



## Campus Racial Climate for African Americans Scale

Dominique Thomas



Figure 1 Photo by Kim Orr, NASA. Used under CC 2.0

African American students have persevered through unwelcome, hostile, and violent racial climates at their colleges and universities. Racial incidents continue to occur, sometimes with fatal outcomes. This was the case in 2017 for Bowie State University student Richard Collins III, who was stabbed by a University of Maryland student in what is widely considered a racially motivated murder.

The current political climate has left many individuals from marginalized backgrounds feeling unsafe and unwelcome in their collegiate environments. It is vital that we include the voices and experiences of African American students as we create more welcoming campus communities.

“From the moment the first African American student integrated a formerly segregated school African Americans have endured indignities and brutality at institutions of higher learning.”

Many institutions of higher learning regularly conduct “campus climate” surveys to assess student perceptions and concerns. For my dissertation, I created a campus racial climate measure specifically for African American college students. The goal was to develop a culturally-relevant measure for this population, basing the questions on the experiences of African American college students.

## Highlights

**Colleges and universities should provide support for African American students at an institutional level through resources such as student organizations, programs, and curricula.**

**Institutional support is vital for African American students.**

**We must include the voices and experiences of African American students in our administrative planning.**

## **Methods**

I conducted a mixed-methods study to develop the scale, using group interviews to create the items and surveys to validate the measure. Data collection took place from January 2017 to June 2017. The final measure consisted of three subscales: Institutional Factors, Racial Attitudes & Experiences, and Student Interracial Interactions.

### ***Campus Racial Climate for African Americans Scale***

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#### *Institutional Factors*

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- 1. The university has practices in place that support African American students.*
  - 2. The university has organizations that support African Americans (clubs, fraternities and sororities, etc.).*
  - 3. The university hosts events that promote and celebrate diversity.*
  - 4. The university hosts events that promote and celebrate African American culture.*
  - 5. There are courses available to me that focus on African American culture and history.*
  - 6. The university employs enough African American professors.*
  - 7. African Americans are represented in high-ranking positions (faculty, staff, administration).*
  - 8. African Americans are recognized for their accomplishments on campus.*
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#### *Racial Experiences and Perceptions*

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- 1. People on campus have negative stereotypes toward African American students. (R)*
  - 2. People on campus have low expectations of African American students. (R)*
  - 3. African American students must go above and beyond to get the same benefits as students of other races/ethnicities. (R)*
  - 4. People on campus use racial slurs and commit racist acts against African American students (refusing service, saying the N-word, etc.). (R)*
  - 5. I only feel comfortable with other African American students. (R)*
  - 6. Students only feel comfortable in their own racial/ethnic groups. (R)*
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#### *Student Interracial Interactions*

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- 1. Students from different races and ethnicities attend social events together.*
- 2. Students from different races and ethnicities study together.*
- 3. Students from different races and ethnicities do extracurricular activities together.*

## **HOW DID A COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE INFORM YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUES, RESULTS, AND IMPLICATIONS?**

The value of respect for diversity largely informs the direction of my work. My goal is to make sure there are culturally-relevant measures to properly capture the experiences of African American college students. It also helped me to understand that racial climate is not just a series of one-on-one interactions, but a broader structure of resources, power, and relationships.

### **What Does This Mean For?**

*Student Activists*— Can use this measure to provide evidence that backs their concerns and give them directions for future conversations with university leaders.

*College and University Administrators*— Can use this measure to assess their own racial climates and develop programs and interventions to improve the environment for African American students.

For more information: <https://www.mixcloud.com/natalie-kivell/rap84-tackling-campus-racial-climate-and-institutional-racism-with-dr-dominique-thomas/>

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