satisfaction with the university experience. Astin (1999) hypothesized that involvement was the observable way of measuring the level of "motivation" in students, with dropping out being the bottom end of the scale, and that all students fall on different places on the scale of involvement. Astin identified several domains in which involvement could be measured. The domains are focused on actions and activities that help to measure engagement in the classroom and social relations (e.g., devotion to studying, participating in student organizations, frequently remaining on campus, and having positive relations with faculty and peers). Although Astin suggests that students will do better if they are more involved, his theory does not adequately explain the role of the institution in getting these students more involved.

Astin's (1999) institutional involvement theory suggests that students of color can have better success if they are integrated with campus activities and have meaningful relationships with faculty and academic staff. One of the factors of involvement most widely researched is that of club affiliation. This form of involvement has been shown to be positively related to numerous aspects of the student experience in college, and may be a way to improve university satisfaction and GPAs within the Black student population.

**Club Affiliation.**

Club affiliation is a facet of involvement that captures a students' active participation in clubs and organizations that are on campus (Astin, 1984; Huang & Chang, 2004). Various aspects of club affiliation have been looked at in terms of its relationship to student GPA, retention, and overall satisfaction. Research has found that students who are involved in some sort of extracurricular activity had higher GPAs than the students who are uninvolved (Chebator, 1996; Derby, 2006; Strapp & Farr, 2009). The level of involvement outside of class has been found to be directly related to greater satisfaction with the university and greater retention (Berger & Milem, 1999; Bryant, Banta, Bradley, 1995; Hawkins, 2015).

Among Black students in particular, the research has indicated that involvement in clubs/organizations is related to feelings of being more supported in their campus environment (Astin, 1999; Kuh & Hu, 2001), a greater sense of belonging to the university (Patton et al., 2011; Nora & Cabrera 1996; Rooney, 1984), and greater feelings of wanting to remain at the institution (Astin, 1999; Furr & Elling, 2002; Kim & Sax, 2009; Nora & Cabrera 1996; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Owens, 2010; Williams, 1999). The influence of involvement is seen at both HBCUs and PWIs, with studies indicating that involvement in clubs/organizations is strongly related to greater overall satisfaction with the university (Astin, 1999; Kuh & Hu, 2001), GPA (Patton et al., 2011), and higher retention for Black college students (Britt, 2014; Furr & Elling, 2002; Patton et al., 2011).

Taken together, this research shows that club involvement is related to greater sense of support (Nora & Cabrera 1996; Patton et al., 2011; Rooney, 1984), feelings of

engagement, overall satisfaction with the university (Alderman, 2009; Astin, 1999; Kim & Sax, 2009; Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Vogt, 2008), GPA (Patton et al., 2011), and retention for students at an institution (Astin, 1999; Britt, 2014; Furr & Elling, 2002; Kim & Sax, 2009; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Nora & Cabrera 1996; Owens, 2010; Patton et al., 2011; Williams, 1999). One limitation of the research cited is that although it demonstrates a relation between club affiliation and GPA and retention/satisfaction for students, it doesn't provide information on the direction of this relationship. It may be the fact that club affiliation leads to higher GPA and retention/satisfaction, but it may also be the case that students who are more motivated and academically prepared have a greater likelihood of joining clubs. More research is needed to determine the directionality of the relationship between club affiliation and student success.

### **Student-Faculty Involvement.**

Experiences such as interactions with faculty have been found to have positive educational outcomes for students attending universities (Astin, 1999); these interactions could be based on the amount of times a student goes to a faculty's office hours, how often they speak to faculty about assignments, or how supportive a student feels their professors are of their education (Alderman, 2009; Astin, 1999; Kuh & Hu, 2001). Astin found that students who had more frequent interactions with faculty had the strongest satisfaction with all aspects of their college experience (Astin, 1984). With this in mind, Astin argued that faculty and educators should lessen the focus on the curriculum,

coursework, and teaching styles, and focus more on how to get students involved in the work that's being done and initiate more positive interactions with students.

Studies that have sought to examine student-faculty interactions and student success have found strong relationships between the two factors. Research has indicated that more involvement with faculty, during and outside of instructional times, is related to greater academic self-efficacy, (Komarraju et al., 2010; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005) higher GPAs (Alderman, 2009; Cole, 2008; Kim & Sax 2009), increased motivation (Astin, 1999; Komarraju et al., 2010), greater college persistence (Alderman, 2009; Vogt, 2008), and overall satisfaction with the university (Alderman, 2009; Kim & Sax, 2009; Komarraju et al., 2010; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Vogt, 2008;).

Although most of the literature indicates the benefits that are related to greater student-faculty interactions there is research indicating differences across student demographics in terms of how frequently they will interact with faculty; these differences influence the degree to which students may reap the benefits that come from more student-faculty involvement, such as greater self-confidence, higher GPA, and greater sense of support in their academic endeavors (Kim & Sax, 2007; Kim & Sax, 2009; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Pascarella, 2006; Sax, Bryant, & Harper, 2005;). For example, Black students have been found to report more communication with faculty in a classroom setting, but have fewer reports of working with faculty outside of class when compared to other students of all races/ethnicities (Kim & Sax, 2009). Working with faculty outside of class has been found to be more strongly related to GPA for Black students than it is for

other students (Kim & Sax, 2007). This research highlights the importance of faculty involvement among Black students.

### **Summary.**

The literature indicates overall that student-faculty interactions are beneficial to the academic success of Black college students (Kim & Sax 2009; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Pascarella, 2006; Cole, 2008). Black students that have frequent interactions with faculty have higher GPAs (Kim & Sax 2009; Kuh & Hu, 2001) greater sense of support and satisfaction (Kim & Sax 2009), more confidence in academic abilities (Kim, & Sax, 2009; Kuh & Hu, 2001), and greater persistence (Kim & Sax, 2009; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Pascarella, 2006).

### **Involvement and Campus Climate**

NCRC has been found to be related to lower academic success for Black college students (Brown et al., 2005; Cabrera et al., 1991, Davis, 1994, D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Hamilton, 2009; Museus et al., 2008; Smedley et al., 1993; Solorzano et al., 2000). Involvement in clubs/organizations and with faculty is related to higher GPA, retention, and satisfaction for students of all races/ethnicities (Alderman, 2009; Astin, 1999; Bryant et al., 1995; Chebator, 1996; Kim & Sax, 2009; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Patton et al., 2011). Unfortunately, the literature lacks research on the role involvement has on Black students, specifically. Even more so, the literature has not examined how involvement on campus may potentially lessen the effects of NCRC on academic success among Black

students. The current research will examine the moderating role involvement plays in the relationship between NCRC and Black students' academic success at a rural institution.

To the author's knowledge, there has been no research that has looked at the influence of involvement and perceptions of a NCRC on academic success for Black college students. However, there have been two studies conducted examining the relationship between involvement (clubs/organizations and with faculty) and perceptions of a NCRC. A study conducted by Kuh and Hu (2001) sought to look at the level of student-faculty interactions as it relates to student success. The study consisted of 5,409 students at a PWI, 5% of the population consisting of Black student participants. Likert scale was distributed to measure the degree of involvement the student had with faculty. The results of the study indicated that Black students typically had the most interactions with faculty among all students, but Black students that perceived a NCRC were less likely to interact with faculty. However, GPA was not measured, nor was university satisfaction, so there was no way of knowing how the faculty interaction and campus climate related to these factors.

Chavous (2005) conducted a study that also sought to look at the relationship between involvement and perceptions of a NCRC. The study looked at perceptions of a NCRC and involvement in campus clubs and organizations. All students in the study were given the same measure to assess the perceptions of the campus climate and involvement in organizations. The results indicated that there were differences in the degree of involvement Black and White students have, with 26% of White students in the study stating no organizational involvements, while only 13% of Black students report no

organizational involvement. It was also shown that those reporting no organizational involvement also had greater perceptions of a NCRC. This study indicates that more Black students were involved in organizations than White students, and that those that were more involved had lower perceptions of a NCRC, suggesting that organizational involvement may help students have lesser perceptions of NCRC. This study, similar to the last, did not examine how involvement was related to the GPA and satisfaction/retention for Black students.

The results of these two studies suggest that NCRC and involvement are negatively correlated, meaning that as perceptions of NCRC increases involvement decreases. NCRC may generate lower levels of involvement for Black students, but it may also be the case that involvement influences perceptions of campus climate. Although a bidirectional relationship may exist between the two factors, they are only moderately correlated. Thus, it is possible for students who experience a NCRC to also have high involvement, and we would expect these students to benefit from greater involvement on campus. With that in mind, involvement may still serve as a protective factor for some students perceiving a NCRC. Additionally, involvement is not solely a student factor. Faculty who reach out to students may encourage student involvement, even among those students who perceive a NCRC. In fact, it may be most important for these students.

If the literature continues to show that perceptions of a NCRC impacts the GPA of some students but not for others (Cabrera et al., 1999; Davis, 1994; D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Hamilton, 2009; Smedley et al., 1993), there needs to be continued

investigation of what explains the relationship between NCRC and GPA. Additionally, we need to better understand how we can help lessen the negative impact of NCRC on academic success among Black students. Experiences with a NCRC has been shown to have significant effect on the GPA of Black students, but if students remain involved and invested in their college career, they may be able to persist, despite a negative campus climate.

By studying involvement in clubs/organizations and positive involvement with faculty, there may be a way of identifying these specific features that help Black students remain in college and do well academically. These factors of involvement may play an even greater role in the GPA and satisfaction/retention of Black students that attend predominantly White rural institutions. Students attending these institutions may face specific challenges within the campus climate that have more of an impact on academic success. This study examined the effects of NCRC on the GPA and university satisfaction of Black students at a rural institution, while examining involvement as a moderator of the relationship between NCRC and Black student success. Although the university is no longer considered a PWI, Black students may still face unique stressors while attending. Given these stressors, it is important to understand the role involvement with clubs/organizations and faculty may have in buffering the negative outcomes that perceptions of a NCRC has on academic success for Black students.

The goal of this study was to recruit Black students from the university, although the sample was ultimately expanded to other groups due to some barriers to recruitment (see 'Methodology' section). Having a within group study allows researchers to examine

differences in outcomes among Black students attending the same institution. While previous studies focused on how Black students compared to White students at large universities, little research has been conducted to assess how Black students compare to one another at rural institutions.

## **Hypotheses**

The current study examined how NCRC relates to GPA and university satisfaction using a within-participants approach. Data were collected from surveys at the end of the semester. The predictor variable in the study was perception of NCRC. The criterion variables were GPA and university satisfaction, and the moderating variable was involvement (student faculty interaction and club affiliation). The study looked at 1) how perception of NCRC is related to GPA/satisfaction, 2) to what degree student-faculty involvement (SFI) moderates the relationship between NCRC and GPA/satisfaction and 3) to what degree club/organizational involvement (COI) moderates the relationship between NCRC and GPA/satisfaction.

There were six main hypotheses of this study: Hypothesis 1: Students reporting greater NCRC would have a lower GPA than students reporting a more positive NCRC; Hypothesis 2: Students reporting greater negative NCRC would report lower levels of university satisfaction than students reporting a more positive NCRC; Hypothesis 3: SFI would moderate the relationship between NCRC and GPA, such that the relationship between NCRC and GPA would be stronger for those with lower SFI. Hypothesis 4: SFI would moderate the relationship between NCRC and university satisfaction, such that the

relationship between NCRC and university satisfaction would be stronger for those with lower SFI. Hypothesis 5: COI would moderate the relationship between NCRC and GPA, such that the relationship between NCRC and GPA would be stronger for those students with lower COI; Hypothesis 6: COI would moderate the relationship between NCRC and university satisfaction, such that the relationship between NCRC and university satisfaction would be stronger for those students with lower COI.

## Method

### Participants

Participants in the current study included 56 college students at a rural state college in California.. Participants were between ages 18 and 45 ( $M=22.8$ ,  $SD=4.9$ ). Surveys were collected using email and in-person recruitment. Of the 56 participants, 15 (27%) identified as Black/African American, 16 (28%) White, 8 (14%) Hispanic, 2 (4%) Asian, 2 (4%) Native American, and 13 (23%) identified as biracial/other. The study consisted of both female ( $n = 39$ , 69%) and male ( $n = 17$ , 31%) participants (see Table 1). Students who identified as only Black/African American and students who identified as Black/African American in addition to one or more other race/ethnicities were coded as Black/African American for the purposes of analysis; this included 11 of the 13 students who identified as biracial. A total sample of 26 Black/African American students were included in the within-participant analyses. Although some students who identify Black/African American as one of multiple ethnic identities may not necessarily identify as being Black/African American, it is possible that they may have some similar experiences on campus in regards to campus climate; thus, the decision was made to include, rather than exclude them in the analyses looking at Black students.

### Power Analysis.

An a-priori power analysis was used to identify the number of participants needed for the study. Assuming a multiple regression analysis, with the anticipated effect size

(f2) being .15, a p-value of .8, and an alpha level of .05, a minimum of 54 Black student participants are needed for the current study.

## **Measures**

### **Demographic questionnaire.**

An 11-item questionnaire identified various aspects of students' demographic background. Questions asked respondents to identify gender, racial/ethnic identification, place of birth, age, year in school, GPA (current & high school), work status, financial aid status (if receiving: yes/no), and club/program involvement.

### **Racial Climate Scale.**

The Racial Climate scale was used in the current study to assess NCRC (Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003). The scale used items and concepts collected from previous research to formulate the item pools for the scale. A principal-components analysis with varimax rotation was used to determine the items that went into the scale. Only items with component loadings of .45 or greater were used in the scale. The scale was created to capture the experiences of both undergraduate and graduate students. The scale is composed of two different subscales, these being: Racial Experiences ( $\alpha = .70$ -undergraduate;  $\alpha = .72$ -graduate) and University Perceptions ( $\alpha = .76$ -undergraduate;  $\alpha = .79$ -graduate). Racial Experiences subscale captures the negative experiences associated with racism and discrimination and the University Perceptions subscale captures the students' view of the university in terms of its diversity. There are a total of 9 items

between the two subscales. Items rated on a Likert scale (1- *strongly disagree* to 7 - *strongly agree*). Subscales can be interpreted individually or averaged for an overall NCRC score. A higher average on the 'Racial Experiences' subscale indicates greater perceptions of a NCRC. A lower average on the 'University Perceptions' subscale indicates greater perceptions of a NCRC. The items on the 'University Perceptions' subscale were reverse scored so that higher scores indicated greater NCRC. The scores of both subscales are averaged together, with higher ratings indicating greater perceptions of a NCRC. The alpha for this scale in the current study is .76, which indicates the scale's reliability.

### **The National Survey of Student Engagement.**

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a survey that measures the level of student participation in terms of learning and engagement. The scale assesses various themes of the student experience, these being: Academic Challenges, Learning with Peers, Experiences with Faculty, and Campus Environment. The full survey consists of 42-items that are broken down into various subscales within the themes meant to assess different parts of the student experience. Each subscale within the survey is meant to be interpreted independently. With this in mind, the current study only used the Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI) subscale, which is under the theme of "Experiences with Faculty." The subscale consists of 6 questions. The 6 questions are meant to assess two different aspects of student-faculty interactions, research related student-faculty interaction and course related interactions. Both aspects of the scale are meant to gauge

the degree in which students interact with faculty on campus (Yuhas & BrckaLorenz, 2017). Responses to items were rated 0- *never* to 60- *very often*. After all scores are given a numeric value, an average score is computed. Mean scores closer to '0' indicate that students have lower levels of faculty interaction, and scores closer to '60' indicate that students have higher levels of faculty interaction.

Test-retest reliability for the SFI subscale was determined through a comparison of survey data collected in 2013 and 2014. Correlations in data from 2013 and 2014 were analyzed for the SFI subscale, which indicated correlations of .63 and .92, respectively, for first year and senior students. The results indicated that the scores are fairly consistent over time, supporting the scale's reliability (NSSE, 2009). Statistics of internal consistency indicate high alpha values for the SFI subscale, .83 for first year students and .85 for seniors; these results demonstrate sufficient internal consistency (NSSE, 2016). The alpha for this scale in the current study is .76, which indicates the scale's reliability.

### **College student experiences questionnaire.**

The current study used the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) to assess the level of involvement students have in clubs and organizations (Gonyea, Kish, Kuh, Muthiah, & Thomas, 2003). The full survey is meant to assess the various aspects of the students' college experience. There are 13 "Activity Scales" within the questionnaire. Each scale measures how often a student engages in each of the activities in the scale. Items are rated on a scale from 1- *never* to 4- *very often*. Responses within a

scale are averaged to get the quality-of-effort score, which indicates the frequency of participation in the activities. Each scale in the questionnaire is measured independently.

For the current study, participants only completed the Activity Scale of “Clubs and Organizations”; this scale consists of 5-questions assessing the frequency of student interaction in clubs and organizations on and off campus. The scale is internally consistent, with an alpha of .83 for the Clubs and Organization scale. Content validity for the study was found to be adequate in assessing college experiences and their relation to student outcomes (Gonyea et al., 2003). The alpha for this scale in the current study is .83, which indicates the scale’s reliability.

#### **GPA.**

Grade point average (GPA) was used as a measure of academic standing in the present study. All grade point averages were self-reported by the participants based on a 4-point scale.

#### **Retention.**

Retention was assessed by asking participants whether or not they intended to return to the institution the following semester (“*Do you plan to return to Humboldt State University in the fall?*”). The item was scored on a dichotomous ‘yes’ or ‘no’ scale. There was a small space provided for students to explain their reasons for returning or not.

**University satisfaction.**

Students were asked to rate their level of university satisfaction (the level in which students felt satisfied with their experience at their university). Students used a rating scale to measure their level of satisfaction, with participants indicating a response between 1- *Extremely Dissatisfied* to 7- *Extremely Satisfied*. Data on retention, GPA, and university satisfaction were collected. Given that data was collected at only one time point, and retention variability was expected to be low, a question on university satisfaction was also included. Although university satisfaction and retention are two different factors, research has indicated the importance of university satisfaction when it comes to the retention and academic success of students attending a university. The satisfaction students have at their institution is related to the students' commitment to the university and overall academic well-being (Astin, 1999; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Vogt, 2008; Alderman, 2009; Kim & Sax, 2009; Patton et al., 2011). Thus, measuring university satisfaction is informative in understanding retention and other academic outcomes.

**Open-ended questions.**

Students were asked to answer two open-ended questions, one of which was included in the CSEQ, regarding reasons for being involved in clubs/organizations on campus. The other open-ended question was regarding intentions to return to university in the fall.

## **Procedure**

Participants completed surveys distributed online and in-person, which they had access to upon their consent to participate in the study. The university's Office of Institutional Effectiveness provided 1000 student email addresses to utilize for online (email) survey distribution. There were 500 students within the email list who identified as Black/African American; the other 500 students identified with other race/ethnicities. Although students who identified as Black/African American were the main population being studied, university procedures required that students from all racial/ethnic backgrounds be included in the email survey distribution. All procedures were approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (approval #IRB 16-225).

### **Email recruitment.**

Survey data was collected in spring 2017. The email portion of data collection lasted for a duration of three weeks. A link to the surveys and an email introduction script was sent to 1000 university students. Two reminder emails were sent to students who did not initially respond to the survey. Students interested in participating were given access to the online consent form in Survey Monkey through a link included in the email. Those who gave consent to participate were directed to the survey on Survey Monkey. Students were informed that they could skip any question they did not wish to answer. The surveys were completed in the following order: demographic questionnaire, the Racial Climate scale, the Student-Faculty Interaction scale, and the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ). In the demographic questionnaire, students were asked to provide

current cumulative GPA scores. An educational and informative debriefing form was provided for students, post-participation.

### **In-person recruitment.**

Given the initial low response rate by email, recruitment was also done through the African American Center for Academic Excellence (AACAE). Paper fliers and verbal recruitment methods were used.

#### *Paper fliers.*

Fliers were left on the front desk entrance to the AACAE, in addition to one being posted on the bulletin board in the center. The fliers gave students two possible options for participation. First, the flier announced certain days and times that in-person survey participation could take place in the AACAE. Fliers left/posted in the center provided students with the days and times the researcher would return to the center for in-person survey participation. Second, the flier also gave students instructions on how to access the online survey. Interested students could access the online survey and consent form through this link. The flier instructed students to refrain from participating in the paper survey if they had already completed it on online through the earlier email recruitment.

#### *Verbal recruitment.*

Verbal recruitment in the AACAE consisted of the researcher reading a structured script when approaching students as a means of gaining their voluntary participation in the survey. Students were instructed not to participate in the paper survey if they already

participated in the online survey. Students who sought to participate in the in-person survey were read and given a copy of the consent form. Upon consenting to participate, students were given a paper copy of the survey to fill out. The survey questions proceeded in the same order as the online survey. A debriefing form was provided for students, post-participation.

## Results

### Data analysis.

At the end of the study, data collected online were downloaded from Survey Monkey to an electronic SPSS file for data analysis. Descriptive statistics of NCRC and Involvement variables were computed. Correlations between GPA and university satisfaction and primary study variables were computed. There were a total of 56 students that responded to the survey, 26 of whom were students that identified as Black/African American; therefore the study was underpowered based on the a-priori power analysis. Not all study variables were normally distributed. Club Involvement (CI) demonstrates negative skewness. GPA was characterized by negative kurtosis. No multicollinearity was apparent in the predictor variables (NCRC, CI, FI). The linearity assumption was upheld; predictor variables were related linearly with outcome variables (GPA, Satisfaction). No heteroscedasticity was apparent.

A moderated multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine Hypotheses 3-6; the data were centered. This researcher examined the interaction effect between NCRC and involvement and whether or not such an effect is significant in predicting GPA and university satisfaction. The analysis examined the effect of NCRC on GPA and satisfaction ( $b1$ ), followed by the effect of involvement on GPA and satisfaction ( $b2$ ), then the effect of NCRC and involvement on GPA and satisfaction ( $b3$ ). This moderation analysis determined the conditional effect of NCRC on GPA and satisfaction with the moderator of involvement, (Conditional effect of X on Y =  $b1 + b3M$ ).

**Hypotheses.**

For Hypotheses 1-2, regression analyses were conducted to better understand the relationship between NCRC and GPA/university satisfaction among Black students. For Hypotheses 3-6, a moderation analysis was conducted assessing the conditional effect of NCRC on GPA and university satisfaction with the moderator of involvement (SFI/COI) among Black students.

**Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons.**

Given that multiple comparisons were analyzed between the hypotheses and exploratory analysis, a Bonferroni correction was made to reduce Type 1 error (Armstrong, 2014). There were a total of 19 comparisons within the study; this number includes: 1 comparison each for Hypothesis 1 and 2, 3 each for Hypothesis 3-6, and 5 comparisons for the exploratory analysis. The alpha level of .05 was divided by the number of comparisons (19) to generate the new alpha comparison of .0026.

**Hypothesis 1.**

It was hypothesized that as students report greater NCRC, lower GPA scores will be reported. A regression analysis was calculated to predict GPA based on perceptions of a NCRC. NCRC did not predict GPA (see Table 2).

**Hypothesis 2.**

It was hypothesized that as students report greater NCRC, lower university satisfaction scores will be reported. A regression analysis was calculated to predict

university satisfaction based on perceptions of a NCRC. The effect of NCRC on university satisfaction was significant after the Bonferroni correction at an alpha of .0026 (see Table 2).

### **Hypothesis 3.**

It was hypothesized that SFI would moderate the relationship between NCRC and GPA, such that the relationship between NCRC and GPA would be stronger for those with lower SFI. The regression model examined the effect of NCRC, SFI, and the NCRC X SFI interaction on GPA. The effect of NCRC on GPA was significant at an alpha of .05 but not after the Bonferroni correction. SFI was not a significant predictor of GPA. The NCRC X SFI interaction term was not significant. SFI was not found to moderate the relationship between NCRC and GPA (see Table 3).

### **Hypothesis 4.**

It was hypothesized that SFI would moderate the relationship between NCRC and university satisfaction, such that the relationship between NCRC and university satisfaction would be stronger for those with lower SFI. The regression model examined the effect of NCRC, SFI, and the NCRC X SFI interaction on university satisfaction. The effect of NCRC on university satisfaction was significant in the full model; this relationship remained significant after the Bonferroni correction. SFI was not a significant predictor of university satisfaction. The NCRC X SFI interaction term was not significant. SFI was not found to moderate the relationship between NCRC and university satisfaction (see Table 3).

**Hypothesis 5.**

It was hypothesized that Club/Organizational Involvement (COI) would moderate the relationship between NCRC and GPA, such that the relationship between NCRC and GPA would be stronger for those with lower COI. The regression model examined the effect of NCRC, COI, and the NCRC X COI interaction on GPA. The effect of NCRC on GPA was not significant in the full model. COI was not a significant predictor of GPA. The NCRC X COI interaction term was not significant. COI was not found to moderate the relationship between NCRC and GPA (see Table 3).

**Hypothesis 6.**

It was hypothesized that COI would moderate the relationship between NCRC and university satisfaction, such that the relationship between NCRC and university satisfaction would be stronger for those students with lower COI. The regression model examined the effect of NCRC, COI, and the NCRC X COI interaction on university satisfaction. The effect of NCRC on university satisfaction was significant in the full model; this relationship remained significant after the Bonferroni correction. COI was not a significant predictor of university satisfaction. The NCRC X COI interaction term was not significant. COI was not found to moderate the relationship between NCRC and university satisfaction (see Table 3).

**Retention.**

Retention was measured on a dichotomous scale, with students either answering ‘yes’ or ‘no’ as to whether or not they intend to return to the university in the Fall. Forty-nine students responded to this question, with most students indicating intentions of returning to the institution (n=37, 75.51%). Few students answered the open-ended question as to why they would return or not (n=26). There was very little variability in responses, with most students indicating that they would return (n=20). Many responses to the open-ended question indicated themes of wanting to ‘stay until graduation’ or to ‘finish what I started’. In the open-ended question, students who indicated that they would not be returning (n=6) stated that they were graduating and had no need to return, or will transfer due to major selection. Because of the low variability in responses, university satisfaction, which relates to retention, was used in analysis. Correlations for the full study sample (n=56) and the Black student sample (n=26) are displayed in Table 5 in the Appendix.

**Exploratory analyses.**

In an attempt to better understand the relationship between NCRC and GPA/university satisfaction, exploratory analyses were run comparing responses of students of color (SOC) to non-students of color (non-SOC) using the full sample (N=56). In running this analysis, a person of color (POC) refers to a person who is not White. Biracial and multiracial students who identified as two or more race/ethnicities on the demographic questionnaire were coded as SOC (n=40), with the remaining coded as

non-SOC (n=16). It is important to note that not all students who identify as White plus one or more race/ethnicities identify as a SOC. However, they may share some experiences with SOC in terms of perceptions of campus climate; the decision was made to include, rather than exclude, them in the analyses looking at SOC.

There was no significant difference on NCRC scores between SOC and non-SOC. There was no significant difference on club involvement (CI) scores between SOC and non-SOC students. There was no significant difference on the faculty involvement (FI) scores between SOC and non-SOC. Non-SOC reported greater university satisfaction, compared to SOC; this difference was not significant after the Bonferroni correction (alpha level of .0026). Non-SOC reported higher GPA than SOC; this difference was not significant after the Bonferroni correction (alpha level of .0026). (See Table 4).

### **Discussion**

The current study sought to examine the effects of NCRC on the GPA and satisfaction of Black students at the university, while examining involvement as a moderator of the relationship between NCRC and Black student success. One unique aspect of the current study is that it sought to examine these factors among a Black student population attending a rural institution. As stated previously in the literature, rural institutions generally have smaller student populations than institutions in urban or city areas and may have a less diverse faculty and staff (Status of Education, 2007). With this being the case, Black students may be faced with unique stressors while attending rural institutions.

Previous research has indicated that perceptions of a NCRC are associated with lower GPA and overall satisfaction with the university (Smedley et al., 1993; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Brown et al., 2005; Vogt, 2008; Alderman, 2009; Hamilton, 2009; Kim & Sax, 2009). This study hypothesized that students reporting greater negative NCRC would have a lower GPA and university satisfaction than students reporting a more positive NCRC. The results of the study, in regards to the first hypothesis, were inconsistent with previous research. The findings of the study indicated that there was not a significant relationship between NCRC and GPA. Consistent with findings, higher ratings of NCRC were related to lower ratings of university satisfaction.

The current study was underpowered, which may help to explain the lack of significant findings. After doing a Bonferroni correction, some results were no longer significant, including the positive relationship between GPA and NCRC. It is necessary to have more participants available in order to identify the relationship between NCRC and GPA/university satisfaction. Additionally, there are possibly variables outside the scope of this study that may have influenced the relationship in some way. The research backing the study is slightly dated in some cases, which reflects the scarcity of research conducted on Black student success. Having such little research on Black student success, it is difficult to truly know which variables are most beneficial when it comes to Black students specifically. The correlational design of the current study only allows there to be a recognition of a possible relationship that may exist between NCRC and GPA/university satisfaction, but does not allow for examination of causality.

It was also hypothesized that involvement would moderate the relationship between NCRC and GPA/university satisfaction; however, regression results indicated no significant interaction effects. Greater COI and SFI did not moderate the relationship between NCRC and GPA/university satisfaction. Although, to the author's knowledge, there has been no research looking at the influence of both campus climate and involvement on GPA/university satisfaction; the research that has been conducted on the subject has indicated that student involvement in faculty/clubs/organizations is associated with student success at an institution (Kuh & Hu, 2001; Chavous, 2005). Contrary to previous research, the current study found no significant association between involvement and student success. A limitation is the small sample size and underpowered study, which made it difficult to detect a relationship. Again, the literature lacks research on the general role involvement has on success for Black college students. There may be factors of involvement that are more beneficial when it comes to understanding Black students success. One factor may be the students' sense of belonging, which is something identified in the literature as being important to student success. HBCUs have had an academic culture of encouraging academic potential of students, having faculty members dedicated to teaching, maintaining supportive social environments, encouraging students with career goals and becoming leaders, and having faculty role models for students attending (Brown et al., 2005; Hamilton, 2009; Williams, 2014); these factors may prove useful in allowing Black students to succeed academically at PWIs, which creates a need for them to be investigated further. The institution itself has a shared responsibility of helping students to become more engaged. As universities grow more diverse, there is a

need for these institutions to adjust to the changing needs of their student body (Kuh, 2009).

It is important to state that this study did not seek to determine causality. The correlational design of the current study solely examined the possible relationship that may exist between NCRC and GPA/university satisfaction. The results indicate that a relationship does exist between NCRC and university satisfaction, but with the current study design there is no way to truly determine which variable influences the other.

## **Limitations**

The purpose of the current study was to examine the effects of NCRC on the GPA/university satisfaction of Black students, while examining involvement as a moderator of the relationship between NCRC and Black student success. A limitation within the design of the study is that it did not allow for multiple observations over time, making it difficult to assess how these variables might be related to student success over time. An additional limitation is the small sample size; the study was underpowered. A greater number of participants would have allowed for a better representation of the true nature of the relationship between the variables. There was a large number of students that were sent the survey via email, but the response rate was much lower than expected. With a response rate of approximately 5%, it is unlikely that the Black student population at the university was properly represented within the study. Having greater incentives for participating in the study may have generated a larger number of respondents. The surveys were also presented in a way that indicated interest in understanding students' views of the university's campus climate. Students who responded to the survey may have been specifically interested in campus climate awareness/change, more so than students that did not respond. Most students were also of junior or senior status which could have allowed them to be more aware of the campus climate at the university and more inclined to respond to the survey. Having a different means of presenting the survey may have allowed more students to feel more willing and able to participate.

Additionally, right before data collection started, there was an incident leading to the murder of a Black university student, which has undoubtedly affected the student body and the community. Many students in the Black student community, as well as others, were deeply affected by the circumstances and outcome of the events. Part of the recruitment method was to collect in person surveys from students in the African American Center for Academic Excellence (AACAE). Collecting survey responses from Black/African American students within the AACAE after the tragic event likely influenced the number of students willing to participate in the study. It was advised by the director of the AACAE to limit recruitment visits during the time of grieving, which ultimately limited opportunities for recruitment in the center. Being that the event influenced many within the student body, it is likely that response rate from online surveys, and even the responses given in the surveys, were also affected by the loss.

### **Future Research**

Given the limitations of the current study, it may be the case that involvement has more of an impact within this relationship than this study suggests. It would be important for future research to include larger sample size, one that is representative of the Black student population. The topic of Black student success is an important issue to be researched and discussed. Unfortunately, there is very little research looking at the role of campus climate in Black student success.

With the findings in the moderation analyses being non-significant, despite literature stating the academic benefits of SFI and COI, there is a great need for future

research to delve into why these factors are significant in some settings, but non-significant in others. Future research could look more into protective factors for Black students attending higher education; this can help identify buffers that may aid in helping Black students achieve, despite negative effects of campus climate. There has been very little research looking at student success at rural institutions, especially among Black students. Understanding the specific and unique factors that rural institutions may have on students, specifically Black students, may help educators and researchers to improve the academic outcomes for students attending universities.

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## Appendix A

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Gender	Male ( <i>n</i> = 17)	Female ( <i>n</i> = 39)	Total ( <i>N</i> = 56)
Age	M = 22.77 (SD = 4.94)		
GPA	M = 3.23 (SD = .30)		
Education			
Freshman	1	7	8
Sophomore	3	3	6
Junior	8	11	19
Senior	7	16	23
Race/Ethnicity			
Black	4	11	15
White		13	16
LatinX	3	5	8
Asian	1	1	2
Native American	0	2	2
Biracial/Other	6	7	13
Financial Aid	Yes ( <i>n</i> = 13) No ( <i>n</i> = 4)	Yes ( <i>n</i> = 34) No ( <i>n</i> = 5)	56
Job (Yes/No)	Yes ( <i>n</i> = 7) No ( <i>n</i> = 10)	Yes ( <i>n</i> = 18) No ( <i>n</i> = 21)	56

Table 2. Regression Results Examining NCRC as a Predictor of GPA

	<i>Df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	$\beta$	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
GPA							
Regression	1	.57	.57	.41	.17	4.28	.051
Residual	21	2.80	.13				
Total	22	3.37					
University Satisfaction							
Regression	1	20.99	20.99	-.70	.49	21.03	.000
Residual	22	21.97	1.0				
Total	23	42.96					

*Note.* \* $P < .05$

Table 3. Summary of Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting GPA and University Satisfaction (N= 26)

Variable	GPA					University Satisfaction				
	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$	$F$	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$	$F$
Model 1										
NCRC	0.46	2.20	.04*			-.72	-4.33	.003*		
SFI	.07	.42	.68			-.005	-.03	.98		
NCRC x SFI	-.19	-.90	.38	.21	1.71	.08	.46	.65	.49	6.52
Model 2										
NCRC	.34	1.65	.11			-.74	-4.47	.0002*		
COI	-.23	-1.12	.28			-.14	-.75	.46		
NCRC x COI	.19	.88	.39	.23	1.87	.10	.54	.59	.50	6.76

Note.  $\beta$ , standardized regression coefficient;  $t$ , obtained t-value;  $p$ , probability;  $R^2$ , proportion variance explained;  $F$ ,  $F$  Statistic; NCRC, Negative Campus Racial Climate; SFI, Student Faculty Interaction; COI, Club and Organizational Involvement \* $p < .05$

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics and t-test Results comparing SOC and Non-SOC on Study Variables

Mean (SE)	SOC (n=40)	Non-SOC (n=16)	t	df	p*
Negative Campus Climate (NCRC)	4.08 (.13)	4.12 (.18)	-.18	50	.86
Club Involvement (COI)	3.20 (.12)	2.84 (.24)	1.44	50	.16
Faculty Involvement (FI)	2.76 (.15)	3.34 (.25)	-2.0	48	.051
GPA	2.89 (.13)	3.36 (.10)	-2.52	46	.01
University Satisfaction	4.17 (.24)	5.23 (.23)	-2.28	50	.03

\*2-tailed

Table 5. Correlations for SOC (n= 40) and Non-SOC (n=16)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean (SD)
1. NCRC	—	.84**	.90**	-0.13	0.47	-0.07	0.18	0.28	0.38	-0.09	3.96 (1.38)
2. Racial Experiences	.91**	—	0.51	-0.07	0.12	0.06	0.36	0.26	0.43	0.07	3.97 (1.54)
3. University Perceptions	.90**	.64**	—	-0.14	.625*	-0.16	0	0.23	0.24	-0.19	3.95 (1.50)
4. Club Involvement (COI)	-0.26	-.38*	-0.09	—	-0.37	0.47	-0.19	0.44	-0.13	0.02	3.20 (.76)
5. Faculty Involvement (SFI)	-0.15	-0.09	-0.17	-.36*	—	-0.42	0.21	0.23	-0.24	0.22	2.77 (.90)
6. GPA	.396*	.384*	0.32	-0.33	0.05	—	-0.48	0.01	-0.18	-0.48	2.29 (.77)
7. Age	0.02	0.03	0	-0.06	0.13	0.27	—	0.05	0.27	0.34	21.75 (3.43)
8. Financial Aid	0.06	0.11	0	-0.11	-0.13	-0.23	-0.14	—	-0.16	0.44	.85 (.37)
9. Retention	0.24	0.11	0.33	0.11	-0.04	-0.17	-.38*	0.15	—	-0.07	0.95 (0.31)
10. University Satisfaction	-.60**	-.54**	-.56**	0.06	0.06	-0.24	0.11	0.29	-0.33	—	4.17 (1.42)
Mean (SD)	3.34 (1.2)	3.47 (1.26)	3.21 (1.53)	2.84 (.91)	3.35 (.38)	3.36 (.38)	25.31 (7.02)	.81 (.40)	.77 (.44)	5.23 (.83)	—

*Note.* Correlations for SOC sample (n=30 through n=40) below the diagonal, and Correlations for NON-SOC sample (n=13 through n=16) above the diagonal. Means and SD for NON-SOC below the chart, and means for SOC sample to the right of the chart\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## Appendix B

### Surveys

#### Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?

Man

Woman

Non-binary/Non-conforming

Not listed:

2. Please select all that apply: To what racial or ethnic group do you belong?

1 = Native American Indian

2 = Black/African American

3 = White (Not Hispanic)

4 = Asian

5 = Hispanic

6 = Other (Please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

3. Where were you born? State/Country: \_\_\_\_\_

4. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What year are you in school?

Freshperson

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

6. What was your high school GPA? \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is your current college GPA? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you have a job during the semester? 1 = Yes 2 = No

8a. How many hours per week do you work:

School year: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Do you receive financial aid? 1 = Yes 2 = No

10. Are you a part of any of the following programs on campus? (select all that apply)

EOP

HOP

RAMP

Intercept

YES

LatinX Center for Academic Excellence

Native American Center for Academic Excellence

African American Center for Academic Excellence

Other (Please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

11. What clubs are you a part of? If none say "none".

Please list: \_\_\_\_\_



### College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ)

In your experience at this institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?

	Very often	Often	Occasionally	Never
Attended a meeting of a campus club, organization, or student government group.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worked on a campus committee, student organization, or project (publications, student government, special event, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worked on an off-campus committee, organization, or project (civic group, church group, community event, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Met with a faculty member or staff advisor to discuss the activities of a group or organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managed or provided leadership for a club or organization, on or off the campus.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



**Retention Measure**

Do you intend to return to ‘University’ in the fall?

Yes

*Please specify reason for returning* \_\_\_\_\_

No

*Please specify reason for leaving* \_\_\_\_\_

**Satisfaction Scale**

How would you rate your satisfaction with your experience at ‘University’?

1	2	3	4	5	6
	7				
Not at all satisfied			Moderately satisfied		Very
satisfied					

**Club/organization Involvement Qualitative**

What motivated you to become involved in clubs/organizations at ‘University’?

- a. Build social relations
- b. Academic/occupational endeavors
- c. Help adjusting/integrating
- d. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please specify response* \_\_\_\_\_