Relationship Between Racial Microaggression and Psychological Wellbeing of
African American College Students


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Charles Andre Helm


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**Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to Wilma L. Helm my model for living.


"You have a good heart

That's the foundation,

But on this earth

You need wisdom."

**Abstract**

Many researchers have investigated the relationship between the experiences of overt racist events and psychological wellbeing (Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Harrell, Hall & Taliaferro, 2003; Okazaki, 2009). The purpose of this study was to evaluate the relationship between psychological wellbeing and racial microaggressions. Psychological wellbeing is measured through classifications of depression, depressive symptoms, and self-esteem. A total of 234 African American college students completed the Racial Ethnic Microaggression Scale (REMS: Nadal, 2010); Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES: Rosenberg, 1965), and Beck Depression Inventory (BDI: Beck, Ward, Mendelson, & Erbaugh, 1916). An analysis of the primary factors, depression, self esteem and racial microaggression was conducted. A statistically significant positive relationship between racial ethnic microaggressions and depression (BDI raw scores; r = .622, p < .001; BDI classifications r = .563, p < .001), and racial microaggression and self-esteem, (RSES; r =.206, p =.002) were found.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

With the election of the country's first African American President, many United

States citizens began to profess that racial equity was in sight. Popular commentators and

civil leaders openly questioned whether racism still exists in America, and if so, to what

extent (Ifill, 2009; Paramewaran, 2009).  The United States has moved past the days of

publicly denying African Americans the right to eat at white restaurants and other signs

of blatant racism.  Now, African Americans can greet whites while passing, marry

interracially, and attend schools among different races. These changes are evidence that

the United States has progressed past the overt notions of racial separation and "separate

but equal." In addition to the idea that racism is becoming extinct, many discussed the

"boot strapping theory" as evidence of equality. This theory states that any American

citizen, regardless of oppression or marginalization, can succeed if he or she tries hard

enough.

I believe that the attitudes described above and many others like it, allow color-

blindness to exist, and also that this country preaches the notion of an equal humanistic

approach towards diversity while simultaneously holding on to stereotypes about

minoritized communities. The color-blind approach is similar to bootstrapping, in that it

believes that color (race) no longer matters in society. Color-blindness indicates that all

Americans can be equal if everyone chooses not to acknowledge current and historic

oppression (Worthington, Navarro, Loewy & Hart, 2008).  The approach is based on the

idea that being human is the most important factor in society. This thought is often

verbalized as "America is a melting pot" and "I don't see color."  This concept of color-

blindness promotes ignoring the psychohistory and racial identity of persons of color.

The notion that persons of color are accepted in the pot of America if they choose to

blend and melt their color into acceptable hues is a conditional acceptance. The

approaches above subtly and repeatedly invalidate experiences of some people of color,

and also that these subtle forms of racism exist in an institutionalized way.

The subtle message outlined in the above examples grant provisional acceptance.

The "America is a Melting Pot", "I don't see color," and "the boot strapping theory" each

invalidate the psychohistory of the oppression of people of color. These ideas place the

responsibility of effort with the boot strapping, blending with the melting pot, and

ignoring self with color-blindness on the oppressed. Each sentiment conveys a subtle

message of equality at the expense of the oppressed. Meaning, persons of color can be

seen as equal if they forego acknowledging racial disparities.  These ideas ask persons of

color to separate their race from their identity, in order to be seen as equal. The request of

separation often comes from subtle statements from the majority culture in reference to

the minority culture.

These subtle racist statements, termed racial microaggressions, occur within the

American education system and negatively affect the psychological wellbeing of minority

students (Hernandez, Carranza, & Almeida, 2010). Racial microaggressions are "the

subtle and commonplace exchanges that somehow convey insulting or demeaning

messages to people of color" (Constantine, 2007, p. 2).  The effects of racial

microaggressions and overt racism are important factors within the psychohistory of African Americans within education. The psychohistory includes violence, threats, and legislation that oppressed people of color. The psychohistory contributes to current attitudes about education and low enrollment in higher education.

Furthermore, while minority populations are increasing, people of color remain underrepresented in higher education (Thompson, Gorin Obeidat & Chen, 2006). Of the minority groups, African American students are my primary concern. In 1996, Nora and Cabrera found African American students are 22% more likely to drop out of college compared to white students. In 2005, Astin and Osegura found that African American students enroll and graduate from post-secondary institutions at a much lower rate than white students. The most recent data, reflecting enrollment ending in 2010, by the National Center for Educational Statistics concludes that there is a 10 percent increase in enrollment among Hispanic students and a 5 percent increase in enrollment among African American students (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Although the racial composition of the country and campuses are changing as a result of people of color, it appears that African Americans continue to be underrepresented in higher education.

Sufficient evidence exists to suggest that racial microaggressions influence African American students' achievement and perceptions of campus climate (Hrabowski & Maton, 2009; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Researchers have suggested that students' adjustment to college environments plays a vital role in achievement, college satisfaction and lower levels of stress during college (D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Prelow & Guarnaccia, 1997; Solorzano, 2000; Worthington et al.,

2008). However, the isolation and displacement of African American students, often experienced through subtle racism, on college campuses may create an uncomfortable learning environment and decrease in psychological wellbeing. Nora and Cabrera (1996) assert that minority students experience prejudice and racist campus climates in a way that has the potential to lower the quality of their college experiences. They suggest that many African American students report their experiences of prejudice and race as forms of racial microaggressions.

Many existing studies investigate the influence of racist events, racism, and race related life stressors on psychological wellbeing defined in terms of self-esteem and depression. This study examined the relationship between racial microaggressions and psychological wellbeing. Specifically, it investigated the questions: 1) What is the relationship among racial microaggressions and the psychological wellbeing of African American college students at a Predominantly white Institution (PWI)?; 2) Are there gender differences in the racial microaggressions reported by African American college students at PWIs?; 3) What is the relationship between self-esteem and racial microaggressions?; and 4) What is the relationship between depression and racial microaggressions?

These questions are investigated through reviewing literature focused on: (a) the psychological wellbeing of students defined through self-esteem, (b) the psychological wellbeing of students defined through depression, (c) a comparison of the experiences of African American students at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) to majority culture students at the same institution, (d) a comparison of the experience of African American

students at historically black colleges and universities (HBCU) to experiences of African American students at PWIs, (e) African American male college experiences of racist events on college campuses and (f) African American college students' experience of racial microaggressions.

**Significance of the Problem**

This study contributes to understandings about how race affects African American students' college experiences and psychological wellbeing. While many researchers have investigated the experiences of overt racist events and conducted inquiries of how perceived racism influences psychological wellbeing (Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Harrell, Hall & Taliaferro, 2003; Okazaki, 2009), few have viewed the variable of racism as racial microaggressions. Moreover, the available research on racial microaggressions does not quantifiably link racial microaggressions to psychological wellbeing. Mainly, the racial microaggression studies have captured the narratives of the racially offended using qualitative methods. This current research studies the relationships between these variables and the strength and direction of possible relationships. This study will investigate if subtle everyday racist events are related to the psychological wellbeing of African American students within higher education using quantitative assessments.

This research provides information on the experiences of African American men and women. More African American women than African American men have been graduating from college for almost a half-century (Garibaldi, 2009), and African American women have been relatively successful in their college enrollment, compared to African American men (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Yet, African American men have

historically been neglected in the research in reference to undergraduate enrollment, experience, and degree completion (Lundy & Wagner, 2011). In recent years, however, researchers have become more committed to focusing their research agendas on the dilemmas African American males face in higher education.

Although there is a need to increase the amount of available research on African American males, the existing literature has produced some important findings. For example studies have found that once enrolled, African American male college students report high volumes of racial microaggression incidents and strong psychological responses of frustration, shock, avoidance, withdrawal, disbelief, anger, anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness and fear when describing college experience (Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli, 2000). Within higher education, African American males report experiencing a heightened sense of racial reality, a constant reminder of racial differences demonstrated through positive and negative expectations. Racial reality refers to the way one's race influences their reality (Sue & Sue, 2008). Many African American males' racial realities include a continuous awareness of a burden related to stereotypes about being African American as well as the burden of stereotypes related to being African American male. Smith et al. (2007) found African American males endorsed experiencing racist events as a result of both their male identity and African American identity. The surveyed African Americans reported experiences of racial microaggressions as well as overt racism on college campuses. It is important to understand the differences in cultural experiences of African American women and

African American men in hopes of better serving their needs for personal growth and academic achievement.

**Definition of Terms**

Racial Microaggression. Constantine (2007) defined racial microaggression as the "subtle and commonplace exchanges that somehow convey insulting or demeaning messages to people of color" (p. 2). The subtlety mentioned in this definition includes offenders' unconscious and conscious harboring of negative feelings and beliefs about historically disadvantaged groups (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). This study will use Sue et al.'s (2007) definition of microaggressions as brief and commonplace daily exchanges as well as "verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color" (p. 271).

For the purpose of this study, institutions will be identified as PWIs or HBCUs. PWIs are college and university campuses whose primary enrollment consists of white raced individuals. HBCUs will be used to reference historically black institutions. HBCUs are commonly defined as colleges and universities founded prior to the Civil Rights Act that were designed for the purpose of educating African Americans (Patterson, Dunston & Daniels, 2011). For this study, the definition of HBCU will be founded in the above definition; however, it will also include institutions founded after the Civil Rights Act that were designed for the purpose of educating African Americans.

Bowman (2010) defined psychological wellbeing using many theoretical approaches from Maslow (1968), Erikson (1959), and Jung (1933). The idea of

psychological wellbeing is based on characteristics and perceptions that influence one's adjustment. Psychological wellbeing includes sense of purpose, social connectedness, life satisfaction, and self-esteem. For the purpose of this study, psychological wellbeing will be measured through the constructs of self-esteem and depression.  Depression and depressive symptoms are aligned with a sense of purpose, social connectedness, and life satisfaction as measured by Rosenberg (1965).  Furthermore, this study will used Rosenberg's definition of self-esteem to conceptualize psychological wellbeing. Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall positive evaluation of the self (Rosenberg, 1965).

This paper will use the term minoritized to discuss racialized experiences and acts of racism. "Minoritized refers to the objective outcome, experienced by "minority" racial ethnic groups, of the exclusionary practices of more dominant groups resulting from history and contemporary racism" (Gillborm, 2005). Furthermore, Harper (2012) asserts that one is not born into the minority status however states one's minority status to be contextual.  One may be of minority status as a man attending an all woman's college, however he would not be of minority status on an all male basketball team. African Americans may be minoritized in on predominantly white college campus but not within their families or racially homogeneous friendships groups.

Chapter 2

This chapter will review the literature regarding psychological wellbeing as defined through the constructs of self-esteem and depression, African American college experiences of racist events, and racial microaggressions. Additionally, this literature review will provide knowledge of how concepts of depression and self-esteem are viewed in development. Furthermore, this chapter reviews experiences of depression and self-esteem by college students. In addition a review of literature on the relationship between race and depression as well as self-esteem and race will be provided.. Lastly this literature review will provide knowledge about African American students' experiences of subtle racism, termed racial microaggressions. [1]

*Self-Esteem*

Self-esteem has been examined in numerous ways from many perspectives. In the helping profession it is a commonplace belief that people will seek avenues and opportunities to maintain, enhance, and protect their self-esteem. Individuals are most likely to seek out opportunities they believe will increase, or at least not decrease, their self-esteem (Allport, 1955; James, 1910). One philosophy of self-esteem is summarized through the following statement: "our self-feeling in this world depends entirely on what we back ourselves to be and do" (James, 1890, p. 45). In other words, one's feeling is based on what one believes about oneself, regarding purpose and ability. Individuals can

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[1] Sections of the following literature review were used in part to fill requirements of an Education Policy Administration – Higher Education masters degree at the University of Minnesota, Spring 2013.

build esteem by being successful or productive in areas that they deem important. These ideologies and others have influenced sociologists (Callero, 2003; Van Laar (2000), psychologists (Allport, 1955), and educators (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010), creating various theories to explain, as well as define, self-esteem.

The literature reviewed in this section used William James' (1890) approach to self-worth and self-esteem, which has become the foundation for many assessments. James states that self-esteem is a response to positive or negative events that have impacted one's self worth. People tend to be happy following perceived success and sad following perceived failures (Frijda, 1988). James believed that one's self-esteem rises and falls as a function of achievement.

Theorists have proposed self-esteem to include appraisal, competency and competition. In each definition there is a hierarchy or standard of comparison. The perspective that self-esteem is built upon appraisal includes the desire to be praised or recognized by someone. Likewise, competency requires guidelines to determine the competent from the incompetent. Competition also includes dueling desires to triumph over something or someone. This acknowledgement fuels the belief that oppressed communities will report lower self-esteem because the achieving standard is often outside their cultural norms, especially within the United States. This idea is important in conceptualizing the effects that racist events and racial microaggression may have on the self-esteem of African American students who may not hold themselves to the standards and guidelines of the majority culture.

Van Laar (2002) utilized Mead's (1934) and Cooley's (1956) perspective that self-esteem is highly related to the appraisals of others. This approach is termed the "looking glass self" and "reflected appraisals." According to this definition of self-esteem, one could hypothesize that African American college students internalize the negative stigma surrounding their group and blame themselves for their lower outcomes. This idea will be explored further later in this paper. More recently, Crocker, Sommers and Luhtanen (2002) defined self-esteem as global judgments of self-worth, self-respect, or self-acceptance. Crocker et al.'s (2002) definition was expanded to include domain-specific evaluations of aspects of the self in areas such as appearance, academia, athletics, (Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, & Rosenberg, 1995; Woike & Baumgardner, 1993). Common definitions of self-esteem recognize the construct as both global and domain-specific. Self-esteem can be thought of as either a trait or a state. Others have defined self-esteem as the positive affect toward the self or as having an affective component (Pelham & Swann, 1989; Smelser, 1989) and research consistently finds correlations in the range of .5 to .6 between global self-esteem and current positive affect.

Rosenberg (1965), popularly recognized for research on self-esteem, wrote extensively on the subject from the perspective of global self-esteem. He defined self-esteem as both favorable and unfavorable attitudes regarding one's self. Global self-esteem, which is most widely referenced in psychology, is trait-like and quite stable over time but it also fluctuates within people as an independent variable predicting defensive reactions to success and failure feedback. Rosenberg developed a self-esteem instrument, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), which is the most widely used self-esteem

assessment spanning many demographic variables in psychology. The RSES was originally developed with 5024 randomly selected junior and senior students from 10 schools in New York high schools.

Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was designed to measure the evaluative attitude toward the self by using self-acceptance and self-worth statements. Rosenberg's scale consists of 10 Likert-type items (some of which are reverse scored) in which one of four responses can be selected: *strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree*. One obtains the score by summing all the respondent's points; the score can range from 10 to 40. The higher the score, the higher one's reported self-esteem. A sample item from the scale is "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself." Rosenberg (1979) reported that his Self-Esteem Scale has been shown to have a test-retest reliability of .88 with college student participants and a convergent construct validity coefficient of .83 with the Self-Image Questionnaire.

The history of self-esteem provides a foundation for interpreting the following studies in this chapter. The presented literature views self-esteem as a global concept as well as domain or a state trait. Both approaches have contributed to understanding self-esteem. This current study was conducted using the global approach of Rosenberg (1965), which will be discussed further in this chapter.

*Achievement & Self-Esteem*

Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, and Bouvrette (2003)'s research contributes to the knowledge of self-esteem and achievement. These researchers assert that a decrease in self-esteem comes from the belief that one cannot change the negative responses one

receives within the desire domain of praise. For example, suppose that an individual of less than average height is told that he would not be successful playing the basketball position of a center, because of his height. The athlete may perceive these constant messages as a situation that he cannot change and subsequently, this decreases his confidence in his ability to play center. Ultimately, this can affect one's self-esteem if personal value is placed in the athletic domain. As a result, the athlete may begin to see himself or herself as less athletic or valuable to the basketball team compared to athletes with more height. Similarly, Van Laar (2000) discussed social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954; Willis, 1991) as a way to understand self-esteem. Van Laar (2000) predicts that downward social comparison following negative performance feedback will lead to a less positive self-concept. This symbolic interactionist perspective maintains that the appraisals reflected by others will be internalized into the self-concept (Colley, 1956). These approaches are congruent with Allport's (1955), James' (1910), and Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, and Bouvrette's (2003) understanding of self-esteem.

Moreover, Crocker et al. (2003) report the success or failure of a goal to have intense and extreme effects on self-esteem. Furthermore, because events or goals have the potential to greatly affect self-esteem, individuals may opt to protect their self-esteem by avoiding risky goals. In the example provided above, if the student was to take the risk and continue to pursue the center position on a basketball team, the consequence related to his self-esteem could be high if he places high value in this domain. The student may opt not to tryout for the position and protect his self-esteem by being able to attribute his

decision of not trying out for the team to other factors that are not connected to his self-worth.

For some students, grades are an important determining factor of their self-worth. Crocker, Karpinski, Quinn, and Chase (2003) researched the influence that academic outcomes have on self-worth and self-esteem. These authors propose that students view their grades to be congruent with their worth. Using global self-esteem as a reference, this suggests that students receiving average grades view themselves and their worth to be average in comparison to other students. Subsequently, this thought creates the potential for instability in worth, as grades and subject matter fluctuate. Crocker et al. (2003) believed that a relationship between students' grades and self-esteem would also affect other factors of psychological well-being.

Crocker et al. (2003) solicited one hundred and twenty-two students, including 62 participants (32 men and 30 women) from Introduction to Engineering and 60 participants (28 men and 32 women) from Introduction to Psychology courses to complete pre-test and post measures of the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale measuring global self-worth; a contingency of self-worth assessment (Crocker and Wolfe, 1998; Crocker, Luhatanen, Cooper & Bouvrette, 2003) which assessed nine domains that college students might base their self-worth upon; and a Daily Report measurement that asked participants to record their emotions each day, as well as class activities, such as exams and academic scores. The researchers found that self-esteem increased on days students received good grades and decreased on days students received poor grades.

Additionally, Crocker, Sommers and Luhtanen (2002) used James' argument that self-esteem fluctuates with success and failure. James (1983) believed that self-esteem comes from self-evaluations that are integrated into one's life based on desire and importance. Crocker et al. (2002) solicited 32 (12 male and 20 female) college seniors applying to graduate programs to complete post and pretest measures of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory and a Web Page Measurement where they answered questions about their daily opinion of self. The study investigated whether students would base their self-esteem on whether or not they received admission to a graduate program of their choice. A hierarchical linear regression model was used to analyze the data and concluded that participants who based their self-esteem on academic competence showed greater increases in self-esteem when they received an acceptance letter from institutions of higher education than those who were declined.

Research presented in this section states that academic achievement and appraisal has an influence on self-esteem. One's self-esteem may be influenced depending on how important the evaluating domain is to the identity of self. The example of the basketball player stated that negative appraisal could influence self-esteem if the individual places a lot of self-worth in the idea of being a basketball center. The concept of "stock", where one places value or importance, is a factor in measuring self-esteem. Some individuals may have no value in educational domains or may protect themselves from the evaluation by placing lower amounts of stock in the evaluation being a part of one's ideal self-worth. This section provided research stating that individuals have a choice to select the amount

of value one places in a chosen domain. Also, research was presented regarding the

relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement.

Race & Self-Esteem

Research from studies using various low status groups is consistent with the

interpretation that attributing negative outcomes to external causes, such as

discrimination, protects one's self-esteem, whereas attributing negative outcomes to

internal attributions leads to lower self-esteem. Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry (2003), as

well as Oyserman, Gant, and Ager (1995), showed that awareness of racism is positively

correlated with self-esteem, suggesting that recognition of racism either in one's own life

or as a general force in society preserves and protects one's sense of personal worth.

Students can then attribute the negative evaluations to the evaluator's attitudes instead of

their own ability. Using the ideal that one may protect self-esteem by attributing external

factors as a cause for lower outcomes, it is reasonable to believe that this is how African

American college students may possess high self-esteem while being disengaged in the

curriculum, resulting in lower achievement. Furthermore, attributing low outcomes to be

the result of external factors can assist individuals in distribution of stock in the education

domain as well as the interpretation of the education domain.

Research has focused on the difference between self-esteem and race. Many

researchers assume that African Americans would report more negative psychological

outcomes (Erikson, 1965; Zeigler-Hill, 2007). This assumption is largely based on the

psychohistory and marginalization of African Americans within the United States.

Researchers hypothesized that factors of slavery, discrimination, racism, and legalized

segregation would negatively influence an African American's view of self (Twenge & Crocker, 2002). Zeigler-Hill (2007) stated "the experience of oppression, discrimination, and segregation would have a devastating impact on Blacks (African Americans) resulting in at the very least in low self-esteem" (p. 52). Using the psychohistoric perspective, self-esteem amongst African Americans is thought to have risen during the late 1960s because of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. These eras are viewed as times of racial solidarity and successful progression. Twenge and Crocker (2002) reported arguments that support the hypothesis that racialized communities develop low self-esteem as a direct result of internalizing socially accepted negative ideologies about their culture from the cultural majority.

Adding to this knowledge, Zeigler-Hill (2007) investigated measures of self-esteem between African American (n= 158) and white students (n=196). The researcher recruited 354 undergraduates to complete the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale to assess seven domains on which college students may base their self-esteem. .Zeigler-Hill (2007) found that African Americans reported higher self-esteem and were less likely than white students to base their self-esteem on the approval of others. The idea that African Americans based their self-esteem on approval to a lesser extent compared to white counterparts may be due to protective factors of racism. African Americans have "self-protective properties provided by membership in a stigmatized group [which] may account for Black self-esteem advantage" (p. 52).

These studies support the idea that self-esteem has a relationship with academic factors that include, but are not limited to: academic performance outcome, academic self-efficacy and academic expectations. I assert that members of minoritized communities academic performance, academic self-efficacy, and academic expectations are influenced in part by their ascribed cultural psychohistory. Furthermore, I question how current oppression, both overt and subtle, influences self-esteem within education.

In the review of literature, Van Laar (2000) found that the longer students are in school, the wider the achievement gap grows between African American and white students. However, since the late 1980s there has been a leveling off in the number of black college students continuing on to college, whereas among white students the rate is still increasing – leading to a widening of the gap between black and white college enrollment rates (Hauser & Anderson, 1991; NCES, 1994, 1995).

Many social scientists (Steele, 1997; Van Laar, 2000) have assumed that the lower academic performance from African American students would be reflective of a more negative self-esteem in these students. Recently, a number of researchers have focused on the disidentification or disengagement with the college domain among African American students as one vehicle by which self-esteem may become disassociated from academic achievement (Osborne, 1995; Steele, 1997). In other words, African American students may disidentify or disengage with the education domain and attribute their academic performance to external factors, thereby protecting their self-esteem. An example of disengagement is a student believing that the curriculum or instructor has a cultural bias, which prevents him from valuing the respective domain.

This concept of disidentification will be discussed in greater detail later in this paper in the racial microaggression section.

The research reviewed in this section investigates the role of race and self-esteem within education. Some literature suggests that that race has a negative influence on self-esteem as a result of racism. Other literature posits that race will have no influence on self-esteem as a result of external attributions. Each study reviewed above used the same measure of self-esteem, Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, as this study. The research reviewed does not conclude that race will negatively contribute to self-esteem.

*Discrimination and Self-Esteem*

Tovar-Murray and Munley (2007) used results from national (Jackson, Williams & Torres, 1997; Pernice & Brook, 1996) and community surveys (Amaro, Russo, & Johnson, 1987) to conclude that there is a relationship between African Americans' self-esteem and perceived racial discrimination (Fernando, 1984). The researchers found, the more one perceived racial discrimination, the higher one reported self-esteem. This is contradictory to much research that reports prolonged exposure to racism (race-related trauma; racism-related fatigue; anticipatory racism reaction; racism-related frustration; racism-related confusion; race-related stress) negatively affects the mental health of African Americans (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2010). In order to understand self-esteem and African Americans, it is important to consider the effects of race-related stress as a factor that may influence psychological wellbeing.

Tovar-Murray and Munley (2007) explored the relationship between identity, wellbeing, and race-related stress among 196 African Americans. Participants were given

the African Self-Consciousness Scale (ASCS; Baldwin & Bell, 1985), the Index of Race-Related Stress (IRRS; Utsey, 1999) brief version, measuring the stress experienced in race-related situations; the Satisfaction with Life Scale used to measure participants' judgments of their life; World Health Organization Quality of Life- Brief (WHOQOLBREF, Harper & Power, 1998) measuring four domains: physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environment to reflect general overall health; and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) to measure global self-esteem.

These researchers did not find that decreasing race-related stress increased self-esteem. In contrast, race-related stress was found not to be a significant factor in predicting self-esteem. This finding contradicts researchers who believe that self-esteem will be greatly affected by the psychohistory of minoritized communities. The results of this study found that the more education attained the higher one reported of self-esteem. .

Greene, Way and Pahl (2006) investigated relationships between perceived discrimination and self-esteem. A three-year longitudinal study was conducted with African American, Latino, and Asian American high school students. Participants were asked to complete two surveys designed specifically for this study: the 'perceived discrimination by adults' assessment to measure perceived ethnic and racial discrimination by adults; and the 'perceived discrimination by peers' assessment, which assesses perceived discrimination by peers. Both assessments contain 7 items and are measured on a 5-point Likert scale. A sample question from the 'perceived discrimination by adults' assessment is "How often are you treated unfairly by adults because of your race or ethnicity?" A sample question from the 'perceived discrimination by peers'

assessment is "How often are you called names or insulted by other teenagers because of your race or ethnicity?" Participants were also given an ethnic identity assessment, the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992), which measured ethnic identity achievement and ethnic affirmation. Lastly, participants were administered the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale to measure global self-esteem. Green et al. (2006) found increased peer and adult discrimination to be strongly associated with decreased self-esteem. Furthermore, it was found that discrimination increased depressive symptoms over time.

These articles demonstrate the incongruent conclusions that exist regarding whether racism causes decreased self-esteem. The authors both used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and arrived at different conclusions. The direction and relationship between racist events and self-esteem is not conclusive and the previous section's review of self-esteem may assert that domain and attribution may be contributing factors. This current study will investigate the relationship between subtle racist events and self-esteem.

*African Americans & Self-Esteem within Education*

Self-esteem has also been studied in attempts to identify the pertinent variables related to the academic achievement of African American students (Chavous et al, 2003; Lockett & Harrell, 2003; Sellers, Chavous, & Cooke, 1998; Witherspoon, Speight, & Thomas, 1997). Award (2007) researched the role of racial identity, academic self-concept and self-esteem as the predictors of academic outcomes of African American students. Award wrote about the plight of many African American college students

facing oppositional identity. The author explained this concept to be similar to being told that succeeding academically was a disgrace to the African American race.

Award (2007) used the example of being told that students are "acting white" as an example of oppositional identity. "Factors believed to contribute to the lower levels of academic achievement of African American students include oppositional identity, "acting White'" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), and general anti-intellectualism (Cokley, 2003) (p. 189)." Award's research suggests that curriculum and dialogue that overtly or subtly encourages the notion that succeeding academically would be against the cultural norms of African American colleges students would have an effect on students' self-concept and self-esteem.

Award (2007) provided research to support the claim that self-esteem is a pertinent variable related to academic outcomes. Award claims that previous research suggested that African Americans suffered from low self-esteem as a result of marginalization and prejudice. The researchers state that the psychohistory of oppression caused minoritized populations to consistently view themselves as inferior in comparison to the majoritized populations causing low self-esteem. Award's research contradicts this idea of African Americans having lower self-esteem via his finding that African Americans tend to have higher self-esteem than white people.

Award (2007) solicited 313 African American students to complete the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) based on Cross's (1991) revised nigrescence model evaluating the stages of racial identity of each respondent; Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale evaluating global self-esteem that includes scoring items' agreeability on such

statements as "I feel I'm a person of worth"; Academic Self-Concept Scale (ASCS; Baldwin & Bell, 1985) developed to measure the overall aspects of a student's academic self-concept; Graduate Records Exam (GRE), a verbal, quantitative, and analytical assessment used by many institutions of higher education to assess one's readiness for advanced education; and a demographic questionnaire with items such as gender, race, class, and age, among others.

The research concludes that academic self-concept significantly predicted students' grade point averages and that racial identity did not predict their grades or test performance. Furthermore, the research reports that global self-esteem did not significantly predict grade point averages of participants or test scores.

Okech and Harrington (2002) investigated self-esteem, black consciousness and academic self-efficacy. The concept of black consciousness relates to one's beliefs and attitudes about self, race, and one's experience of being a member of a minoritized community. As discussed earlier, African Americans do not generally possess lower amounts of self-esteem in comparison to their white majority counterparts. It was also previously discussed that the psychohistory of African Americans in the United States continues to be a factor to influence the perspective mentioned above. Baldwin (1984) believes that African Americans possess low self-esteem because of oppressive Eurocentric approaches. Furthermore Baldwin (1984) discussed conceptualizing cultural norms within African American communities to be less than compare to Eurocentric majority culture. Race and culture in the United State not only dictated which schools one would attend but also the taught material, and granted opportunities. African Americans

were not welcomed into all vocations and were seen to be intellectually inferior. Some

believed African American to be impervious to learning. The attitude of individualism

was not congruent with the collectivist approach to life held by many African American

communities. The history of the education system created a limit to academic

achievement for African Americans, subsequently limiting potential. This contributes to

the thought that individual may not place full stock of self within the education domain.

Okech and Harrington (2002) reviewed the idea that African Americans may not

put complete stock in academia as a protection mechanism. Some African Americans

may perceive the environment of higher education as not accepting their norms or not

expecting African American students to be successful. These messages are subtly

conveyed in the American education system and will be addressed further in latter parts

of this paper.

Steele (1992) asserts that marginalized students receiving subtle slights or overt

racism are likely to disidentify with education. Disidentification is a term used to define

the process of detaching oneself from learning and academic outcomes. Some scholars

would argue that this detachment is an effort to protect oneself from failure and a

decrease in self-esteem. Hughes and Demo (1989) found the domains of efficacy and

self-esteem to be positively correlated. African American self-esteem has been measured

in a global sense as well as in a domain-specific context. Each subset of self-esteem

includes research on the psychohistoric influence. Hughes and Demo (1989) observed

that discrimination and racism greatly influence personal efficacy.

The relationship between self-efficacy and self-esteem is vast and demonstrates a strong relationship between the concepts. Subsequently, Okech and Harrington (2002) investigated the presence of the relationship between black consciousness, self-esteem, and academic self-efficacy by surveying 120 African American college males. Furthermore, the research questioned whether academic self-efficacy and self-esteem depended on the level of black consciousness. Each participant completed the DIB-C (Milliones, 1980) to measure progress through Cross' (1973) racial identity stages of preconscious, confrontation, internalization and integration; Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale to evaluate global attitudes towards self; and Wood and Locke's (1987) Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (ASE) measuring specific academic efficacy components. Independent t-tests were performed. The study concluded a non-significant relationship between academic self-efficacy and self-esteem that is consistent with Steele's (1992) disidentification theory that African American students detach. There was a significant relationship between black consciousness and self-esteem.

This section on self-esteem concluded that academics, grading and environment greatly contribute to self-esteem. Furthermore, oppressive ideas and events have the potential to decrease self-esteem and influence performance. The influence can be significant depending the conceptualization of self-esteem. This section discussed global versus domain self-esteem. The idea of global self-esteem addresses the overall feeling of self. The idea of domain specific self-esteem addresses the feeling of self within a specific domain. This information was provided to assist in understanding how this study will investigate relationships of global self-esteem and subtle racism within education.

Self-esteem is one component in this study's conceptualization of psychological wellbeing. The second component of psychological wellbeing is depression. The following will provide an understanding of depression; college stress and depression; depression and academic achievement; and race and depression.

Perspectives of Depression

Historically, social scientists and psychologists have invested energy towards understanding how moods are influenced by biological, environment, and situational factors (Corey, 2005). Long before the Diagnostic Statistical Manual IV (DSM) creators agreed upon the current criteria for depression, theorists had already postulated its origin. Sigmund Freud, referred to as the founder of psychoanalytical psychology, believed that mood symptoms and behaviors were in response to familial events (Corey, 2005). Subsequently, Freud viewed depression as a loss of a loved object that results in people turning self-hate and anger towards their parents. Freud believed that depression was a result of not receiving an appropriate amount of love or affirmation from parents (Seligman, 1998). Freud's position uniquely places depression mostly in environmental situations and early childhood occurrences.

Social learning theorists, such as Bandura (1997), posit depression to be a learned response to elicit rewards. Social learning theorists state that when depression is rewarded or reinforced it becomes a coping mechanism for individuals to deal with situational stressors (Seligman, 1998). Moreover, this approach hypothesizes that people who become depressed have poor interpersonal skills resulting in minimum positive

social reinforcement. Also, lack of positive social reinforcement may lead to isolation and alienation. This infers that depression derives from inappropriate amounts of dependence on others for reinforcement and, when these reinforcements are not met, patterns of depressive behavior are presented. According to Bandura's (1979) theory, depression results from one's perception of one's own inability to reach goals. This is particularly true for efficacy related to events or conditions that are central to one's life (Zychinski & Polo, 2012).

A biological approach to conceptualizing depression is defined as dysfunctional levels of serotonin. It has not always been the practice of the American Psychological Association to recognize this biological approach as a contributor to mood and depressive symptoms. More recently, helping professionals and the DSM-IV have recognized the various ranges of depression; mild, moderate, severe, in partial remission and full remission. An example is the recognition and treatment of what is commonly known as "winter depression" or clinically recognized as Seasonal Affective Disorder (Schlaepfer & Nemeroff, 2012). An understanding of the biological approach can assist in understanding the developmental effects of depression. A developmental model to understanding depression states that those who experience depression are more likely to have childhood difficulties including stress in parental and peer relationships. Hamilton and Dobson (2002) and Seligman (1997) both acknowledge that depression can be genetic and inherited.

Lastly, the approach to understanding depression that has gained the most notoriety is based in a cognitive theory perspective. In general, cognitive theorists believe

that thinking, feeling, and behavior are all influenced by each other. The pioneer of this approach is Aaron Beck, a medical doctor trained in psychiatry. He transitioned from Freud's teaching of depression being self-directed anger to understanding depression as a result of errors in logic or cognitive distortions (Corey, 2005). Beck believed that "negative thoughts reflect an underlying dysfunctional belief or assumption. When these beliefs are triggered by situational events, a depressive pattern is put in motion" (p. 270). Corey (2005) provided the following example in a theories and practice training textbook for helping professionals seeking their master's degree:

> Your professor does not call on you during a particular class session. You *feel* depressed. *Cognitively*, you are telling yourself: "My professor thinks I'm stupid and that I really don't have much of value to offer the class. Furthermore, she's right, because everyone else is brighter and more articulate than I am. It's been this way most of my life" (p. 289).

As a cognitive theorist, one would focus on the faulty thinking that is assumed from the interpretation of the classroom event. If the student in the above example interprets the events to be racially motivated, meaning the student perceived the actions of the teacher to be a subtly insult, a cognitive behavior therapist may challenge distortions and realities related to culture. This section will highlight experiences of racial minorities who frequently interpret classroom events in a similar manner. The idea of this faulty thinking will be analyzed through literature discussing the concept of Catch 22 as well as coping with racial microaggression mechanisms.

The idea of depression has evolved since its conceptualization to include and exclude many symptomatology and criteria. According to the DSM-IV, the primary symptoms of depression include feeling discouraged, hopeless, a dysphoric mood, loss of energy, low sense of self-worth and excessive guilt. Many researchers and helping professionals recognize a change in appetite, decreased sexual interest, gastrointestinal difficulties, headaches and sleep as a physiological symptomatology of depression (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Depression may result from external events as well as internal or biochemical events. Beyond the above primary symptoms, the emotional expression of anxiety, guilt, anger, hostility, irritability, agitation, social and marital distress are also included as emotional expressions of depression. The American Psychiatric Association (2000) reports behavioral symptomatology attached to understanding depression to include: crying, neglect of appearance, withdrawal, dependence, lethargy, reduced activity, poor social skills and psychomotor agitation. The attitudinal symptoms of depression are commonly agreed to be pessimism, helplessness, thoughts of death or suicide, and low self-esteem.

The brief history of depression was provided to assist in understanding the literature. Theories and criteria have changed over time to create American Psychological Association's current criteria. The following literature will explore expressions and meet criteria of depression and its relationship to race.

*College Stress and Depression*

The stresses of college have changed over the years and often college students have been motivated to work for change in the college and larger sociocultural

environment. College students have been involved in the desegregation of institutions, expression of civil unrest during times of war, and more recently, the epicenter for debates on equality and rights. The idea of college has changed, highlighting great concern about the adjustment, stressors, and the college environment. The percentage of students utilizing psychological services or requesting psychiatric accommodations on campuses has increased over the past decade (Brockelman, 2009). The psychohistory of college campuses includes race-related stress, gender-related stress, and homophobia. Today, college campuses are paying more attention to depression and adjustment as a result of tragedies such as the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting in which 32 people were killed, the 2008 Louisiana Tech College shooting in which 3 people were killed, and the 2010 Northern Illinois University shooting in which 6 people were killed.

Researchers propose that the stressors of college are best understood through a perspective of psychology and student development. Typically, college students arrive at institutions during a developmental period of questioning their identity, direction in life, self-worth, and relationships (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Simultaneously, their minds are categorizing ways to interpret life experiences. Lewinsohn, Rohde, and Seeley (1998) stated that the identity development process that occurs in conjunction with transitioning to college might lead to lower self-esteem as well as symptoms of depression such as withdrawal or isolation. The young minds are still developing biologically as well as psychologically. Furthermore, Major Depression Disorder in adulthood has its first onset during or shortly before the age of college (Field, Diego, Pelaez, Deeds, & Delgado, 2012). It is important to note that many students experience difficulty in recognizing and

managing moods, resulting in a decrease in emotional and behavioral skills (Brockelman, 2009). Moreover, the stress of development combined with the stress of relocating and adjusting to higher education expectations often contributes to depression as well as poor academic performance. These stressors have been known to contribute to drop-out rates. Students are more likely to leave school when they have experienced social and emotional adjustment difficulties (Lee, Olson, Locke, & Michelson, 2009).

Field et al. (2012) asked 283 university students to complete the CES-D for depression, the State Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Spielberger et al., 1970), the Intrusive Thoughts Scale (ITS; Field et al., 2009), the Difficulty Controlling Intrusive Thoughts Scale (DCITS; Field et al, 2009), and the Sleep Disturbance Scale (SDS; Field et al., 2009). The researchers found that 49% of the variance in scores of depression was explained by anxiety, sleep disturbance, and intrusive thoughts. The research concluded that students were not seeking proper health care for these issues and attributed it to "the college experience".

Frequently, many students in research report symptoms of depression to be a normal part of "the college experience". Dixon and Robinson Kurpius (2008) stated that the stressors of the college experience were related to academic success and depression. Their belief is supported by the statistics that 77% of college students experience moderate stress and 10% experience serious stress. Students reported that they were most stressed by exams and workload. The National College Health Assessment results from 2001 revealed that 76% of college students felt "overwhelmed" and 22% of students reported not being able to function because of depressive symptomatology.

Dixon and Robinson Kurpius (2008) used Ross, Neibling and Heckert's (1999) literature to define college stressors. College stressors include: adjusting to college life, managing relationships, academic pressures and performance, lifestyle changes, and housing. Eisenbarth (2012) defined stress as an imbalance between one's perception of the demands placed upon them and the interpretation of the resources available to cope with demands. These stressors and depressive symptoms have been empirically linked through literature (Dyson & Renk, 2006; MacGeorge et al., 2005) and are correlated with anxiety, negative health outcomes, and other psychosocial factors.

Dixon and Robinson Kurpius (2008) recruited 455 undergraduate college students from over 30 southwestern higher education institutions to complete the Daily Hassles Index for College Stress (DHCS; Schafer,1992) assessment to measure perceived college stress; Self-Rating Depression scale (SDS; Zung, 1965) to measure depression; the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965) to assess global self-esteem; and the General Mattering Scale (GMS; Marcus, 1991) to assess mattering to others. It was concluded that mattering accounts for 40% of the variance within stress and depression. Furthermore, self-esteem, depression and mattering accounts for almost 50% of the variance in college stress and depression. This research states that feeling as though one matters can combat college stress. The more that someone feels that they belong or are contributing to their college experience, the less likely it is that they will experience depressive symptomatology. This concept will be important in understanding race as a contributing variable of depression, self-esteem, the college experience and racial microaggressions.

Studying the idea of depressive symptoms in the college experience, Andrews and Wilding (2004) examined depressive symptoms impact on achievement for students. Andrews and Wilding (2004) surveyed 351 students, each completing the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale Inventory (HADSI; Zigmond & Snaith, 1983) at the beginning of college and mid-semester. The participants were asked to endorse stressors from a list of 11 commonly stated college stressors, such as financial crisis, death of a close relative and serious illness, among other choices. It was found that there was a significant increase in depression from the start of the college year to mid-semester. Also, it was found that among students who reported no significant depressive symptoms at entry, 9% developed a mild or clinically significant depressive condition by mid-semester. It was noted that 60% of students endorsed at least one item of stress while almost 25% endorsed more than one item. Of the endorsed items, 29% endorsed relationship difficulties, 28% death or illness of a friend or relative, and 21% reported a valued item lost or stolen. This literature provides evidence of college being a stressful environment that can contribute to depression amongst its attendees.

The stress of college often extends outside the classroom. Many college students attend classes full-time, work on campus part-time, and live on campus full-time, which all contribute to stress. Dusselier, Dunn, Wang, Shelley, and Whalen (2005) took these factors into consideration while investigating stress and depressive symptoms of college students. Dusselier et al. (2005) recognize stress as a healthy way to deal with the demands of college. The authors acknowledge the empirically founded negative relationship that exists between stressful events and academic performance. Dusselier et

al. (2005) cite the National College Health Assessment (American College Health Association, 2006) as showing that its respondents identified stress as the largest barrier to their academic achievement.

Dusselier et al. (2005) recruited 462 undergraduate resident hall students in the Midwest to complete a 76 item survey regarding personal matters, health, academic issues, and environmental concerns. Included in this survey was one qualitative question: What stresses you the most? Through this research it was concluded that women and United States citizens experienced greater stress than men and non-US citizens. Also, it was found that conflict or an unsatisfactory relationship with roommates, as well as conflict with a faculty member or staff member, was also a significant predictor to stress and depressive symptomatology. The researchers reported, "When students perceive stress negatively or it becomes excessive, they experience psychological impairment" (p. 16). This psychological impairment takes a negative toll on academic potential as well as preventing the deployment of healthy coping mechanisms. The research continued by stating, "These poor coping strategies are better predictors of GPA [grade point average] than are SAT scores" (p. 16).

The overall idea that environment can create a stressful college experience or contribute to depressive symptomatology is reviewed by Bayram and Bilgel (2007) from the approach of overall satisfaction with the college experience. These researchers solicited 1617 students to complete the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-42; Crawford & Henry, 2003). This scale assesses dysphoria, hopelessness, devaluation of life, self-deprecation, lack of interest, anhedonia, and inertia, amongst other variables for

anxiety. This study found that students who were more satisfied with their education had lower symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress scores than those who were dissatisfied with their education.

The research provided in this section indicates many students are likely to experience depression or depressive symptoms as a result of college stressors. It was reported that many students expect to experience depression as a result of enrolling in college. This section provided knowledge that many students experience depressive symptoms such as isolation, feeling lonely, and sleep disturbance. The next section will further this discussion with literature exploring depression and academic performance.

*Depression and Academic Performance*

Depression has been on the rise among young adults aged 18 – 25. This increase is evidenced by the self-reports of various college counseling centers, among other agencies (DeRoma, Leach, & Leverett, 2009). DeRoma, Leach, and Leverett (2009) reported depression as being one of the most common mental health experiences recorded at institutions of higher education across the United States. The authors state that an estimated 50% of college students will experience symptoms of depression throughout their college experiences, and that academic performance, social stressors, finances and environmental adjustment contribute greatly to their stress and depressive symptoms. Most importantly, DeRoma et al. (2009) cited academic stress as the greatest contributor to symptoms of depression.

DeRoma et al. (2009) investigated the relationship between depression and college academic performance. The researchers based their investigation on Beck's

(1976) perspective of cognitive theory. According to Beck's (1976) cognitive theory of depression in achievement-oriented environments, "depressed individuals are prone to react to low grades with a sense of failure due to tendencies to display negative perceptions of themselves, the world, and the future" (p. 326). Students who exhibit depressive attitudinal symptomatology of pessimism show more awareness of the pressures associated with difficult academic tasks. These individuals may view difficult tasks as being too hard to complete or simply impossible. According to Beck, the pessimism of not believing oneself to be capable of successfully completing the task will influence one's view of self and ultimately negatively influence one's academic potential. Beck (1976) hypothesized that the self-defeating view possessed by these students can influence their view of their future in academia. Most importantly, DeRoma et al. (2009) state that "these negative biases can further impair many aspects of information processing, rendering students less able to accomplish academic tasks" (p. 327).

DeRoma et al. (2009) recruited 164 undergraduate and graduate students to participate in their study. The students were given the Beck Depression Inventory – II (BDI-II) and provided a self-report of their cumulative grade point average up to the semester of testing. This study used a hierarchical multiple regression analysis and found a significant negative relationship between self-reported grade point averages and self-reported depressive symptomatology. It was also noted that students who reported as experiencing moderate depressive symptoms had substantially lower academic functioning compared to others. This study supports that idea that an association exists

between self-reported academic functioning and self-reported depressive symptomatology of students enrolled in higher education.

The inverse of believing that everything has to end in "doom and gloom" is individuals expecting only the best. The idea of perfectionism can contribute to depressive symptomatology in a similar fashion to pessimism. Sevlever and Rice (2010) researched the relationship between perfectionism, depression, anxiety and academic performance. 180 students were assessed using the Center of Epidemiological Students Depression Scale (CES-D) to measure depressive symptoms; the Self-rating anxiety Scale (SAS) to measure on a four-point scale anxiety experienced during the week; and a self-report of their undergraduate grade point average to measure academic performance. A MANOVA was used for analysis and concluded that self-critical perfectionism was positively correlated to depression.

Hysenbegasi, Hass, and Rowland (2005) also researched the impact of depression on the academic performance of university students. The study used a control group of 209 Midwestern University students and an experimental group of 121 identified Midwestern university students with depressive symptomatology. Although depression is a common experience, it impacts each person differently. Thus, the researchers sought to understand the impact of depression by using students who experience depression and comparing their stressors and academic performance to those who do not report experiencing depression. Within the survey created for this study two questions assessed the degree to which depression impaired their ability to complete academic tasks such as attending class, studying, and preparing homework. Academic performance was

measured through self-reporting of grade point average. These authors concluded that students who self-identified as experiencing depression during the surveyed time were associated with a half letter grade decrease in student grade point average. Furthermore, students who displayed depressive symptomatology reported a pattern of the frequent interference of depression in their ability to optimally perform in an academic environment.

Similarly, Ruthig, Marrone, Hladkyj and Robinson-Epp (2011) concluded that depression affects academic performance, evidenced by grade point average. Ruth et al. (2011) surveyed 203 college students using the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Tamarck & Mermelstein, 1983); Cohen-Hoberman Inventory of Physical Symptoms (CHIPS; Cohen & Hoberman, 1983); a health behaviors survey measuring diet, exercise, tobacco use, binge drinking, and sleep; and academic performance measured by self-reported grade point averages. A significant number of students reported a moderate level of perceived stress and 38% reported feelings of fatigue. These researchers state that the transition to college can include negative behavior such as sleep disturbances and poor dietary practices. They assessed students at the beginning and end of the school year and found the depressive symptoms to negatively affected students' academic performance. The significant finding from this study was that a negative relationship was found between the symptoms and academic performance; however, the extent varied by self-reported gender. Women participants reported a higher frequency of a perceived stress compared to men participants, $F(1, 200) = 7.37$, $p = .007$.

Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein, and Hefner (2007) surveyed 2843 undergraduate and graduate students via web-based assessment, which included the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ; Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams, 1999). The PHQ measures experienced anxiety over the past 4 weeks and depressive symptomatology over the past 2 weeks. Also, the National Comorbidity Survey Replication (NCS-R; Kessler, Berguland, Borges, Nock & Wang, 2005) was used to assess suicidality over the past 4 weeks. Demographic information was gathered to contribute to the examination of depressive and suicidal risk factors such as age, gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, living situation, financial strain and relationship status.

The research concluded that over 18% of undergraduate and 14% of graduate students surveyed reported missing an academic obligation in the past 4 weeks because of depressive symptomatology. Statistical analysis found 44.3% of undergraduate and 41.3% of graduate students reported that depressive symptomatology affected their academic performance over the last 4 weeks. The researchers found that students who reported financial struggles were more likely to be positive for depression. Also, it was noted that students who described themselves as being from the category of "other race" were more likely than white students to be positive for depression. This concept of race as a factor for depression will be discussed later in this chapter.

Each study presented in this section states depression and depressive symptoms to negatively affect achievement. Researchers used varying measures of depression evaluating both undergraduate and graduate students and concluded a consistent negative

affect. Furthermore, researchers concluded a negative relationship with letter grades as well as success factors like class attendance.

*Race and Depression*

In conducting a literature review on race and depression, I found a limited amount of literature regarding the relationships between academic achievement, acculturation stress and depression (Muris, 2002). Acculturation stress defined as the psychological impact adapting to a new culture (Smart & Smart, 1995). However, academic achievement and depression have been found to be negatively associated with each other. Alva and de los Reyes (1999) explored the possible relationship that exists between stress, internalizing symptoms of acculturated stress, and academic achievement of Latino high school students. The results of this study reported stress to negatively impact academic achievement as well as acculturation stress. The researchers also found a negative relationship between grades and depressive symptoms.

Zychinski and Polo (2012) researched academic achievement and depressive symptoms in low-income Latino youth. The 131 Latino student participants completed the Children's Depression Inventory (CDI, Kovacs, 1992) to measure depressive symptoms; Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scale (PALS; Midgeley et al., 2000) measuring students' perceived self-efficacy and goals; scoring from the Illinois Standards Achievement test, grade point average, and the Acculturative Stress Scale. The Latino youths reported higher levels of depressive symptoms compared to their racial counterparts.

The findings, which revealed that Latino youths were experiencing acculturation stress and presenting with higher scores of depressive symptoms in high school, fueled my quest to examine race, particularly African American college students and depression within higher education. Note that this section will use the term 'race-related stress', which is defined as "the level of discomfort felt as a result of observing or personally experiencing racial discrimination" (Johnson & Arbona, 2006, p. 496). Race-related stress was found to be a contributing factor to the level and frequency of depressive symptoms. Specifically, the more students perceive that they have experienced racist events, the more depressive symptoms they will endorse.

Bynum, Best, Barnes, and Burton (2008) assert that racism has a negative effect on mental health, including depression (Williams & William-Morris, 2000). Many researchers have attributed race-related stress to a lack of resources or a socio-economic and class standing issue. Research has viewed race-related stressors as an individual's interpretation of a stressful event based on a combination of constitutional, socio-demographic, socio-psychological, and behavioral factors (Bynum et al., 2008). Racist events trigger a set of coping mechanisms that induce psychological and physiological stress that is harmful over time (Singleton, Robertson, Robinson, Austin, & Edochie, 2008). Green et al. (2006) found that exposure to racial discrimination predicted more depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem over time. Jones et al. (2008) concluded that African American female college students' experiences of racist events were positively related to depressive symptoms.

Gore and Aseltine (2003) confronted the concept that much research of race and ethnic differences is attributed to socioeconomics. These researchers attempted to determine whether differences would exist if one statistically controlled socioeconomics. Gore and Aseltine's (2003) study included 1325 individuals who were graduating from high school. Participants provided demographic information about their financial status, social class, guardians' education attainment, family structure, and path choice (work or school). Each participant was required to complete the Center for Epidemiological Studies' Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977). This research concluded that relative to their white and Asian American counterparts, African Americans and Hispanics had significantly higher scores of depression. Most importantly, these scores remained higher than their respective counterparts when controlling for individual background information. Minority students noted problems with social adjustment, family and peer stress as their major causes of depressive symptoms.

Furthermore, Ayalon and Young (2003) examined differences in reported depressive symptomatology amongst races using the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; Beck, Rush, Shaw & Emery, 1979). The authors stated that they used the Beck Depression Inventory with this population because of the instrument's history and validation with other cultures. The BDI is one of the most frequently used tests by practicing clinicians and is widely used in non-clinical agencies. The researchers recruited 278 African American and 278 Caucasian Americans who were seeking psychotherapy. Each participant provided demographic information such as race, level of education, and marital status. It was found that African Americans reported being less

pessimistic, dissatisfied, and with fewer suicidal attitudes. African Americans reported more of a sense of punishment and weight change; however, they did not attribute these factors to depression.

The lack of connection between these characteristics and depression may be linked to a cultural understanding of "depression." Westernized cultures are said to psychopathologize depression while non-Western cultures are said to somatize depression (Ayalon & Young, 2003). This means that African Americans have the potential to be depressed and not acknowledge it because a cultural understanding of depression has not been met. This study also revealed that Caucasian Americans expressed a stronger sense of self-dislike, sleep disturbance, loss of appetite and loss of libido compared to their African American counterparts.

Lett and Wright (2003) reviewed literature to guide their investigation into the psychological barriers that exist for African Americans matriculating through higher education. These writers emphasized the thought that higher education has a responsibility to develop healthy minority students capable of achieving. The psychohistory of African Americans and education was highlighted to discuss the many overt barriers that have existed in the past. It is important to note that PWIs are responsible for educating the majority of minority students in higher education.

Lett and Wright (2003) highlighted Cross' racial identity model as a guide for higher education to understand the concurrent psychosocial and academic development of African American scholars. They proposed Chickering and Reisser's (1993) student development stages to assist in understanding the development process of minority

students and mental health barriers. To best understand the psychosocial barriers, they

stressed the need for complete developmental, not sectional developmental, models.

Institutions should not seek to develop racial identity separately from professional

development nor academic development. Instead, institutions should use holistic

approaches to development. The process of ignoring racial development becomes

stressful for minority students and often creates uncomfortable environments to navigate

(Lett & Wright, 2003). The process of ignoring racial development is similar to color-

blindness, the idea that one's race and racial identity does not require consideration. The

authors expressed the aforementioned stress as contributing to barriers of psychosocial

development, causing depressive symptoms.

In addition, Lett and Wright (2003) cited studies that indicated African American

students often feel isolated, withdrawn, and alienated in predominantly white institutions.

Students reported not feeling included or wanted on the campus or in the classrooms. The

writers state that African Americans discussed not feeling "up to par" or accepted in

adjacent communities as well. These reports of environmental stressors do not produce a

space conducive to learning. Lett and Wright (2003) assert these conditions greatly

contribute to depressive symptomatology as well as the drop-out rate of African

American students. The barriers to obtaining a college education included alienation,

isolation, intimidation, discrimination, racism and financial problems, to name a few.

Each variable listed becomes unique to individuals belonging to a minoritized community

in a hyper-majoritized setting. The authors stated that "acts of discrimination and campus

racism, no matter how subtle, can cause enduring harm to the psyche, inclusive of evoking a lessened self-esteem, under-developed personal identity… increased anxiety, rage, psychopathologies and depression" (p.190).

The literature reviewed found race to be predictive of depression or depressive symptoms. Researchers found minority students to endorse more depressive symptoms and depression compared to majoritized racial counterparts. This section states that even when African American do not endorse depression they are likely to endorse a somatic understanding of depression criteria.

*African American Males and Depression*

The purpose of my study is to focus on African Americans and the subset population of African American males. As such, it is necessary to review studies that focused solely on African American males' experiences and expressions of depressive symptomatology. Watkins, Green, Goodson, Guidry, and Stanley (2007) stated that an increasing amount of literature is beginning to focus on the stressful events of college life for African American males. Researchers are addressing this issue through terms such as daily hassles, stressors, campus stressors, life events and life stress events. The authors introduced their study by stating that African Americans, especially males, are often more aware of restricted opportunities because of racism and psychohistory which can increase stress levels and create maladaptive coping mechanisms.

Watkins et al (2007) interviewed African American men who attend PWIs (n = 22) and HBCUs (n = 24) through a series of focus groups. A trained facilitator asked

questions during a 90-minute group session about health behavior, general mental health, comfort with discussion of mental health, individual mental health and mental health management. Watkins et al (2007) focused solely on the transcription and content analysis of the individual mental health and mental health management section of the focus group. One questioned posed to the group was: "What kind of things lead to stress in your life?" The following is a direct quote response to that question:

> The number one stress I got is 'just don't ____ it up.' Some of it comes from your family, some of it comes from you, some of it comes from society. Society already has this stigma that black men ain't ____, and so you don't want to be
>
> that. You don't want to have had the opportunity to be something and then fall off and become a stereotype. (p. 109)

The interviewees agreed that being accepted in "White America" is stressful, subsequently reporting "within the first three months of me being up here [at college], I experienced five different racial experiences … that just really stressed me out" (p. 110).

When asked about the stressors of college, participants at HBCUs agreed with participants at PWIS that racism was number one.

> Everywhere I go in [the city], especially the other places in [the state] my blackness is always a factor. At [this institution] I've experienced some racism off campus by people in the community, but the thing that distresses me at [this institution] is that people, even professors, really don't know how to deal [with]

or know what things a black person goes through because we don't have a lot of

blacks here. (p. 110)

The respondents noted that stress for African American people is inevitable. One

participant was quoted as saying that "stress of black people is over survival" (p. 111).

They spoke of common themes of carrying the weight of African American communities,

not falling into stereotypes, and not acting "too white" or "too black".

The African American male participants attending PWIs stated that they embrace

daily stressors created through school related interactions. They spoke of expecting

racism. These men reported racism to be a major stressor and barrier for academic

success that they must confront for survival. These encounters listed above have the

potential to increase isolation, loneliness, defeat, hopelessness and other depressive

symptoms. The environment, coupled with the perception of society's expectation for

failure from the majority society and hope of success from the minoritized societies, can

create insurmountable pressures.

Baker (2001) acknowledges the influence that depressive symptomatology has on

academic achievement but also recognizes that depression may manifest itself differently

in African American cultures, especially with African American males, compared to

majority cultures. Baker (2001) stated that African Americans' depressive symptoms

differ from those listed in the DSM-IV. The author related the psychohistory of African

Americans and psychology to evidence his point. He discussed that in the 1900s African

Americans were not seen as being capable of experiencing or expressing affective

illnesses. Bell et al. (1985) state that clinicians were more likely to diagnose African

Americans with schizophrenia than depression.

Baker (2001) administered a structured clinical interview and the CES-D to

confirm three alternative presentations of depression for African Americans: the stoic

believer; the angry, 'evil one' with personality change; and the John Henry doer. A

depressed African American client whose presentation meets that of the "the stoic

believer" may not report feeling sad, blue, down, or helpless. These individuals may not

endorse related statements on depression measures because of their strong religious-

spiritual faith. When questioned about depressive symptoms, some frequent responses

are: "if it wasn't for my faith, I would feel sad," or "my faith keeps me going" (p. 34).

The angry, 'evil one' with a personality change presents as having an abrupt mood

change and becoming very irritable, hostile in presentation, and abrupt in communication.

Baker (2001) asserts that this presentation is frequently missed or confused by meeting

criteria of other diagnoses. The author suggests mindfulness of this presentation,

especially with young African American males. This presentation has implications for

assessing suicidality, which is often a product of depression. Lastly, there is "the John

Henry doer," which is exhibited by an individual taking on multiple tasks to avoid

dealing with depression or depressive symptoms.

Baker (2001) found that the participants may frequently complain of family

members or co-workers not pulling their weight. The literature reviewed demonstrates

psychosocial barriers and related stressors that exist for African Americans, simply as a

byproduct of race. The stressors create depressive symptomatology and lower the

potential for academic performance. The authors demonstrated that depressive symptoms may be expressed differently because of culture but nevertheless play a role in college experiences.

*Psychohistory of African Americans in Education*

Historically, race has been a factor in institutions of education in the United States. African Americans have forged institutional battles to earn the legal right to educational opportunity. For example, a paramount case in 1896, Plessy v. Ferguson, sanctioned "separate but equal" educational facilities on the basis of race as constitutional. It took over half a century for the Supreme Court to unanimously overturn the Plessy v. Ferguson ruling in the 1954 landmark case of Brown v. Board of Education, forcing schools across the nation to integrate. For almost four hundred years, racism has plagued the personal development of African Americans. These disparities are reflected in African Americans' inability to achieve a state of social, economic, and psychological wellbeing (Dion & Park, 1992; Essed, 1991).

The history of race and racial attitudes continues to influence the educational experience of students of color. Recently, racial tensions in educational settings have received much media attention. In December 2006 in Jena, Louisiana, a publicized high school race brawl caught the attention of the nation, known in the media as 'Jena Six'. In the late 2000s there was a spate of discoveries of nooses at public institutions of higher education: September 2007 University of Maryland – College Park; October 2007, Columbia University – New York; February 2010 University of California – San Diego; and February 2010 University of Missouri – Columbia. The following literature will

provide knowledge of how African Americans have reported their college experience at PWIs as more negative and hostile compared to their racial majority counterparts.

*African Americans at Predominantly White Institutions*

The research on racialized experiences of African American students at PWIs is growing. Ancis, Sedlacek and Mohr (2000) investigated African American students' experiences of race in higher education by recruiting 578 undergraduate students at a large mid-Atlantic university. The sample population included 136 African Americans (93 females, 43 males), 130 Asian Americans (58 females, 72 males), 77 Latinos/as (43 females, 34 males) and 235 whites (130 females, 105 males) who were classified as freshmen or juniors. Their mean age was 20 years old. Participants were selected for participation by using a stratified random sample of first and third year students, completed via the campus diversity evaluation committee program.

Respondents were mailed instructions to complete The Cultural Attitudes and Climate Questionnaire (CACQ) (Helm, Sedlack & Prieto, 1998) containing 11 subscales; racial tension, cross-cultural comfort, diversity awareness, residence hall tension, fair treatment, faculty racism, respect for other cultures, lack of support, comfort with own culture and overall satisfaction. A MANOVA was conducted, and a significant multivariate effect for racial and ethnic group differences on the 11 factors ($F$ (33, 1662.35) = 5.78, $p < .0001$) was found. Subsequently, 11 univariate tests of significance were performed, resulting in statistically significant differences on 8 of the 11 factors.

African American students reported experiencing significantly more racial conflict than did Asian American or white students ($p < .0002$). Latino/a and African

American students reported more discomfort with both racially and ethnically similar

faculties and students, as well as racially and ethnically different faculties and students,

than did white students ($p < .0007$). African American students consistently expressed

more negative campus experiences than Asian American, Latino/a, or white students ($p <$

.005).

In another study, Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds and Cancelli (2000) also examined

African American college students' perceptions of racial discrimination by surveying 213

African American college students (64% female, 36% male) who attended schools in

North Carolina (n = 98), New York (n = 68) and Louisiana (n = 47). The participants

were informed that the purpose of the investigation was to examine African American

students' behaviors while coping with racial discrimination and racist events. The

researchers qualified these events to include individual racism (racism on a personal

level), institutional racism (racism as a result of social and institutional policies) and

cultural racism (cultural practices of the "dominant" group as seen as superior to the

"subordinate" group). Each participant received a packet that included the Coping

Strategy Indicator (CSI) (Amirkhan, 1990), which was revised to meet the needs of the

study; the Index of Race-Related Stress (IRRS) (Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996); the

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al., 1985); and the Rosenberg Self-

Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965).

Using the general linear model for multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA),

with gender as an independent variable, a statistically significant gender difference was

found regarding African American college student responses to racist events. A post hoc

analysis was conducted and found that the CSI's seeking social support subscale reported

that women sought social support significantly more than men. The analysis also found

CSI Avoidance subscale scores were significantly different across racist events ($F(2, 137)$

$= 3.77$, $p < .05$). Fischer's LSD post hoc of least significance difference found the

variable of individual racism conditions to be greater ($M = 2.33$) than that of the variable

cultural racism conditions ($M = 1.90$) and the institutional racism condition ($M = 2.00$).

11% of the total variance in IRRS Global Racism could be accounted for by CSI scores.

Additionally, race-related stress was best predicted by the cultural racism condition,

cultural practices of the "dominant" group as seen as superior to "subordinate" groups,

and the CSI seeing Social Support subscale. This study suggests that African Americans

are prone to use avoidance when coping with racist events at PWIs.

In another study, Reid and Radhakrishnan (2003) examined perceptions of racial

and academic climate in relation to racial difference in the perception of general campus

climate (GCC) using 928 undergraduate and 503 graduate students at a large Midwestern

state university. The undergraduate sample was comprised of 113 African Americans,

142 Latinos/as, 239 Asian Americans and 426 White students. The graduate sample was

comprised of 69 African Americans, 70 Latinos/as, 119 Asian Americans and 245 white

students. White students were randomly selected from the university using records

supplied by the Office of Admission, while racial minority students were oversampled

using registration lists provided by the Office of Minority Student Affairs. Two newly

constructed survey instruments, one for graduate students and one for undergraduate

students, were developed.

The subscales of general campus climate (GCC) and academic climate (AC) were developed using principal-components analysis with varimax rotation of a number of subscales that measured racial and academic climate. Subscales for undergraduate and graduate students were developed separately to account for differences in their university experience. The GCC subscale for undergraduates (Cronbach's $\alpha = .72$) consists of four items and possesses two additional items evaluating fair treatment and faculty experience, making a total of six items for the graduate student participants (Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$).

The academic climate was assessed through the following subscales: impact of instructors (Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$), students' perception (Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$), and undergraduate students' perception of social and intellectual respect (Cronbach's $\alpha = .68$). For graduate participants, academic climate subscales were mentoring and advising (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$), students' perception of their academic self-confidence (Cronbach's $\alpha = .72$), and to what extent graduate students felt that they were taken seriously (Cronbach's $\alpha = .70$). Lastly, racial climate was assessed via two subscales of racial experiences (Cronbach's $\alpha = .70$ undergraduate, $\alpha = .72$ graduate students) and university perception (Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$ undergraduate, $\alpha = .79$ graduate students).

All participants were sampled and the results were analyzed by using one-way analysis of variance. For undergraduates, students of color perceived a more negative general campus climate (GCC) than white students. For graduate students, results were somewhat similar; however, African American students reported more negative perceptions of GCC than did any other groups. Both African American undergraduate

and graduate students reported more negative racial experiences than Latino/a or Asian American students. Graduate African American male students reported more negative perceptions of the academic climate than members of all other groups did. White students' perceptions of the academic climate explained variance in students' perceptions of the general campus climate (GCC), but perceptions of racial climate explained almost none.

The results of this study are similar to those of Ancis, Sedlacek and Mohr (2000), who found in their research that racial minority students evaluated general campus climate, racial and academic climate more negatively than white students. Interestingly, these studies show negative experiences to be produced from both overt and subtle events. Although research has historically focused on overt, old-fashioned forms of racist experiences, currently the field of education and psychology, separately, are beginning to produce more research on the subtle events. These studies support the need to investigate the experience and influences of campus environments of African American students at PWIs.

African American undergraduate students' responses indicated that academic climates account for 43% of the variance in general campus climate; 34% of the variance in general campus climate is accounted for by perceptions of racial climate. African American graduate students' responses explain 61% of the variance in general campus climate to be attributed to academic climate, while 24% of the variance in general campus climate was influenced by racial experience. African American students reported that concepts of being taken seriously by instructors and peers, as well as their perception

of social and intellectual respect, were significant factors in assessing their undergraduate campus climate. African American graduate students reported mentoring and advising, seriousness, and self-confidence as influencing their perception of general campus climate.

Finally, in another study, Rankin and Reason (2005) sought to investigate the difference in perceived campus climate between students of color and white students, using 7,347 undergraduate students from Northwest, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, Great Lakes, Midwest, Southwest and Northwest region institutions (10 campuses). Data from individuals who identified themselves as being African American/black, Asian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, American Indian, Alaska Native, Chino, Latino or Hispanic, or more than one identity, were merged to represent data from a variable titled "students of color." A survey was constructed to gather personal campus experiences (reliability coefficient = .84), perception of the campus climate (reliability coefficient = .81), and reaction to diversity issues (reliability =.74).

The chi square analyses of the data demonstrated that a significantly greater proportion of students of color compared to white students viewed the campus climate as "racist," "hostile," and "disrespectful". Alternatively, a significantly greater proportion of white students viewed the campus climate as "non-racist," "friendly," and "respectful." These results suggest that a significantly greater proportion of students of color compared to white students view the campus climate as less welcoming for underrepresented students of color. They suggest that, in general, students of color perceived the university less favorably than white students ($\chi^2$ = institution addresses racism 235.725, $p < .001$.).

Although merging all students of color to create one variable can be seen as a limitation when trying to understand the experience of African American college students at PWIs, this study soundly provides evidence of race influencing the perception of campus environments. The notion that white students and students of color reported contrasting views of the campus has been supported through others' work provided in this literature review (Ancis et al., 2000; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003).

In summary, these studies investigated African Americans' experiences of campus climate by comparing their experiences with majority culture students (Ancis, Sedlacek & Mohr, 2000; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003; Rankin & Reason, 2005). Conclusions were made in these studies without accounting for inter-racial conflict or racial identity attitude. The research design of these studies compares racial minority students to racial majority students without accounting for contextual factors such as inter-racial stress, which could vary by campus. The method of comparing minority to majority students without accounting for individual differences of contextual factors and inter-racial stress varying across campuses can inaccurately influence perceptions of experiences. In other words, although comparisons were made, investigators failed to explain the racial make up of the campuses from which participants were drawn, which could have biased the interpretation of the results, as well as limiting the results' validity and generalizability.

Despite the limitations listed, each study found race to influence college experience and perceptions of campus environments. Ancis, Sedlacek and Mohr (2000) found that African American students perceive and experience significantly more racial

conflict compared to any other participating race. Reid and Radhakrishnan's (2003) work similarly found African American college students to report a more negative racial experience and more negative perceptions of the academic climate compared to racial counterparts. Rankin and Reason (2005) found that students of color, including African Americans, found campuses to be "racist," "hostile," and "disrespectful" while white students reported campuses to be "non-racist," "friendly," and "respectful." Utsey et al. (2000) showed that African American college students use avoidance over seeking support for dealing with all categories of racist events, including individual racism, institutional racism, and cultural racism. In this study avoidance was found to account for the most variance in self-esteem. This literature provides information supporting the need for further investigation of African American college students at PWIs.

*African Americans at Historically Black Colleges and Universities Compared to Those at Primarily White Institutions*

The research reviewed about African American college experiences at PWIs state campus environments to be hostile compared to white students (Ancis et al., 2007). To understand the influence of environment on academic achievement and the self-concept of African American college students, this section explores the differences found when comparing African American college students at PWIs to African American college students at HBCUs.

Cheatham, Slaney and Coleman (1990) investigated the development of African American college students by comparing 130 African American (77 women and 53 men) undergraduate students at an HBCU and 120 African American (75 women and 45 men)

undergraduate students attending PWI in the same northeastern state with similar

demographic variables: size of hometown, education level of parents and college grade

point averages.

Participants from both groups were administered the 30-item Racial Identity

Attitudes Scale (RIAS) (Parham & Helms, 1981), the 140-item Student Development

Task and Lifestyle Inventory (SDTLI) (Winston et al., 1987), and the 19-item Career

Decision Scale (CDS) (Osipow, Carney, Winer, Yanico & Koschier, 1976). All survey

instruments were administered in the same order, regardless of setting.

A MANOVA, with the four RIAS scales as the dependent variables and the type

of college they attended as the independent variable, revealed no statistically significant

main or interaction effects, meaning the stages of racial identity development (pre-

encounter, encounter, immersion, and internalization) did not influence results. A second

MANOVA was conducted on the 11 scales of the SDTLI. There were statistically

significant main effects for institution, $F(11,192) = 2.82$, $p<.01$, years in college, $F(3,$

$566) = 1.72$, $p<.01$, and sex $F(11, 192) = 2.41$, $p<.01$. No interactions were found to be

statistically significant.

In regard to the institution, four ANOVAs were conducted with the variables of

cultural participation, emotional autonomy, academic autonomy, and the salubrious

lifestyle scale. Cultural participation is defined as the level of being actively involved in a

variety of cultural activities. Many of these activities were qualified as "traditional in

nature," and include attending plays, ballets, museums, art exhibits, and classical music

concerts (p. 457). Emotional autonomy is defined as possessing a greater freedom from

the need for the approval of others, and having greater trust in their own ideas and opinions. The results of this study indicate that African American college students at PWIs have higher mean scores of cultural participation ($M = 4.17$, $M = 3.36$), emotional autonomy ($M = 5.05$, $M = 4.44$) and academic autonomy ($M = 5.36$, $M = 5.11$) compared to HBCU African American college students. The subscale of salubrious lifestyle produced higher means for students at HBCUs. Cheatham, Slaney and Coleman (1990) concluded that HBCUs are not more conducive to the exploration of black identity compared to being at a PWI according to the results of the RIAS. The researchers found cultural participation and emotional and academic autonomy to be greater at PWIs, which greatly influence development. This study indicates that although literature may suggest that the climate of traditional HBCUs would be more conducive for African American college development, researchers disagreed and found RIAS not to be significant. However, it was concluded that emotional and academic autonomy was greater at PWIs.

Contrastingly, Greer and Chwalisz (2007) researched the differences in stress and coping between 203 African American undergraduate students at an HBCU, and a PWI (101 from a medium-sized PWI in the Midwest and 102 from an HBCU located in the east). At both institutions, participants were recruited from introductory psychology classes, Black American studies classes, and honors course classes. Course credit was provided when applicable and in cases where students could not receive course credit, their names were entered into draws for a monetary award. The Coping Orientations to Problems Experienced Inventory (COPE; Carver et al., 1989); the Minority Status Stress Scale (MSS; which measured both interpersonal and intragroup stressors; Prillerman et

al., 1989; Smedley et al., 1993); and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; which measured general stress; Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein 1983) were administered.

Using an ANOVA, it was found that participants at PWIs reported experiencing slightly more general perceived stress ($M = 27.24$) than their HBCU counterparts ($M = 26.76$). However, analysis did not show the difference to be significant. A MANOVA was used to test the significance of MSS on the effect of school and was significant ($F$ $(5,197) = 20.03, p <.001$). A follow-up univariate analysis demonstrated that participants' scores were significantly different in regard to perceived environmental stressors ($F$ $(1, 201) = 82.04, p < .001$), interpersonal stressors ($F$ $(1, 201) = 4.07, p < .05$), and intragroup stressors ($F$ $(1, 201) = 5.43, p < .05$). These results suggest that African American students did not differ by type of school in their general perceived stress, but did differ by school in their experience of minority status stressors. The overall F value for the effects of school on approach and avoidance coping strategies were found not to be significant. A univariate test showed participants to differ significantly in coping strategy approaches by school with HBCU participants possessing more coping approaches compared to their PWI counterparts, $F(1, 201) = 4.01, p<.05$.

Participants at the PWI reported experiencing significantly higher levels of environmental, interpersonal, and intragroup stressors than did their counterparts at the HBCU. As a result of this study comparing HBCU and PWI African American students in two distinct regions, it was found that environmental racism plays an important factor on the scores of MSS and PSS. African American college experiences of racism or

perceived stress could vary according to state racial climate and history, which directly affects campus climate.

Although the literature reviewed African American student development on college campus via two distinct avenues: comparing HBCUs to PWI and comparing student experiences solely at PWIs, similarities allow inferences and implications to be made. Cheatham, Slaney and Coleman (1990) and Utsey et al. (2000) utilized different avenues for comparison while accounting for inter-racial stress in their assessment. The remaining articles across approaches failed to evaluate the effects of inter-racial/inter-cultural stress when assessing campus climate.

Lastly, Rankin and Reason (2005) were the only researchers to acknowledge the idea that students may be multiracial or multiethnic. While investigating the college experience of African American students, findings can be inaccurate if researchers do not distinguish between African American students and bi-racial students. Bi-racial and multiracial identity, as well as student development, has its own process, stereotypes, advantages and disadvantages unique to their development (Poston, 1990; Kich, 1992; Ramirez, 1996, Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). Unfortunately, that acknowledgement was not utilized but instead their racial experience was collapsed into a group of 'student of color' experiences. Multiracial student development could encompass pressures and choices to identify between heritages, possibly having a significant effect on the outcome of the study.

Further research is needed to investigate the effects of campus climate on African American students, although each study reviewed stated that African American students

are experiencing college climates as being more negative than their racial counterparts. Research including acculturation and self-identity with an exhaustive list of cultures to include African and African Americans separately is needed to help campuses identify avenues of change. Despite the various threats to validity, these articles state that a relationship may exist between self-concept, perceived racism, and development of African American students. The developmental task of establishing and clarifying as well as the subscales of lifestyle and intimacy seem to be decreased in the experiences of African American students attending PWIs compared to HBCUs (Greer & Chawalisz, 2007; Rankin & Reason, 2005).

*African American male college experience*

Notably, more African American women than men have been graduating from college for almost a half-century (Garibaldi, 2009). Also, there are more African American women in college enrollment, compared to African American men (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Researchers suggest that African American females are outnumbering the males because African American males are less likely to apply and enroll in college (Jipguep, Harrison & Bonner, 2009). In recent years researchers have committed to focusing their research agendas on the dilemmas African American males face in higher education.

Subsequently, the *Journal of African American Males in Education* was created to feature works and recommendations for researching the African American male population. As the interest in African American males' college experience grew, Harper (2010) urged writers to be cautious not to over-generalize or homogenize the African

American experience, creating a perception of a uniform experience had by all African Americans within higher education. Harper (2010) also cautions researchers to investigate environment as well as the two distinct subpopulations of high achieving and at-risk African American students in the hope of creating a more accurate understanding of African American males' experiencesin education.

Harper (2008, 2010),responds to the alarming rates and projections of African American male college completion through their research. Anyaso (2007) asserts that seventy-six percent of African American male students who begin college never complete their degrees. It was predicted that in 2005 more than two thirds (67.6%) of all African American males who started college would not graduate within 6 years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005; Hawkins, 1996; Harper, 2008). Furthermore, enrollment projections for 2013 also indicate that women will continue to outpace men in college completions in the foreseeable future (Jipguep, Harrison & Bonner, 2009). African American male have the lowest graduation rate among both sexes and all racial groups.

Recently, researchers have begun to hypothesize factors that contribute to the trend of low African American male participation in higher education. Cuyjet (2006) concluded through a meta-analysis of literature on the educational experiences of African American males that the challenges faced by African American males are the alarming retention, graduation and degree attainment rates. Similarly, as a result of African American males comprising of only 4.3 percent of student enrollment at American colleges and universities, this concern has colloquially termed this issue as an "epidemic"

or the "Brown male crisis" (Anyaso, 2007; Ross, 1998). The alarming statistics and documented experiences of African American male students support the need for research on this specific demographic.

Lee (1991) found that African American males tend to experience an enormous alienation from the educational process. Black males tend to be suspended more often and for longer periods of time and they drop out or are punished at much higher rates than other ethnic/gender groups. Ethnicity, race, gender and class have proven to be factors with interactions that uniquely affect African American males, placing them at risk of school failure, stress-related illness and psychosocial problems (Bowman, 1989). This section will review research on the unique experience of African American male students in higher education.

Cokley (2002) contributed to the investigation into the differences of ethnicity, gender and academic self-concept by supporting the idea of academic disidentification as a part of the African American male experience in higher education. Survey packets, including the Academic Self-Concept Scale (ASCS), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and self-reported grade point averages, were collected from one Midwestern PWI, one southern PWI and two HBCUs (359 African American students and 229 European American students). This study revealed that both African American males and African American females identified with academics, measured by the ASCS. However, there was a significant decrease in the correlations between academic self-concept and grade point average for African American male of junior and senior enrollment status compared to African American female of junior and senior enrollment status. The psychosocial

events that occur during the educational process creates opportunities for African American male students to disidentify with school. The examples provided included persistent and overwhelmingly negative material, and threat of stereotyping. The negative material includes continuous portrayal of minoritized cultures as inferior. Cokley's (2002) study demonstrates how ethnicity and gender interact to impact self-concepts and academic performance.

The impact of self-concept and academic performance includes the concept of stereotype threat. Steele (1997) explains stereotype threat to be "the social-psychological threat that arises when one is in a situation or doing something for which a negative stereotype about one's group applies" (p. 614). African American students are faced with the pressure of not conforming to stereotypes and the fear of being reduced to a stereotype. The stereotypes of African American males often equate to inferiority and criminality. Evidence of the above stereotype threats is found in research that concludes African American males tend to disproportionately generate suspicion of criminal activity (Davis, 2004; Feagin et al., 1996).

Smith, Allen and Danley (2007) conducted research with African American male students that support the finding that they experience stereotypes of criminality. This study used federal data to explore psychosocial experiences of African American male college students. Campus interview data and reports from the "FBI and US Department of Justice documents describe campus environments where African American males tend to be a primary target for verbal and physical abuse, and for racially motivated hate crimes" (Caroll, 1998; U.S. Department of Justice, 2001, 2004) (p. 552). Smith et al.

(2007) concluded that being African American and an African American male carried two categories of negative social burdens and identities resulting in experiences of racial microaggressions as well as overt racism. The two negative social burdens are the stereotypes of being African American (e.g. being poor and lazy) in additional to stereotypes distinct to being African American male (e.g. being violent, hypersexual, conniving and untrustworthy). "Additionally, African American male collegians (college students) constantly confront negative stereotypes about their intellect and must excel academically despite racially biased course content and racially insensitive instructors" (p. 522).

The stereotypes of African American males students possessing a lack of general ability, low aspirations, low motivation and "fear of acting white" has been thought of by researchers as the cause for low academic attainment and retention (D'Souza, 1995; Hrabowski & Maton, 2009; Ogbu, 2003; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2004;). It is important, however, to recognize these burdens as contributing factors to racial battle fatigue (Smith et al., 2007) and the overall struggle to survive in college. Racial battle fatigue is defined as the physiological and psychological strain experienced by racial minorities and the amount of energy lost which is dedicated to coping with racial microaggressions and racism (Smith et al., 2007).

In a previously mentioned study, Reid and Radhakrishnan (2003) found that African American male college students report more negative perceptions of academic climate than do any other racial groups. Other researchers have found similar results. For example, Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) examined the experiences of 36 black male

students at esteemed institutions: Harvard, Michigan State University, University

California – Berkeley, University of Illinois, and the University of Michigan. The

participants formed focus groups at the school that discussed eight areas: (a) types of

racial discrimination experiences, (b) what psychological responses occurred for each

incident experienced by students, (c) how students reacted to racial discrimination, (d)

how mundane racism affected their ability to perform academically, (e) the advantages of

having a crucial mass of students of color on campus, (f) what advice students would give

for the study, (g) whether the racial climate for students of color has improved or

worsened in the past few years, and (h) whether they would recommend their college to

other students of color.

This qualitative study revealed that these men tended to feel the pressure of

targeting, including being placed under surveillance in the community (e.g., in stores),

and by local/campus police. Participants spoke of the theme of "being out of place" and

"fitting the description." The concept of fitting the description is used to justify negative

assumptions about people of color. An example is the provided scenario of two African

American teenagers walking in a suburban community who are randomly stopped by

police because they fit the description of a criminal. These experiences were reported to

happen in three racial domains: (a) campus academic, (b) campus social, and (c) campus

public spaces. Campus academic spaces are areas on campus where students are near or

in academic or administration buildings. Campus social areas were reported to be spaces

where students live, socialize, or participate in recreational activities. Lastly, campus

public spaces were designated to be areas adjacent to campus.

One of the male participants provided this response when prompted about campus academic space:

> I went to the physics lab on Sunday to study on the computer … A university officer came into the computer lab and asked for my ID. I asked him why. He stated that someone called and reported a suspicious-looking person entering the building [fitting the description] … I told him that I'm a student studying for an exam and I wouldn't even be able to log onto the computer if I wasn't enrolled in the class… At this point I handed him my student ID. The officer then asked, "Do you have another piece of ID?" (p. 560)

Smith et al. (2007) reported that African American male students perceive their environment as extremely stressful, exhausting and diminishing to their sense of self, comfort and control. These participants spoke of feeling loss, frustrated, and being treated unjustly. One participant stated: "To be a black male is to have your integrity chronically under question, to always have to somehow verbally or nonverbally communicate convincing reasons for being where you are if you are not in your 'place' " (p. 572).

Across the themes, African American males reported that in each case of perceived racial microaggression, students experienced psychological responses of frustration, shock, avoidance, withdrawal, disbelief, anger, anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness and fear. This study was conducted at elite institutions and reports may differ at smaller institutions or liberal arts colleges. It is important to take into consideration the history of racial tension in the areas studied. This study demonstrates African American males experience a heightened sense of racial reality as a result of

continuously being aware of the burden of the stereotypes of being African American and

the stereotypes of being African American male. The heightened reality of self-concept

may influence academic achievement.

*Comparing African American Male Experiences of PWIs v. HBCUs*

Many African American males at PWIs report it being hard to succeed in a

seemingly hostile environment that forces invisibility or marginalization of their presence

(Davis, 1999; Cuyjet, 2006). African American students at PWIs typically have lower

levels of academic achievement, as well as difficulty with identity, self-esteem and

psychosocial development in comparison with their counterparts at HBCUs.  These

troubles contribute to maladjustment and higher levels of stress (Baldwin, Fisler &

Patton, 2009; Bruno, 2002; Carter, Miller, Sbrocco, Sunchday, & Lewis, 1999;

Thompson, Anderson & Bakeman, 2000).

Smith, Yosso and Solórzano (2007) investigated the African American male

experience on historically white campuses through the lens of black misandry, critical

race theory and racial primes. Black misandry is an exaggerated pathological aversion to

black men, which is reinforced through society, institutions, practices and behaviors.

Racial primes refer to the conditioning of white individuals to engage in color-conscious

racialized actions and self-perceptions of color-blindness. The researchers solicited 36

African American male students from five Carnegie-designated research institutions to

complete an interview of five reflective questions to examine how concepts of racial

priming and black misandry are experienced through college tenure. The participants

were recruited through their membership of African American student organizations,

referrals, electronic mail and advertisements in the newspaper. Each participant was asked the following questions:

1. How has or can race and racism in our institution play a role in the everyday decisions we make? How about gender and gendered racism?

2. How is our institution meeting or exceeding our institutional responsibility to enroll, retain and graduate students of color?

3. If we value the experiential knowledge of Faculty, Staff and Students of Color, have we nurtured direct and consistent lines of communication with them?

4. How does our university mission reflect a genuine commitment to social justice? How can this commitment be implemented and integrated into the leadership culture as the day-to-day decisions are made?

5. What analytical tools and practical methods can we engage to better know and understand the racial and gendered histories and contemporary conditions of our institution?

From these questions the respondents revealed that they believed that the campus climates were racially hostile. Results also showed that they believed that African American males' experiences were characterized both by daily subtle and overt racial incidents (Baldwin, Fisler, & Patton, 2009). The four major themes of black misandry stereotyping were criminal/predator, street-smart – expert on all things ghetto, non-student athlete and anti-intellectual. Smith et al., (2007) used critical race theory and grounded theory to capture the narratives of participants and provide historical context. The pressure exists for African American students to remain cognizant of the four major

themes of black misandry, stereotype threat and campus climates, all while attempting to develop themselves as an adult and student.

Next in another study, Spurgeon (2009) investigated the wellness of 203 African American college male juniors and seniors enrolled in mid-sized universities in the South East, at PWIs (N = 100) and HBCUs (N = 103). Spurgeon used Myer's (1991) paradigm of wellness defined as a quest for humanity to achieve maximum functioning through 17 factors: spirituality, work, leisure, friendship, love, sense of worth, sense of control, realistic belief, emotional awareness/coping problem solving, creativity, sense of humor, nutrition, exercise, self-care, gender identity, cultural identity, and stress management. The participants were volunteers recruited from intact classes using the Office of Minority Affairs. The Office of Minority student affairs identified classes attended by African American males using classes that filled graduation requirements or upper decision courses as requirements. The literature review to support this study explained the African American male college experience to be one of feeling excluded from social activities, unwelcoming residence halls, unfriendly peers and racial problems.

Each participant received a demographic questionnaire as well as the Wellness Evaluation of Lifestyle assessment (WEL; Myers, Witmer & Sweeney, 1996). The reliability of the 17 factors for this study using Cronbach's reliability ranged from .62 to .82, and .88 for the total Total Wellness. An ANOVA was performed and statistics were analyzed with alpha set at .05. The results showed a statistically significant difference for Friendship, $F(1,201) = 6.24$, Love, $F(1, 201) = 7.91$, and Sense of Worth, $F(1, 201) = 7.98$. African American males attending HBCUs scored significantly higher than those

attending PWIs in the areas of experiencing more friendships, feeling a greater sense of control, experiencing more love, and gender identity. However, African Americans at PWIs scored significantly higher on having a sense of worth than those male students attending HBCUs. Spurgeon (2009) reported that HBCUs operate with an aim to provide relationship development and social adjustment with an emphasis on cultural identity formation.

This study shows that the college experience of African American males differs between HBCUs and PWIs. African Americans students attending HBCUs were reported to be more closely surrounded by people who look like them and are active in their culture to provide support. Friendship, control, love and identity are important parts of becoming a productive adult. These researchers show that environment matters.

The perception of African American males experiencing a uniquely supportive campus climate at HBCU campus, similar to research previously reviewed, is evidenced in many studies. Palmer and Young (2010) quoted, "Black universities provide positive social and psychological environments for African American students compared to those experienced by White students who attend White University" (p. 140).

A supportive climate influences student attachment and student identity development within college campuses. Research has shown that identification with academics is an important correlate of outcomes such as grades and being placed on the Dean's list (Osborne & Rausch, 2001). Cokley (2002) found that ethnic identification and racial centrality were negatively correlated to academic achievement for male students. In another study, Davis (1994) investigated the relationship between student background,

college behaviors and attitudes, and academic performance in college by examining how they differ between 742 African American males students at HBCU (n = 408) and PWI (n = 334) across 30 campuses in the southern and Mid-Atlantic states through regression analysis. These students were given the Student Opinion Survey (SOS) a 109-item questionnaire addressing the issues of college performance, behaviors and attitudes. The operational definition of academic achievement for this study is defined by cumulative grade point average.

T-tests were used to analyze differences on all variables by college type. Subsequently, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to discover effects of each group of independent variables used to predict college academic performance. The three groups are; academic and personal background factors, racial congruency factors, and college level environment factors, which were all used to predict academic achievement. The first stage investigated the effects of personal and academic background. The next stage used racial congruency and the third stage included college level environment variables.

Academic and personal background factors included age; the socioeconomic background of parents' income (alpha reliability = .85), occupations, and level of education; high school grade point average; total score on Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) ranging from 400 to 1600 points; degree aspirations reported by respondent using ratings from 1 = none, 2 = associate degree, 3 = bachelor's degree, 4 = master's degree, 5 = doctorate to 6 = professional degree. Racial congruency factors used two variables: community racial congruency defined as the degree of fit between the racial composition

of the community and current college environment; and high school racial congruency defined as the racial composition of the respondents' high school attended and college environment. Each subcategory used a Likert scale of 1 = very similar to 5 = very different.

College level variables included academic integration derived from SOS (alpha reliability = .83) (e.g. "It is easy to develop a close relationship with faculty members on this campus"); study habits based on SOS (alpha reliability = .84) (e.g. "I keep my assignments up-to-date"); peer relations derived from SOS (alpha reliability = .65) (e.g. "How often have you participated in activities with other students?") ; institutional support based on responses from SOS (alpha reliability = .74) (e.g. "I am satisfied with the academic advice I have received at my institution"); and academic achievement from the undergraduates' average grades.

Results of the study indicated that students at the PWI reported less racial congruency between their high school and community than did students attending HBCUs. The regression analysis found college environment accounted for 48% (Academic Integration t = 3.06; study habits t = -1.09; peer relations t = .788; institutional support t = -1.28) of the variance in achievement, while racial congruency accounted for another 40% (community t = 2.14; high school t = .354). It was noted that students whose college environment more closely matched their community environment had significantly higher academic performance indicators than those whose environment did not (t = 2.14).

This article did provide evidence that for African American males, the college environment affects academic achievement. The article states that African American male college students report having more coping mechanisms compared to African American male college students at PWIs. This information, combined with the knowledge that African American males at HBUCs experience more friendships and love compared to those at PWIs (Spurgeon, 2009), is evidence that race and environment are important in developing self-concept and achievement. Similarly, Davis (1994) found college environment to account for 48% of the variance in achievement, supporting the notion that the perception of self and environment influences achievement.

African American males report experiencing a greater sense of connectedness, power, affiliation and culturally responsive engagement at HBCUs compared with those at PWIs (Fleming, 1984). Research in the 1990s began to highlight findings that African Americans gained more in areas of overall personal development and degree attainment while attending HBCUs compared to their African American peers at PWIs (Cuyjet, 2006; Davis, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Fleming (1984) describes the profile of African American males at PWIs as depressed. The author posits that these students become unhappy with college life, display academic demotivation and devalue their abilities. The research provided above supports the notion that African American males have negative experiences and often internalize these experiences, allowing them to affect their academic performance, attachment and aspiration.

*African American Males at HBCUs*

HBCUs are believed to be more supportive environments for African American student development and achievement. Researchers posit that African American male developmental issues of interpersonal skills, isolation, and belonging become irrelevant on HBCU campuses (Fleming, 1984; Berger & Milem, 2000). African American males have reported a greater sense of connectedness, power, and engagement at HBCUs compared with those at PWIs (Baldwin, Fisler, & Patton, 2009). Additionally, the overall improvement in personal development influences academic achievement (Cuyjet, 2006; Davis, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Moreover, in this environment African American males report increasing academic efficacy and overall wellness (Fleming, 1984; Berger & Milem, 2000). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) state that "Black (African American) students at HBCUs often leave these colleges with a greater sense of the value of learning for self-understanding and with a heightened self-concept in both the academic and social domains" (p. 185).

Despite the stated benefits for African American males in attending HBCUs, information about their experience at HBCU institutions is limited. Lundy-Wagner and Gasman (2011) conducted a literature review regarding the 4-year experience with African American male students at HBCUs. These researchers concluded that from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day African American males have been neglected in the research in reference to undergraduate enrollment, experience, and degree completion. Literature most often examines African American student experiences at HBCUs without controlling for gender although it has been cited that African Americans students often experience race in conjunction with gender. The research experiences of

African American males at HBCUs are often undertaken in comparison to their PWI attending counterparts.

In Michael Cuyjet's (2006) *African American men in college*, researchers Kimbrough and Harper contributed an entire chapter to "African American Men at Historically Black Colleges and Universities." Although in the 1980s over 90 percent of African American students sought instruction from HBCUs, current researchers have shown the ability for HBCUs to enroll and retain a significant number of African American males remains consistent; however, the enrollment numbers, as well as the numbers achieving completion, have been declining over the years (Fleming, 1984; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006). It is important to note that the gender disparity of HBCUs is the same as PWIs. Men only make up less than a third of the graduating degrees awarded at HBCUs.

The graduation rate can be linked to Cokley's (2002) ideas of disidentification, Cokley and Moore (2007)'s concept of disengagement or Harper, Carini, Bridges and Hayek (2004)'s concern regarding African American male engagement. The alarm of engagement has shifted from when Allen (1986) solicited data from 8 HBCU campuses and found African American males to possess higher education and career aspirations in comparison to African American female students. More recently, Harper et al. (2004) used the National Survey on Student Engagement with 1,167 African American students (919 women, 248) from 12 different HBCU institutions and concluded that African American males were less engaged and studied less compared to their female counterparts.

Cokley (2001) surveyed 258 African American undergraduates (92 males, 165 females, 1 unidentified) at two southern HBCUs to investigate gender differences among African American students' impact of racial identity on academic and psychosocial development. The assessments used were Racial Centrality Scale (RSC) (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton & Smith, 1997), the Academic Self Concept Scale (ASCS) and the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS). The research found that African American females scored significantly higher on the AMS subscale of extrinsic motivation and African American males reported significantly higher scores on the subscale of motivation. These results support the notion that African American males become disenchanted and disengaged during the education process. It appears that African American males' racial identity becomes detached from the academic process and influences academic efficacy.

Wade (1998)'s theory of male reference group identity would support the literature viewed above. The ego development, psychological relatedness, and reference group appear to influence African American students' college experience. The tenets of Wade's (1998) theory may contribute to Cokley (2007)'s theories of disidentification, Harper et al (2004)'s thoughts on lacking male engagement and Fleming (1984)'s concern that African American college students' development can be depressed by institutions of higher education. Further research is needed.

*Microaggressions*

Various definitions of microaggressions have been offered; however, one consistent theme across these definitions is subtle oppression. Constantine (2007) defined

racial microaggressions as the "subtle and commonplace exchanges that somehow convey insulting or demeaning messages to people of color" (p. 2). The subtlety mentioned in the above definition includes the unconscious harboring of negative feelings and beliefs about historically disadvantaged groups (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). Another definition comes from Sue et al., (2007), in which researchers state that microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily exchanges as well as "verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color" (p 271). These ambiguous and nebulous offensives are expressed in three ways: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations.

*Microassaults*

Microassaults are identified as "old-fashioned" racism, coined as transactions that were once overtly commonplace expressions in America, which are no longer acceptable in modern society. These transactions are considered an old way of thinking. An example of "old-fashioned" racism is calling someone a "nigger" or displaying the hood of the Ku Klux Klan, which are deliberate, conscious and explicit acts that were socially accepted expression in past but are presently deemed unacceptable. These acts are conscious and deliberate with intentions to harm persons. Microassaults almost always occur in closed settings with people who openly share the same beliefs or in situations that will allow the offender a degree of anonymity. The environment for this type of microaggression has to allow the offender to feel safe in committing the microassault. These harmful acts may be expressed when individuals are intoxicated, blaming inebriation for racial outbursts and

loss of control. Sue et al. (2007) assert that this form of microaggression is the easiest to confront and identify; however, it occurs less frequently compared to the other levels of microaggression that will be discussed.

Microassaults are less likely to occur compared to decades ago; however, these offenses have appeared in modern society more frequently as of late. In 2006, famous actor Michael Richards, star from the popular sitcom Seinfeld, was filmed during his comedy act engaging in a racist rant against one of the African American audience members because the patron's talking was interfering with the comedy show. Richards, most popularly known for his character Kramer, repeatedly called the patron a "nigger" and explained that years ago society would have strung him up on a tree. In Richards' official apology, he expressed sorrow while adamantly proclaiming not to be a racist.

Additionally, acclaimed actor Mel Gibson was recorded calling Latinos "wetbacks", asserting the holocaust to be a myth, and overtly calling African Americans "niggers" (Nadal, 2008). These two incidents are evidence of the frequent occurrence of microassaults in modern society. These acts are conscious behaviors intended to hurt individuals based on beliefs about race. Microassaults are assaults with prejudice motivations. Microassaults are undeniable hate crimes. Richards and Gibson's actions were undeniably discriminatory while other with microaggressions such as microinvalidation and microinsult intentions or actions can often appear to be unclear. This writer acknowledges that the frame of microaggression, provided by Sue et al., (2007), recognizes microassaults to be the same as assaults, direct racial assaults, and hate crimes.

*Microinsults*

Microinsults are often categorized by the intentions of the offender and the impact on the offended. Microinsults are statements that convey rudeness and insensitivity, and that demean the heritage, culture or identity of people of color in such a way that it may be unrecognizable to the offender but transmits an insulting message to the offended person. Microinsults are seen as being aggressive and oppressive. Furthermore, the offender may or may not intentionally attempt to communicate these snubs; however, the slighting message appears seemingly clear to the offended.

Microinsults can also occur non-verbally. For example, a white teacher consistently fails to call on a minority student in the classroom. The action does not appear to be egregious; however, the message conveyed to this student and other minority students in the classroom is that what they have to say is not important (Sue, et al., 2007). Microinsults are hard to identify because they may occur consciously or unconsciously, and with malice or innocuous intent. As previously stated, microassaults are undeniable hurtful actions, while microinsults may have rational explanations. In the example provided above, the teacher can explain that she simply did not see the student. Rational explanations make it difficult for the offended to identify the action as having racial undertones. The difficulty in addressing microinsults appears later in the literature review.

*Microinvalidation*

"Microinvalidations are characterized by communications that exclude, negate or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color"

(Sue et al., 2007, p. 274; Nadal, 2008). In this aspect of microaggression, the most common phrases heard by people of color are: "When I look at you, I don't see color," "We are all human beings," "Don't be oversensitive," and "America is a melting pot." These phrases typically do not have malicious intent, and do not set out to cause harm; however, they negate the reality of those asked to melt or become colorless. The invalidation of cultural experiences can create great barriers to developing relationships (Butler-Byrd, 2010; Constantine, 2007; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; & Sue et. al, 2007).

While investigating the degrees of microaggression (microassault, microinsult and microinvalidation), researchers have found a number of culturally-based, commonly held assumptions that can help us understand the motivations underlying these micro-behaviors. These are: colorblindness, over-identification, denial of personal or individual racism, the assumption of criminality, the myth of meritocracy (i.e., the belief that people's achievement or progress is dependent only on their abilities or talents, and not also on class, gender, or racial privilege), the pathologizing of cultural values, environmental invalidation, and the acceptance of less than optimal behaviors on the basis of racial-cultural group membership, meaning a lower level of expectations for minority members (Sue et al., 2007 & Constantine, 2007).

Below (Table 1) are the three types of microaggressions identified by Sue and colleagues; microassault, microinsult and microinvalidation. In the table it is identified whether each of these behaviors are conscious (i.e. willful) or unconscious (i.e. not willful), and whether they are committed with malice (i.e. with an intent to harm) or innocuously (with no intent to harm).

*Identifying Microaggressions*

Racism is a part of everyday life; however, "most White Americans experience themselves as good moral and decent human beings who believe in equality and democracy" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 275). Because of these assumptions, most non-white Americans do not perceive that they commit racist or micro-aggressive acts. Thus, once a student has experienced a microaggression, the task of "making the invisible visible" begins.

Microaggressions are most often expressed in indirect and rational ways. This style means the acts are extremely hard to acknowledge by the aggressor, the majority culture in general and the aggressed (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). Identifying microaggressions is made even more difficult because of the very real possibility of an alternate explanation, demonstrated in the school teacher example provided earlier. Students of color are often plagued with the question of whether a microaggressive incident truly happened or not. The problem in interpreting others' behaviors as microaggressive or not was conceptualized by Sue et al (2007) as consisting of four types of dilemmas: (1) the clash of racial realities, (2) the invisibility of unintentional expressions of bias, (3) perceived minimal harm of racial microaggressions, and (4) the catch-22 of responding to microaggressions, discussed in more depth below.

*Clash of Racial Realities*

The clash of racial realities is a concept that describes racial minorities experiencing a different reality than the majority culture as a result of their race. White Americans experience themselves as good and decent humans who may believe that

minorities are doing better in life compared to the overt racial realities of past decades

when race relations were criminally combative (e.g. lynching, spitting on African

Americans, and cross burnings). They believe that racial equality has been achieved, that

discrimination is declining and that racism is no longer a significant factor in minority

lives, particularly in America. More significantly, white Americans do not view

themselves as racist or capable of racist behavior (Sue et al., 2007). Subsequently,

Dovidio and Gaertner (2000), state that white Americans who do recognize the

possibility of racism and prejudice existing often do not recognize themselves as being

prejudiced.

     Contrary to majority beliefs, minorities have reported that they believe white

Americans to be racially insensitive, unwilling to share their position and wealth,

possessing an attitude of superiority, needing to control things and treating them solely on

the basis of their skin color (Sue et al., 2007). These characteristics are poignant parts of

understanding how minorities perceive the majority culture in everyday interactions. The

views held by minorities about white Americans are expressed through the lack of

relationships between minority and majority people. This lack of relationship contributes

to the mistrust in the mental health and education system (Phelps, Taylor & Gerard,

2001). White Americans have historically abused the relationship with African

Americans which has led to events such as the Tuskegee experiments, the

overrepresentation of African Americans in the correctional system as well as the

overrepresentation of African Americans in special education tracks within education.

The academic lives of African Americans are affected by racial mistrust and this

influences their academic performance and academic efficacy (Fleming, 1984). Sue et al., (2007) report that "…96% of African Americans reported experiencing racial discrimination in a one-year period" (p. 277). The degree to which these perceptions are derived from overt racism or microaggression was not reported.

The difficulty in addressing microaggressions is the differences in beliefs between white people and people of color. Nadal (2008), for example, noted the difficulty in confronting people who have levied microinsults as they may deny their behavior and reject that interpretation of events as they continue to claim a non-racist stance. The two different explanations of the same event leave victims to question the merit of the event, their relationship with the offender, and their own interpretation. This confusion and self-doubt causes stress for persons who have been aggressed against, and forces them to question their reality.

The theme of the clash of racial realities has proven to be problematic at all levels of microaggression, with the exception of microassaults. Individuals' daily reactions and interactions are responses to their reality. Offenders' realities are supported by microaggressions institutionalized through legal and education systems making it difficult to accept differing realities. This stance most commonly implies that the reality of the offended is wrong and that the offended are being too sensitive. Sue (2010) states that whites hold great power over people of color as a result of their privilege to create social realities that dictate how both majority and minority people interpret their experiences. This control derives from their control over the mass media, education system and social institutions.

*Invisibility of Unintentional Expressions of Bias*

Sue (2010) states the invisibility of unintentional expressions of bias to be "an insidious and less conspicuous form of racism that hides in the assumptions, beliefs and values of well-intentioned people and is difficult to identify in its motivational manifestation" (p. 14). This concept defines aversive, subtle contemporary biases. People who express unintentional bias genuinely consider themselves to be without stereotype and state that they would never do anything to intentionally harm anyone. The invisibility and unintentionality serves to preserve the person's self-image as a non-racist, non-biased person. This good image blinds offenders to the racist traditions, teaching and ideologies that are embedded in the fabric of American culture.

As support for the model of invisibility of unintentional expressions of bias, Sue et al. (2007) reviewed Plant and Peruche (2005)'s study which investigated a laboratory experiment that indicated that law enforcement officers were more likely to fire their guns at African American suspects than white American suspects. The findings of this study also indicated that individuals with more Afrocentric features (e.g. color of skin, hairstyle/texture, fuller lips and broader noses) were more likely to receive longer prison terms compared to individuals with less Afrocentric features, including African Americans of a lighter hue and white Americans. In all these cases, law enforcement personnel were unaware that their responses varied. This example illustrates how embedded stereotypes and racism are exhibited among law enforcement. Interpreting this study, Sue et al., (2007) suggested that exhibiting microaggressions, as a result of cultural

conditioning, has become an automatic response that may be connected neurologically with the processing of emotions that surround prejudice.

Furthermore, Cuyjet (2006) discusses the harm of invisibility of unintentional expressions of bias in terms of frameworks used to discuss cultural experiences in higher education. Research demonstrates this through masking statistics, the element of hiding in plain sight, stereotyping and marginalization. Institutions have masked their statistics regarding campus populations by reporting the results of African and African American students together. Research has shown schools are more likely to report percentages of African American experiences without considering gender. This is important because African American females typically report higher positive statistics and outnumber their male racial counterpart. The experience and lower statistics of African American males are often lost within the composite statistics and present a more positive image of the African American experience within represented institutions.

Additionally, Cuyjet states this invisibility allows agencies to subscribe to a myopic perspective of acceptable behavior. The idea of hiding in plain sight develops from the majority culture being acceptance of people who have assimilated and exhibit behaviors typical to the dominant culture while seemingly ignoring those who have not assimilated. African American students who choose to conform to dominant cultures' ideas of dress, language and aspirations begin to serve as the sole reference group to well-intentioned majority culture individuals. African Americans who express alternative characteristics can be assumed to be presenting their "cool pose" by the majority culture (Majors & Billson, 1992). This reference group allows people to hide their assumptions

and beliefs about minority cultures similarly to the Plant and Peruche (2005) study

discussed previously. These assumptions lead to subtle marginalization and stereotyping.

*Perceived Minimal Harm of Racial Microaggressions*

When confronting the aggressor, it is most common for the aggressor to perceive

the confrontation as an event of over-reacting or being too sensitive. Often, minorities are

encouraged by members of their identifying cultural group not to confront an aggressor.

The subtleness of microaggressions allows perpetrators to cling to the idea that these acts

are not harmful, especially when compared to more overt racist acts. Determining the

intention of subtle microaggressive remarks is associated with the development of stress,

emotional turmoil and anxiety. According to theorists, acts of microaggression have been

hypothesized to take more of a psychological toll on minorities than overt racism because

of the energy used to determine the intentions of racially slight events. D.W. Sue was

quoted as stating, "This contemporary form of racism is many times over more

problematic, damaging, and injurious to persons of color than overt racist acts" (Sue et

al., 2007, p. 279).

The impacts of these small slights, or microaggressions, contribute to hostile and

invalidating campus and work climates. Microaggressions devalue social groups, reduce

productivity, lower academic achievement, perpetuate stereotype threats, inflame

emotional turmoil, lower self-esteem and deplete psychological energy. Sue (2010)

outlined the harm caused by microaggression, including biological and physical harm,

which makes people susceptible to illnesses and diseases as a result of stress.

Microaggression also affects people's emotional well-being, psychological adjustment

and mental health, as well as affecting them cognitively through the fear caused by stereotype threats, and behaviorally through the assault on people's self-esteem. Microaggressions create hypervigilance, rage, and anger among people who have been offended against. The impacts of perceived minimal harm will be discussed further in the section on the influence of racial microaggressions.

*The Catch-22 of responding to microaggressions*

The Catch-22 of responding to microaggressions is the dilemma faced by victims of microaggressions, which is questioning if a microaggression really occurred, and even if it did, whether it can be proven. For an individual to discern the difference between finding a rational explanation for a comment or deciding whether one has been the recipient of a microaggression or not, he or she relies on their reality of past experience, initial reactions and trusted peers to assist in the decision-making process. Once a person has decided that a microaggression has occurred, he or she must then decide how to respond. The manner in which a person responds can have consequences for both the perpetrator and offender. Emotional reactions can have consequences, such as being seen as a violent black man, someone not able to take a joke and being too sensitive (Sue et al, 2007).

Some of the aspects associated with the concept of Catch 22 are attributional ambiguity, response indecision, and denying experiential reality. Sue (2010) states attributional ambiguity to be when the offended analyzes the situation and its ambiguity to discern whether a racial microaggression has occurred. This analysis includes questioning the intentions of the offender and whether he or she believes that this was a

conscious (willful) or unconscious (unwillful) act. Determining attributions can be difficult if the person offending appears to be a well-intentioned person.

According to Sue et al. (2007), response indecision is weighing the consequences of reacting to a perceived offense. The person offended must decide if an expression of anger will cause the perpetrator to become defensive or not. Response indecision for some people who are offended takes into consideration the offender's feelings and position as well as his or her own.

Denying experiential reality describes how offenders who experience racial microaggressions are forced to acknowledge a change in the way they view the offenders, especially if this is a close neighbor, friend or boss.

*African American Experiences of Racial Microaggressions in Education*

Using Sue's conceptual understanding of racial microaggressions, researchers have recognized that these subtle insults have become institutionalized and commonplace. The following studies investigate how African Americans experience racial microaggressions in higher education.

Constantine and Sue (2007) conducted a qualitative analysis in order to explore the forms of racial microaggressions that occur in supervision cross-racial dyads and the issues that characterize the incidents as microaggression. Ten (8 females, 2 males) self-identified black students who were participating in practicum or advance counseling training experiences volunteered to participate in this study. The semi-structured interview was developed based on research into African American racism experiences, racial microaggressions, cross-cultural multicultural supervision, and supervision

processes and outcomes. From this study, seven themes of experienced racial microaggressions emerged.

The first theme was invalidating racial-cultural issues. The African American supervisees discussed how their white supervisors dismissed, minimized, or avoided discussing racial issues in supervision. The participants reported that they were frustrated that white therapists had decided to proceed as if race did not exist or that race existed only outside the supervision-counseling relationship. The second theme was making stereotypical assumptions about African American clients. African American supervisees expressed anger and reluctance to discuss their African American clients with their supervisors. The supervisees felt that their white supervisors possessed stereotypes about African American clients that directly influenced the supervisory working-alliance. A female supervisee said:

> "[My supervisor] used to say things about black clients that would just make my skin crawl. [Say things like] … "It's inspirational for me to see [black] students at this university get the chance to go to college, because a lot of them don't make it out the ghetto." … He thought he was being nice [and] complimentary about black folks, but he was really being flat-out racist and condescending" (p. 146).

The third theme was making stereotypical assumptions about African American supervisees. Similar to the second theme, African American supervisees felt that their supervisors' stereotypes and assumptions influenced the therapeutic expectations in their supervisory relationship. The fourth theme was reluctance to give performance feedback for fear of being viewed as a racist. Black supervisees reported feeling that their

supervisors appeared to be intimidated by them because of their racial identity. The participants perceived these fears as being tied to supervisors not wanting to be called a racist.

The fifth theme was supervisors focusing primarily on clinical weaknesses. When African American supervisees did receive feedback it was centered on weaknesses, and neglected their clinical strengths. Supervisees believed that this occurred as a result of their supervisors' ideas that black supervisees were incompetent on some level. The sixth theme was blaming clients of color for problems stemming from oppression. Several supervisees noted that their supervisors had a tendency to blame clients of color for societal predicaments. This appeared to be the most frustrating for supervisees when dealing with issues of racism, discrimination and oppression with their clients, as their supervisors' approach would be to ignore the institutional forces involved. These incidents created feelings of mistrust, frustration and anger in the supervisory relationship. The last and seventh theme was offering culturally insensitive treatment recommendations. A female supervisee stated:

"My supervisor basically wanted me to ignore the fact that one of my Jamaican clients was drinking daily [and heavily] to numb his pain surrounding the loss of [a significant relationship], [my supervisor] said "In some cultures, it's normal for people to cope with their problems by drinking. This is probably one of those situations so I don't think you should make a big deal out of it" (p. 147).

As learners of the counseling process, supervisees were disheartened by supervisors' recommendations that did not appear to consider ethnicity, race or cultural

values. Supervisees believed that these recommendations conveyed a message from supervisors to both supervisees and clients of cultural superiority.

Constantine and Sue's (2007) article acknowledges that cross-racial supervisory relationships expand beyond African Americans and white Americans to include other races. However, the researchers were distinctly interested in African American and white American relationships within educational institutions. Subsequently, the researchers were selective when choosing volunteers and excluded one participant, who identified themselves as being bi-racial, to allow their results to be valid to their desired population. Furthermore, the researchers recognized that their own biases could be a factor and enlisted two other psychologists to assist in analyzing the data. With the help of these two expert psychologists who have practiced for over 15 years each, the results show that racial microaggression affects the learning process of African American college students.

Similarly, Constantine, Smith, Redington and Owens (2008) published qualitative work from the responses of 12 African American faculty members (7 women, 5 men). Participants were all tenure track or tenured self-identified African Americans. The interview protocol was based on literature informing racial microaggressions and black Americans' experiences of racism. Several black faculty members discussed the stressful experiences that resulted when they did not present themselves in ways that corresponded with the established white, Eurocentric models of dress, hair and speech. Through these interviews, seven themes emerged.

The first theme was alternating feelings of invisibility, marginalization, and hypervisibility. Participants spoke of the feeling that they were invisible to other faculty

members and administrators. Many participants discussed how their research was overlooked or under-valued when it focused on ethnic or racial minority concerns. One African American faculty member states: "… most of the white faculty in my department don't like or respect my work. They see it as too personal or about me and my life" (p. 351). These faculty members felt invisible until it was time to recruit a faculty member of color or speak about "minority issues", in which case they were aggressively sought out. The need of departments to show cultural acceptance or inclusion created a sense of hypervisibility for the otherwise invisible faculty of color.

The second theme concerned qualifications or credentials questioned or challenged by other faculty colleagues, staff members, or students. Participants expressed that other students, staff and faculty members often questioned their credentials in a microaggressive manner. Students would take the liberty of calling these professors by their first name without regard to earned titles such as Doctor or Professor. Participants vividly recalled these incidents of having faculty members blatantly question their credentials. One participant contributed this statement:

> "I remember having had an hour long meeting with the grants office about some
> of my research … Before I made it back to my office, the secretary in my
> department said that the grant office guy had his secretary call our department to
> find out if we really had a faculty over there by [my name]" (p. 353).

The third theme was receiving inadequate mentoring in the workplace. Over half of the participants reported a lack of guidance within their field at the institutional level. This left the African American faculty isolated and feeling unsupported. The fourth

theme was organizational expectations to accept service-orientated roles with low perceived value by administrators or other faculty colleagues. Black faculty members were expected by administrators and other faculty peers to be committed to research, teaching and service as well as to become faculty advisers to black organizations on campus, although these expectations were not placed on faculty members of the majority culture.

The fifth theme was difficulties determining whether subtle discrimination was race- or gender-based. Several females in the focus group expressed their difficulty in deciphering whether the indignities experienced were attributed to gender or race. The sixth theme was self-consciousness regarding choice of clothing, hairstyle and manner of speech. Participants felt the need to conform in terms of their appearance and expressions to become more included and accepted. One faculty member was quoted as saying:

> "I'm very cognizant of the way I sort of project myself, understanding that as a young black male, I may be intimidating to some people … I also was very methodical when I spoke in faculty meetings because I didn't want to say anything grammatically incorrect or anything that might perpetuate stereotypes about black people … I've gotten over a lot of that, but it's something that's always going to be on my mind" (p. 353).

The seventh and last theme was coping strategies to address racial microaggressions. African American faculty members in this study disclosed a variety of exercises to deal with racial microaggressions. The most common coping mechanism was to seek support from family, friends, and colleagues who were trusted by the African

American faculty members. It was also commonly acknowledged that the practice of choosing one's battles carefully would assist in dealing with the microaggressions. In making the choice to engage or confront the incident, it was felt as important to be deliberate about how and when. Some other coping strategies were prayer, interpersonal or emotional withdrawal, and resignation that subtle racist treatment will always exist to some degree.

This study demonstrates that racial microaggressions are present and harmful in all levels of participation with education, from student level to being a faculty member. Respondents told of their experiences of reacting, feeling, and deciphering subtle racist acts. The work incorporated in each theme demonstrates the impact each event has on a person disputing notions held by offenders of little perceived harm. The researchers acknowledge the limitations of the research team relying on transcripts versus hearing the actual recordings. Hearing the original recording has the potential to lower error, as researchers would be able to capture and experience vocal intonations, which are very important in ground theory.

Although this article specifically investigates faculty members instead of students, it was included to support the narratives of barriers placed on people of color within education. This writer posits that students of color, and more importantly students' development, are greatly influenced by the campus environment that includes the quality of instruction, relatedness and contact with faculty.

Sue, Nadal, Capodilupo, Lin, Torino and Rivera (2008) investigated racial microaggressions against African Americans using a qualitative approach. The

researchers used two focus groups of 13 self-identified African American college

students (9 women and 4 men), both graduate and undergraduate, as well as 4 higher

education professionals, to capture the experience of racial microaggressions, the given

meaning of racial microaggressions, and emotional responses to different

microaggressions. The participants for this study were solicited through flyers, classroom

visits and electronic mail requests to African American student organizations. Six themes

emerged representing the meaning of microaggressive incidents. These themes are: (1)

assumption of intellectual inferiority, (2) second-class citizenship, (3) assumption of

criminality, (4) assumption of inferior status, (5) assumed universality of the African

American experience, (6) assumed superiority of white cultural values and

communication styles and (7) underdeveloped incidents or responses.

The first theme, assumption of intellectual inferiority, "refers to microaggressions

that assume black Americans to be intellectually inferior, inarticulate, or lacking common

sense" (p. 333). The theme of this microaggression was reported as being experienced

through statements such as, "You speak so well!" or "You are so articulate!" These

statements maintain that African Americans are inferior by considering the speaker to be

an exception to their race. One participant spoke of the assumption of intellectual

inferiority through a job seeking experience: "Every time I go on an interview, my

resume doesn't speak black … [When I show up for the interview] I get the same reaction

from people. Sometimes it's more blatantly obvious than others, but it's always like, 'Oh,

you're Silvia [pseudonym]?' " (p. 333)

Theme 2, second-class citizenship, is being perceived and treated as a lesser being as a result of race. The participants most frequently spoke of this theme in remembering services received in stores and restaurants. Participants told of being served last or being ignored. One of the male participants described this theme through the following statement: "I go to the supermarket and there's an opportunity. [The salesperson says,] 'Who's in line next?' [and then chooses] someone who was not in line next, and I was standing there" (p. 333).

Theme 3, assumption of criminality, is the idea that African Americans are potential criminals because of their race. Participants spoke of situations in which African Americans were viewed as thieves and shoplifters as well as being expected to have antisocial and violent behavior. One female participant said, "I've walked down the block from where I live and had a white woman cross the street and go to the other side and continue up [the street]"(p. 333). A male participant stated, "Sometimes they [white people] follow you [in a store] … Somebody's walking behind me trying to monitor me or whatever" (p. 333). All participants considered these behaviors to be an assumption of being up-to-no-good or being dangerous.

Theme 4, assumption of inferior status, is the notion that African Americans are inferior in class, education, and culture. Participants spoke of incidents of white Americans assuming African Americans to have lower paying jobs and occupy lower status careers. One participant spoke of the high frequency in which angered white customers approached him, an African American, with complaints, demanding to speak to a manager. When he explained that he was the manager, "the response was, in turn,

met with incredulous and dubious looks from the microaggressor" (p. 334). Another

participant shared an experience doing business between two corporations: "I was in

shoes, dress slacks, dress shirt, carrying a messenger bag and so I walked in … [The] first

person I see is a guard and the guard's like, "Ok, you go through that door right there."

So I go through the door, and it turns out to be the messenger area, you know?" (p. 333).

The participants attributed this experience to the guard's assumption that he could not be

a manager or holding a corporate position. He interpreted it to be an assumption of

credentials and holding lower paid jobs.

Theme 5, assumption of universality of the African American experience, is being

asked to speak for all members of their race. Participants spoke of events where they felt

their identity and life experiences were seen to be interchangeable with other African

Americans by whites. Many in each group recognized being made to feel like the "black

representative" at work and in educational settings. Some examples given were having

coworkers ask, "Do I say African American or black when referring to another

coworker?" (p.333) Another member stated that she was told that her presence "brought a

certain degree of authenticity to meetings." This statement was interpreted as being seen

as having the ability to represent all black people.

Theme 6, assumed superiority of white cultural values and communications

styles, was expressed by all the research participants. Participants attributed the pressures

of conforming to white culture to be a part of this theme. One female spoke of receiving

direct and indirect messages to "act white" in order to be "acceptable" and

"professional." Another female stated, "In a professional setting, you really have to sort

of masquerade your responses. You can't say what's really on your mind, or you have to filter through so many different lenses till it comes out sounding acceptable to whoever's listening" (p. 334). A male added to the above statement by stating, "Yeah, and that sort of way of interacting is not, in terms of a cultural experience, is not always what I value nor even always want to do but it's something you have to learn how to do" (p. 334). This theme also includes white standards of beauty. Members of the focus groups discussed how their hairstyles and cultural dress were seen as abnormal or strange.

Lastly, theme 7 is the underdeveloped incidents and responses, which were not endorsed by all group members. These incidents were not easily categorized into any of the previously mentioned themes. One of these incidents reported by a participant was of a member of the white culture calling an African American baby a 'cute little monkey'. The racial reality of the reporting African American connected the comment to a time when people referred to African Americans as porch monkeys or primitive beings. Other incidents included feeling tokenized. Participants spoke of members of white culture making racially charged comments and exempting them, the participant, from the comment. An example would be, "Black people are always so loud, but not you. We're not talking about you. You're different."

Sue et al. (2008) uses Sue et al. (2007)'s nine categories of racial microaggression to conceptualize the interviews of the participants. This study cautions generalization as there were twice as many women than men in the study. Previous research from Utsey et al. (2000) showed that genders cope with microaggressions differently and Constantine and Sue (2007) stated that it is often hard to differentiate between gender and race

discrimination. Having a more balanced sample of each gender could have strengthened this study. It was also acknowledged that the terminology used to identify racial microaggressions could have influenced responses; however, this study does support evidence of African Americans experiencing a different reality in education compared to whites. The statements provided present evidence of self-doubt, uncomfortable environments and stress perceived by African Americans in education.

Each of the above studies used focus groups to capture the experiences of racial microaggressions of African Americans at various educational levels and roles within higher education. These qualitative studies revealed themes that were conceptually related to racial microassaults, microinvalidations and microinsults. Each theme is supported by Sue's (2007, 2008) literature defining racial microaggression and describing minority experiences of racial microaggression. Participants consistently discussed dealing with stereotypical assumptions about their intelligence or the intelligence of members of their race (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Sue et al., 2008). Each group spoke of experiencing their cultural realities as being devalued by disempowering statements, the process of invisibility, assumptions of universality and second-class citizenship (Constantine et al., 2008; Constantine & Sue, 2007; Sue et al., 2008).

Furthermore, the results of these studies of African American undergraduate students (Sue et al., 2008), graduate students (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Sue et al., 2008) and African American faculty members (Constantine & Sue, 2008; Sue et al., 2008) were consistent in their findings that African Americans from each of these groups reported a lack of support as a result of microaggression. Participants spoke of negative feedback,

questioning of credentials and assumed inferiority status as a demeaning manner in which their progress was hindered. Investigating the experiences of racial microaggressions revealed common experiences of microaggressions across groups, which affect student development through avenues of psychological, emotional and academic achievement aspirations.

*Coping with Racial Microaggressions*

African Americans experience racial microaggressions at various stages within education. This experience can occur as an employee, instructor, undergraduate or graduate student. The following section provides literature on coping with racial microaggressions.

Hernandez, Carranza, and Almeida (2010) conducted a qualitative study to discuss the coping mechanisms that people use when dealing with racial microaggressions. The study sampled 24 ethnic minority (13 United State citizens, 11 Canadian citizens; 13 women and 11 men) mental health professionals with advanced degrees who were teaching mental health-related courses at institutions of higher learning or training institutions. Each participant responded to a semi-structured interview based on previous studies of racial microaggressions. The questions included "How do you cope/manage with the racial microaggressions that you have experienced consistently in your life?" as well as "Are there racial microaggressions that you feel have more or less impact on you? What distinguishes the less from the more harmful?" (p. 209)

From the semi-structured interview, eight themes were derived to express how individuals cope with racial microaggressions. The first theme was identifying key issues

in deciding how to respond to a racial microaggression. Responses categorized under this theme include participants' acknowledgement of their own feelings, ideas, thoughts and experiences in response to perceived racial microaggressions. This included "balancing their knowledge that racism exists while taking distance from a situation that they may deem as racist" (p. 205). This theme reflects the idea of coaching oneself to understand that not all situations are racist. An African American female said this about the identification process:

> "I take a deep breath and sit with it for a minute and second-guess myself. Did they really say that to me? Think about it. Is there any other way I can interpret this other than racism? Is there any other way I can rationalize this and extend this person a little bit of grace before I tell them exactly what my experience is and how I experienced that situation?" (p. 205)

The second theme is self-care. Participants reminded themselves to routinely relax, disconnect, and "detoxify from frequent forms of racial microaggressions they experience in their jobs". Participants shared that in order to deal with the constant indignities they experience from being subjected to microaggressions, they involve themselves in sports, exercise, religious activities, or meditation. The third theme was spirituality. Eighteen of the 24 participants expressed that faith was a centering tool that they used to cope with microaggressions. Some participants developed rituals prior to entering and directly after leaving microaggressive environments as a coping mechanism.

The fourth theme was confronting the aggressor, which means verbalizing that microaggressive behaviors are unacceptable and need to be addressed. Confronting the incident can cause indecision as the consequences vary. The approach of confrontation can elicit very different responses from the microaggressor. One African American male said he used humor to confront microaggressions.

> "I was working as a program director and found a program for working with HIV African American men and we had this art show; this white man said to me, "Wow, we were reading about you all over the newspaper. You have done a lot of things. Pretty soon you're going to get your Cadillac [microaggression]!" And I just say, "Oh no, I am a Volvo kind of guy" (p. 206).

Participants reported that this type of response brought about dialogue about the environment or issue. The fifth theme was seeking support from white allies. Participants noted the importance of having the support of peers when challenging issues arise. This support assists them in identifying microaggressions as well. The sixth theme was keeping records and documenting experiences of microaggression. Participants stated that this seemed to be necessary to support their perceptions of the microaggressive behaviors they saw, but they also stated that the task was time consuming. The seventh theme was mentoring. Participants explained how the honesty and trust in mentor-relationships allows for the sharing of the microaggressions to be understood by both sides of the relationship. An African American female said that she "always looks to describe the scenario to someone else to see if they see it in the same way I do" (p. 207).

The eighth theme was organizing public responses, which centered on the understanding that there are other people who struggle in similar situations and in similar contexts. This coping mechanism allows participants to be active in preventing and healing the effects of microaggression for others. Organizing a public response acknowledges that a private individual response is helpful but also limited and that change requires group activity.

> "We created a diversity committee and 10 or eight of us that were directly involved with that incident and that had been noticing the ones calling out certain things going on in the school. We are getting together, we're venting and supporting each other but we're also making recommendations …" (p. 207).

Hernandez et al. (2010) used narratives to support the themes of coping with racial microaggressions. It is important to note that this study included Canadians and United States natives. The history of race relations differs greatly in these two countries and could have influenced the realities expressed in responding to prompts. Despite the differences in national race relations, the respondents appear to have universally reported that racial microaggressions have psychological, cognitive and behavioral effects.

Sue, Capodilupo and Holder (2008) researched the experiences of African Americans who encountered racial microaggressions. Thirteen participants from New York were sampled. The participants were solicited through fliers, classroom visitations, word of mouth and web sites asking for study volunteers at a graduate school of education and psychology. All participants were either graduate students or held careers in higher education. The research resulted in five domains used to assist in understanding

the lived experiences of African Americans who encountered racial microaggressions, termed incident, perception, reaction, interpretation, and consequence, which represent the manner in which participants spoke about microaggressions.

This study provides support for Sue et al.'s (2007) conceptualization of microaggression. For example, the incident domain is comprised of three themes: verbal, nonverbal, and environmental incidents. The example provided by one of the participants that was included in this domain came out of a situation with her boss regarding her hairstyle. "It was kind of like, 'You're wearing a turban' or something regarding it. He didn't - not like he was saying it in a negative way, but you could still feel that hint of like there's some kind of negative connotation" (p. 332). This illustrates how non-verbal communication is used to communicate subtle messages of inferiority.

The next domain is titled: Perception. Perception refers to deciding whether or not an incident was racially motivated. The example provided was about a coworker telling a racist joke while stating that he [the co-worker] had no intention of being racist. The other example provided was receiving a compliment such as, "You are very smart!" from a white person. The participant reported receiving that comment was confusing as she [the participant] did not know if it was a compliment or if the white person just possessed low expectations on account of the participant being black. This uncertainty can become a source of psychological stress.

The reaction domain is an extension of the perception domain as it is a consequence of behavior and interpretation. Perception creates responses within the cognitive, behavioral and emotional realms. The researcher identified the reaction domain

to be categorized by four themes within this domain. Those four themes are; healthy paranoia, sanity check, empowering and validating self, and rescuing offenders.

"Healthy paranoia is the sense of paranoia experienced right before or after a microaggressive incident" (p. 332). The authors explain this emotion as "a necessary reaction to the overwhelming number of microaggressive incidents that take place in the course of any given day" (p. 332). Sanity check is described as a method of understanding incidents and calming some of the questions of "Did this really happen?" Sanity check was reported by these African American respondents as the act of soliciting other African American perceptions regarding a possible incident of racism.

'Empowering and validating self' is defined as a self-acknowledgement that persons who are aggressed against are not to blame for the event, and this allows them to appropriately place responsibility on the aggressor. Lastly, participants discussed rescuing offenders as a domain within the reaction domain. This idea highlights the need for the microaggressed not to blame the microaggressor. This theme reports that rescuing could also be a hypervigilence about your own presence. This article reported it to be "… A pull to take care of the white person in the situation, despite a belief that the person had committed an offense" (p. 332). One participant spoke of the following experience: "Inside an elevator, a closed space, being very conscious if there is a white woman, whether or not she's afraid, or just sort of noticing me, trying to relax myself around her so she is not afraid" (p. 333). This idea of rescuing the offender can be seen as an effort not to have relationships change between the microaggressor and the microaggressed.

The interpretation domain explains the meaning participants made of microaggressive acts. Researchers found four themes within this domain: "You do not belong," "You are abnormal," "You are not trustworthy," and "You are all the same." Participants reflected on how microaggressive acts made them feel as though they did not belong in certain social circles, specific situations or in society as a whole. Participants spoke of feeling that aspects of their identity were degraded because they were different compared to the racial majority. They reported feeling that white people associated everything involved with being African American to be abnormal because it was not White. An African American male provided the following experience of wearing African dress, "I mean that's my traditional way of dressing, you know, why should I have to explain it? It makes me feel like I am being questioned. Is something wrong with me, or what?" (p. 333) This reinforced participants' feelings that white is right. Furthermore, participants spoke of incidents, similar to Sue et al. (2008) and Smith et al. (2007)'s ideas of assumption of criminality, where they were continuously asked to identify themselves or where they were followed in stores by employees, not trusted to have the same rights as other citizens. The example provided above is an example of Smith et al. (2007)'s "fitting the description." The last theme was feeling that they were expected to speak for their entire race.

The last domain was: Consequence. This domain refers to the psychological effects of microaggressions on the recipient (p. 333). This domain defined the effects microaggressions have on the "individual's behavioral pattern, coping strategies, cognitive reasoning, psychological well-being and worldview over time" (p. 333). The

themes in this domain are feelings of powerlessness, invisibility, forced compliance and

loss of integrity, and pressure to represent one's group. Invisibility is defined as

participants feeling that their ideas and presence were seen as less valuable and less seen

than those of whites. The idea of conforming and loss of individuality was captured in

this statement from a participant who reported, " … feeling like they had to navigate two

worlds on a daily basis: their own world and the white world" (p. 334). The last theme,

pressure to represent one's group, is defined as feeling the pressure to represent one's

race well. The pressure includes the awareness that their actions have the power to

increase or decrease opportunities for their entire race. One woman stated, "If I screw up,

every black woman after me, or every black person after me, is going to have to take it,

… so I carry that pressure with me (p. 334)."

In summary, the research gathered that focuses on coping with racial

microaggression presented varying escapes and methods of dealing with the hard-to-

detect occurrences of microaggression. Hernandez et al.'s (2010) research focused on

confronting the aggressor while Sue et al.'s (2008) research focused on rescuing the

aggressor. The idea of confronting the aggressor is akin to an individual's motivation to

directly address the situation to bring about change. The idea of rescuing the offender is

akin to an offended person needing to bring less attention to the situation and can be seen

as the offended person's desire not to bring about change. The consequences of coping

are intentional in creating a more comfortable environment. These two contrasting ideas

demonstrate that comfort can be found in repeated victimization or adjustment; each

coping mechanism influences stress levels in the offended.

Sue et al. (2008) argue that this situational comfort is a product of "healthy paranoia," of knowing that microaggressive events are likely to occur. This state of mind acknowledges the anticipation of daily microaggressions while minimizing their psychological impact and avoiding becoming preoccupied with the acts (Bynum et al., 2008). This sense of paranoia may be heightened for African American males, as their mere presence has the potential to activate stereotypes of violence, consequently causing a state of hypervigilance to be institutionally normalized. Correspondingly, participants spoke of the necessity of having other people who can validate their experiences or understand their racial reality. Hernandez et al.'s (2010) results showed that having support from white allies and mentors, as well as having faith, were important aspects of coping. Sue et al.'s (2008) results illustrated how reactions to microaggressions are personal and that coping mechanisms that include other people are empowering as well as a means of ensuring sanity. Knowing the coping mechanisms of African American experiences of racial microaggression in higher education assists in understanding their experience, influence and effects.

*Influences of Microaggression*

Clark, Anderson, Clark, and William (1999) assert that the impact of racism on African Americans should be conceptualized as a stressor. These researchers believed that racism is a psychological and physiological stressor for the victims of the racist event. Comas-Diaz and Jacobsen (2001) asserted that some racial minorities experience racist events that cause psychological injury. Racist events have the potential to sustain

for long periods of time as a hypervigilance and hypersensitivity to being re-victimized in unknown or social situations.

Constantine (2007) examined a path model of the relationship among African American clients' perceptions of racial microaggressions in counseling with white therapists, the therapeutic alliance, general counseling and multicultural competencies and counseling satisfaction. This study gathered information through focus groups on the effects of racial microaggressions. Twenty-four students (17 women, 7 men) agreed to participate in this study. Members of the focus group were former clients from one campus-counseling center. Two clinical staff members recruited the participants. From the results, the Racial Microaggression in Counseling Scale (RMCS) was developed. The RMCS included statements such as: "My counselor sometimes was insensitive about my cultural group when trying to understand or treat my concerns or issues," and "My counselor at times seemed to have stereotypes about my cultural group, even if he or she did not express them directly". In this study, the RMCS was given to 40 African American clients, along with a general demographic questionnaire, the Working Alliance Inventory – Short From (WAI-S; Tracy & Kokotvic, 1989), the Counselor Rating Form – Short (CRF-S, Corrigan & Schmidt, 1983), the Cross-Cultural Counseling Inventory - Revised (CCCI-R, LaFromboise, Coleman & Hernandez, 1991), and the Client Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ-8, Larsen, Attkisson, Hargreaves & Nguyen, 1979).

Results of this study indicated that the path between perceived racial microaggressions and the therapeutic working alliance were both negative and significant. This suggests that the "higher the degree of perceived racial microaggressions

by African American clients, the lower the perception of working alliance with white therapists (p. 9)." It also suggests that the lower the working alliance with White therapists, the higher the degree of perceived racial microaggressions by African American clients. It was noted by the researchers that 15.8% of the variance in the therapeutic working alliance could be explained by perceived racial microaggressions. The path between racial microaggressions and satisfaction with counseling was negative and significant. This suggests that the greater the perceived racial microaggressions by African Americans while working with white therapists, the lower the counseling satisfaction ratings. This study demonstrated how the conscious and unconscious beliefs about minority groups weaken therapeutic bonds and hinder the counseling process. Sue et al. (2008) found similar results.

In this study, participants spoke not only of racial microaggressions but also of their emotional responses, such as psychological stress, to microaggressive events. Participants reported feeling frustrated, angry, sad, guilty, and doubtful as a result of experiencing racial microaggressions against themselves. They stated that these experiences affected them for days, weeks, months or even years. During the interviews, many participants became emotional, crying and stammering, while reciting their experiences. Researchers identified these emotional responses as evidence of the trauma and stress from the experiences they were sharing.

In addition to the above effects of microaggression, it has been shown that perceived racism is positively associated with greater anxiety and depression. Furthermore, racism has been found to have a negative effect on African American males

that can result in poor mental health outcomes (Bynum, Best, Barnes, & Burton, 2008).

For example, Clark, Anderson, Clark, and Williams (1999) found that psychological

responses to perceived racism included not only anger, but also paranoia, anxiety,

helplessness, hopelessness, resentment and fear. These symptoms were related in this

sample to overeating, low self-esteem, passivity, and passive-aggressiveness (Clark et al,

1999; Okazaki, 2009). In addition to elevated levels of anger, hostility and paranoia,

perceived racism has been related to hypertension cardiovascular reactivity in African

American males (Singleton, Robertson, Robinson, Austin, & Edochie, 2008; Clark, et al,

1999; Blascovich, Spencer, Quinn, and Steele, 2001).

These studies have shown that microaggressions are emotionally, physiologically

and mentally harmful. The feelings of frustration, anger, sadness and doubt resulting

from this race-related stress have the potential to have long term effects (Sue et al., 2008).

Microaggressive events are difficult to detect and difficult to manage. These events are

linked to African Americans' feelings of powerlessness and invisibility within the

majority culture. African Americans reported that microaggressions weaken relational

bonds with members of the majority group. The inner turmoil created by

microaggressions creates unstable environments for growth.

The literature reviewed support the notion that microaggressions exist within the

racial realities of African American college students. The experiences of racial

microaggression influence perceptions of college environment, social development [e.g.

friendships, mentor-relationships, finding love], ideas of self [e.g. self-esteem, self-

efficacy, self-awareness] and academic achievement. It is important to understand racial

realities and racial identity development when asking participants to discuss experiences of racial microaggressions. It is also important to understand how participants feel about being part of a racial minority. Further research is needed to include measures of private regard, experiences of racial microaggression and achievement to conceptualize the African American college experience.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter provides information on the research methods of this study. The research methods were selected to investigate the relationship between racial microaggressions, self-esteem, and depression of African American college students. This chapter reviews the sampling process; define measurements, process of data analysis, and hypotheses.

*Design*

The events of interest in this study, such as racist remarks and actions, are ones that produce discomfort and possible negative psychological outcomes. It would be unethical to subject participants to such events in a designed experiment. Therefore, the design used in this study is a non-experimental, correlation design.  Although it is not a designed experiment, this study presents high external validity because it catalogs actual experiences of the people in the population of interest. Furthermore, since the aim of this study is to explore the relationships amongst the proposed variables, a correlational design is appropriate for preliminary investigation of the data. This study will employ a correlational analysis to test if there is an overall relationship between racial and ethnic microaggressions and psychological wellbeing. Secondly, a series of multiple regressions will be completed in order to test if there are significant relationships between subscales of racial and ethnic microaggressions and psychological wellbeing variables self-esteem and depression using hypothesis testing.

*Variables*

The predictor variables for this study are derived from Nadal's (2010) Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale Checklist (REMS). This checklist requires a dichotomous response on 45 statements. Of the 45 statements: 8 assessed Assumption of Inferiority, 7 assessed Assumption of $2^{nd}$ Class Citizenship and Criminality, 9 assessed Microinvalidations, 9 assessed Exoticization and Assumptions of Similarity, 7 assessed Environmental Microaggressions, and 5 assessed Microaggressions in the Workplace and School. Please see appendix A for a complete list of items. This assessment was piloted by Nadal (2010) using 462 participants from the following racial groups: Asian American (n=157), Latino/a Americans (n=138), Black/African Americans (n=74), White/European Americans (n=56), Multiracial/multiethnic person (n=46), others (n=21), and not reported (n=2).

Validity for REMS was established using more prominent assessments. Nadal (2010) found REMS to be significantly correlated with the Racism and Life Experiences Scale – Brief Version (r = .464, N = 376, p < .001) and the Daily Life Experiences Scale – Frequency (DLEF) (r. 746, N = 253, p < .001). Nadal also used a common mental assessment, Mental Health Inventory (Veit & Ware, 1983) showing REMS as a predictor of depression (F(1,354)=7.43, p= .007). REMS was also found to be a predictor of positive affect (operationalized by the Mental Health Inventory – Positive Affect Subscale) (F(1,354)=8.43, p= .004) in the same study.

*Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)*. The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES) is one of the most widely used measures of self-esteem. Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem

Scale (RSE) was designed to measure the evaluative attitude toward the self by using self-acceptance and self-worth statements. The RSES was originally developed using 5,024 high school juniors and seniors. These 5,024 students were randomly selected from 10 schools in the state of New York. The 10 items on this scale are rated on a 4-point Likert type scale ranging from (1 = strongly disagree) to approval (4 = strongly agree). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965) was designed to be a global measure of self-esteem. Scores may range from 10 to 40 and the higher the score, the greater a person's self-esteem. The following are statements form the RSES: "I feel I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others" and "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself." The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale has a test-retest reliability of 0.88 as established by a study with college student participants (Rosenberg, 1979). Convergent validity was also established using the Self-Image Questionnaire (r=0.83, Rosenberg 1979). See appendix B for a complete list of items.

*The Beck Depression Inventory.* The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; Beck, Ward, Mendelson, & Erbaugh, 1916) was designed as a standardized device to assess depths of depression. The items are based on observations of the symptoms and basic beliefs of depressed people. The inventory measures 21 symptoms and attitudes: 1) sadness, 2) pessimism, 3) sense of failure, 4) dissatisfaction, 5) guilt, 6) sense of punishment, 7) self-dislike, 8) self-accusations, 9) suicidal ideation, 10) crying spells, 11) irritability, 12) social withdrawal, 13) indecision, 14) distorted by image, 15) work inhibition, 16) sleep disturbance, 17) tendency to become fatigued, 18) loss of appetite, 19) weight loss, 20) somatic preoccupations, and 21) loss of libido (Corey, 2005).

The BDI is one of the most frequently used measures of depression among helping professionals and agencies. The BDI is a 21 item self-report assessment that measures the severity of depressive symptoms. The following are examples of endorsable Likert scaled statements on the BDI: "I am no more irritable than usual" to "I am irritable all the time." The BDI is stated to have high internal consistent and content validity (Ayalon, 2003). Please see appendix C for a complete list of items. The reliability of the BDI is reported to be strong for African Americans and Caucasian Americans (Carr, Gilroy, & Sherman, 1986). Ayalon (2003) cited several studies that reported the BDI to be a reliable assessment of suicidality in African Americans (Beck, Rial, & Rickels, 1974; Lester & DeSimone, 1995; Trent, Rushlau, Munley, Bloem, & Driesenga, 2000). The higher score the more symptoms of depression one is said to be experiencing.

*Academic Performance*. This academic performance measure is participants' self-reported grade point average. The University of Minnesota's standardized evaluation form was used to categorize ranges of grade point averages that can be endorsed by participants: a) 4.0 – 3.51; b) 3.5 – 3.01; c) 3.0 – 2.51; d) 2.5 – 2.01; e) 2.0 – 1.01 and d)1.0 – 0. Demographic information was collected such as gender and year in school, and race was gathered from this evaluation form as well.

*Participants*

The participants in this study are 234 (40.5% undergraduate; 39.7% graduate; and 18.8% recently graduated; and 0.9% no endorsement) African American college students. Individuals who had graduated less than six month prior to submission of the survey were allowed to participate as recently graduated. The participants were recruited from one

research institution located in an urban metropolitan area. A total of 236 surveys were submitted however 2 surveys endorsed Caucasian as a race and 1 survey was not fully completed. Of the participants 160 are female, 70 are male, and 4 endorsed not applicable. Table 1 summarizes other demographic data that describes the participants in this study.

For the purpose of this study, participants will be referenced to as African American, although some researchers and literature included use the term Black. The category of African American best represents the students solicited for this study. The participants were both graduate and undergraduate students at a metropolitan research university who identify themselves as Black or African Americans. Participants who are multiethnic, and first generation American born African students will be included as well if they chose to endorse identifying themselves as Black or African American.

Table 1. Characteristics of Participants

| Variable | N (%) Total (N=234) |
|---|---|
| Gender | |
| Female | 160 (68.4) |
| Male | 70  (29.9) |
| N/A | 4 (1.7) |
| Years in School | |
| N/A | 2 (0.9) |
| Freshman | 11 (4.8) |
| Sophomore | 18 (7.7) |
| Junior | 29 (12.4) |
| Senior | 37 (15.8) |
| Graduate/Professional Student | 93 (39.8) |
| Recent Graduate | 44  (18.8) |
| Grade Point Average | |
| 3.51 – 4.0 | 82 (35) |
| 3.01 – 3.5 | 72 (30.7) |
| 2.51 – 3.0 | 50 (21.4) |
| 2.01 – 2.5 | 19 (8.2) |
| 1.01 – 2.0 | 1 (0.4) |
| N/A | 10 (4.3) |

*Procedure*

African American students selected for this study completed an online survey composed of the REMS, BDI, and RSES assessments. These assessments were readily accessible through a single website. Students were recruited with the help of the National Black Greek Organization Association, University of Minnesota Black Student Union, the Office of Multicultural Academic Excellence, National Society for Black Engineers, Community of Scholars program, Holmes Scholar Organization, Common Ground Consortium, African American studies department, Student Affair Office, campus barber shop, Facebook, Twitter, and word of mouth.

Additionally, a series of informational meetings for African American students to solicit their participation in this study was held. These informational meetings included an audience with members from the African Student Association, The Black Graduate and Professional Student Association, Black Law Student Association, Black Motivated Women, In the Mix (a group for individuals of bi-cultural heritage), Common Ground Consortium, The Holmes Partnership Group, the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) and others. Also, a call for participation in this study was posted on numerous Facebook pages and Twitter accounts. After an accumulation of retweets and Facebook inbox messages, additional informational meetings were held.

*Data Analysis*

A minimum sample size for this study, given the number of parameters to be estimated for the intended model, was calculated to be 205 African American college students. The model selected for calibration of the scale was the Rasch model, which has

been used to advance the development and application of assessment in education and psychology research (Snyder & Sheehan, 1992). The Rasch model will be used to calibrate data such that the item and person locations are on the same scale (Wright, 1977).

$$\textbf{Pr } \{\textbf{xvi f v, 6i}\} = \textbf{exvi(v-6i)/[ 1 + e(v-6i)]}.$$

Item parameters will be estimated for each of the items on the scale and person estimates will be calculated. Person estimates will also be calculated for subscales. The subscales from the racial microaggression scale will be Assumptions of Inferiority, Microinvalidations, Second-class Citizenship and Assumption of Criminality, Exoticization and Assumption of Similarity, Environmental Microaggressions, and Workplace and School Microaggressions. These subscales revealed racial ethnic microaggression factors experienced by African American students. The Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale measured the parameter of self-esteem and Beck's Depression Inventory measured the parameter of depression. The estimates of self-esteem and depression will be used to discuss factors of psychological wellbeing of African American college students.

The Rasch model is a type of model within item response theory (IRT). This model will provide an estimate of item difficulty, the inverse of which is often referred to as *endorsability* in psychological scales. It is expected that items will have different endorsability because of the different levels of intensity or felt experiences associated with each type of microagression. It is important to investigate the different endorsabilities of each question in order to describe the range of microagressions and also

in order to accurately estimate the level of respondent experience. The Rasch model, which has been applied in many areas of research including ability and attitude measurement, is also suitable in this context.

In addition to the Rasch Model, this study used the polytomous Rasch Model, known as a partial credit model. The partial credit model is applicable to assessment instruments that incorporate varying rating scales. For example, the REMS assessment used in this study is created with dichotomous responses, while the BDI and RSES are scored with Likert Scales and rating scales. The partial credit model will allow the intensity of dichotomous response as well as Likert scale response to be accurately interpreted. Subsequently, a dichotomous response of true/false can be as powerful as a Likert response of strongly agree or disagree. Masters (1982) asserts this partial credit model to be useful in understanding the interaction between examinees and test questions with varying categories. This model allows varying threshold responses for individual question items without ignoring the endorsability of statements.

Several steps were involved in the analysis of this study. First, using the partial credit model, responses were calibrated to determine the probabilistic function. Secondly, a correlational analysis was completed to examine the relationship between racial and ethnic microaggressions and psychological wellbeing. This analysis determined whether there is an overall relationship prior to investigating existing relationships between subscales and psychological variables independently. Thirdly, seven correlational analyses were completed. Each analysis will include one of the subscales from the racial and ethnic microaggression scale to determine the relationship with psychological

wellbeing. In other words, one analysis used the assumption of inferiority (REMS) as the independent variable with psychological wellbeing. The SPSS computer program will be used to analyze the data.

*Hypotheses*

There are several null hypotheses posed in this study:

- There will not be a relationship between racial ethnic microaggressions (as measured by REMS) and psychological wellbeing (as measured by RSES and BDI).

- There will not be a relationship between gender and racial microaggressions (as measured by REMS).

- The racial ethnic microaggression subscale, Assumption of Inferiority (as measured by REMS), will not be related to psychological wellbeing (as measured by RSES and BDI).

- The racial ethnic microaggression subscale, Second Class Citizen (as measured by REMS), will not be related to psychological wellbeing (as measured by RSES and BDI).

- The racial ethnic microaggression subscale, Microinvalidation (as measured by REMS), will not be related to psychological wellbeing (as measured by RSES and BDI).

- The racial ethnic microaggression subscale, School Microaggressions (as measured by REMS), will not be related to psychological wellbeing (as measured by RSES and BDI).

- The racial ethnic microaggression subscale, exoticization and assumptions of similarity (as measured by REMS), will not be related to psychological wellbeing (as measured by RSES and BDI).

- The racial ethnic microaggression subscale, environmental microaggressions (as measured by REMS), will not be related to psychological wellbeing (as measured by RSES and BDI).

- There will not be an overall relationship between racial ethnic microaggressions (as measured by REMS) and academic performance measured by self-reported grade point averages.

Chapter 4

Results

In this chapter, the data analysis results presented will answer the questions posed in this study: Is there a relationship between experiences of racial ethnic microaggressions and psychological wellbeing? Is there a relationship between gender and experiencing racial microaggressions? Is there a relationship between the racial ethnic microaggression subscale, Assumption of Inferiority and psychological wellbeing? Is there a relationship between the racial ethnic microaggression subscale, Second-class Citizen, and psychological wellbeing? Is there a relationship between the racial ethnic microaggressions subscale, Microinvalidation, and psychological wellbeing? Is there a relationship between the racial ethnic microaggressions subscale, Workplace and School place microaggressions and psychological wellbeing? Is there are relationship between the racial ethnic microagressions subscale, Exoticization and Assumption of Similarity and psychological wellbeing? Is there a relationship between the racial ethnic microaggression subscale, Environmental Microaggressions and psychological wellbeing? And lastly, is there a relationship between experiencing racial ethnic microaggressions and academic performance?

This study investigated the relationship between racial microaggressions, measured by the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (Nadal, 2010) and psychological wellbeing as measured by RSES (Rosenberg, 1965) and BDI (Beck, 1979). Before the relationship between the scales was explored, the scales were calibrated using

Item Response Theory. The scales were calibrated using the partial credit model

(Masters, 1982) in ACER Conquest Version 2.0 (Wu, Adams, Wilson, and Haldane,

2007). Traditional item analysis was also conducted to describe the performance of each

item and the scales as a whole in the sample of data collected for this study. Fitting the

instruments to the partial credit model found the instruments (REMS, RSES, and BDI) to

have a combined reliability of .974. After establishing that each item response was not

moderating subsequent responses, a correlational analysis of each assessment was

performed using SPSS to answer the proposed research questions. The correlational

results were obtained using SPSS Version 20 for Mac (SPSS Inc., 2012).

In Chapter 3, descriptive statistics were provided on the data collected from

participants including gender, college enrollment classification, and self-reported grade

point averages. Here in Chapter 4, Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics obtained from

the BDI inventory used in this study as a measure of psychological wellbeing and Table 3

presents these statistics in the clinical classification form. As stated in previous chapters,

the BDI is widely used to assess depression; its symptomology has various intensities and

expressions.  For the BDI, scores 0 – 10 are classified as one who is experiencing the

normal ups and downs of life; 11 – 16 are classified as one experiencing mild mood

disturbances; 17 – 20 are classified as one experiencing borderline clinical depression; 21

– 30 one experiencing moderate depression; and 31 – 40 one experiencing severe

depression (Beck et al., 1979).

**Table 2**
*Descriptive Statistics for Raw BDI scores*

| BDI Raw - Scores | *n* | *Percentage* |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 0 | 20 | 8.5 |
| 1 | 14 | 6.0 |
| 2 | 22 | 9.4 |
| 3 | 14 | 6.0 |
| 4 | 18 | 7.7 |
| 5 | 16 | 6.8 |
| 6 | 17 | 7.3 |
| 7 | 19 | 8.1 |
| 8 | 9 | 3.8 |
| 9 | 10 | 4.3 |
| 10 | 13 | 5.5 |
| 11 | 9 | 3.8 |
| 12 | 11 | 4.7 |
| 13 | 4 | 1.7 |
| 14 | 5 | 2.1 |
| 15 | 3 | 1.2 |
| 16 | 6 | 2.6 |
| 17 | 3 | 1.3 |
| 18 | 2 | .80 |
| 19 | 4 | 1.7 |
| 20 | 2 | .80 |
| 21 | 3 | 1.3 |
| 22 | 1 | .4 |
| 23 | 1 | .4 |
| 24 | 2 | .8 |
| 25 | 2 | .8 |
| 28 | 1 | .4 |
| 30 | 1 | .4 |
| 31 | 1 | .4 |
| 32 | 1 | .4 |
| Total | 234 | |

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics for BDI Clinical Classification*

| BDI Clinical Classification | *n* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| Normal Life Stressors | 177 | 75.6 |
| Mild Mood Disturbance | 34 | 14.5 |
| Borderline Depression | 10 | 4.3 |
| Moderate Depression | 11 | 4.7 |
| Severe Depression | 2 | .9 |
| Total | 234 | |

A frequency distribution of the scores for the Racial Microaggression Checklist is provided in Table 4. It is important to note that only one person out of the 234 surveyed reported never experiencing a racial microaggression. Additionally, it is important that not one participant endorsed all 45 available microaggression events. These descriptive statistics support the idea that subtle racial events are commonplace within the higher education experience of African American college students. However, this study does not conclude that all minoritized individuals will perceive themselves as experiencing a racial microaggression.

**Table 4**

*Descriptive Statistics for REMS Scores*

| REM scores | n | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | .4 |
| 3 | 1 | .4 |
| 5 | 2 | .9 |
| 6 | 5 | 2.1 |
| 7 | 7 | 3.0 |
| 8 | 3 | 1.3 |
| 9 | 7 | 3.0 |
| 10 | 4 | 1.7 |
| 11 | 8 | 3.4 |
| 12 | 5 | 2.1 |
| 13 | 11 | 4.7 |
| 14 | 5 | 2.1 |
| 15 | 15 | 6.4 |
| 16 | 8 | 3.4 |
| 17 | 8 | 3.4 |
| 18 | 8 | 3.4 |
| 19 | 9 | 3.8 |
| 20 | 6 | 2.6 |
| 21 | 7 | 3.0 |
| 22 | 9 | 3.8 |
| 23 | 5 | 2.1 |
| 24 | 8 | 3.4 |
| 25 | 4 | 1.7 |
| 26 | 7 | 3.0 |
| 27 | 9 | 3.8 |
| 28 | 9 | 3.8 |
| 29 | 5 | 2.1 |
| 30 | 6 | 2.6 |
| 31 | 5 | 2.1 |
| 32 | 5 | 2.1 |
| 33 | 5 | 2.1 |
| 34 | 7 | 3.0 |
| 35 | 12 | 5.1 |
| 36 | 4 | 1.7 |
| 37 | 2 | .9 |
| 38 | 5 | 2.1 |
| 39 | 1 | .4 |
| 40 | 2 | .9 |
| 41 | 1 | .4 |
| Total | 234 | |

Table 5 through Table 10 provides the descriptive data for items endorsed on the subscales of REM. The subscale Assumption of Inferiority has 8 items; Second-Class Citizen and Assumption of Criminality has 7 items; Microinvalidation has 9 items, Exoticization and Assumption of Similarity has 9 items, and Environment has 7 possible endorsable items. The subscale Workplace and School microaggression has 5 endorsable items.

The results of this study indicate that over 18% of the participants endorsed each of the eight items in the category of Inferiority. The most endorsed statement in this subscale is, "Someone acted surprised at my scholastic or professional success because of my race." This statement was endorsed by 70% of the participants surveyed. Almost 20% of the participants endorsed six of the seven items available for the subscale Environmental Microaggressions. The subscales Workplace and School Microaggression as well as Microinvalidation indicate a range of data responses. Workplace and school environment reported 20.5% of participants not endorsing any items and 20.1% endorsing at least two items in this subscale. The subscale of Microinvalidation shows 30 participants (12.8%) did not endorse any items and 29 participants (12.4%) endorsed at least three items within this subscale.

**Table 5**

*Descriptive Statistics for REMS Subscale: Assumption of Inferiority*

| Inferiority Responses | n | Percentage |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 0 | 27 | 11.5 |
| 1 | 25 | 10.7 |
| 2 | 21 | 9.0 |
| 3 | 26 | 11.1 |
| 4 | 28 | 12.0 |
| 5 | 38 | 16.2 |
| 6 | 25 | 10.7 |
| 7 | 44 | 18.8 |
| Total | 234 | 100.0 |

**Table 6**

*Descriptive Statistics for REMS Subscale: Second-class Citizen and Assumption of*

*Criminality*

| Second Class Assumption of Criminality Responses | n | Percentage |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 0 | 25 | 10.7 |
| 1 | 33 | 14.1 |
| 2 | 41 | 17.5 |
| 3 | 39 | 16.7 |
| 4 | 18 | 7.7 |
| 5 | 23 | 9.8 |
| 6 | 27 | 11.5 |
| 7 | 28 | 12.0 |
| Total | 234 | 100.0 |

**Table 7**

*Descriptive Statistics for REMS Subscale: Microinvalidation*

| Microinvalidation Responses | *n* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 30 | 12.8 |
| 1 | 21 | 9.0 |
| 2 | 16 | 6.8 |
| 3 | 29 | 12.4 |
| 4 | 26 | 11.1 |
| 5 | 21 | 9.0 |
| 6 | 18 | 7.7 |
| 7 | 27 | 11.5 |
| 8 | 19 | 8.1 |
| 9 | 27 | 11.5 |
| Total | 234 | 100.0 |

**Table 8**

*Descriptive Statistics for REMS Subscale: Environmental*

| Environmental Responses | *n* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 7 | 3.0 |
| 1 | 19 | 8.1 |
| 2 | 17 | 7.3 |
| 3 | 30 | 12.8 |
| 4 | 38 | 16.2 |
| 5 | 40 | 17.1 |
| 6 | 46 | 19.7 |
| 7 | 37 | 15.8 |
| Total | 234 | 100.0 |

**Table 9**

*Descriptive Statistics for REMS Subscale: Exoticization and Assumption of Similarity*

| Exoticization and Assumption of Similarity Responses | *n* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 26 | 11.1 |
| 1 | 40 | 17.1 |
| 2 | 38 | 16.2 |
| 3 | 36 | 15.4 |
| 4 | 31 | 13.2 |
| 5 | 18 | 7.7 |
| 6 | 21 | 9.0 |
| 7 | 9 | 3.8 |
| 8 | 12 | 5.1 |
| 9 | 3 | 1.3 |
| Total | 234 | 100.0 |

**Table 10**

*Descriptive Statistics for REMS Subscale: Workplace and School*

*Microaggressions*

| Workplace Responses | *n* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 48 | 20.5 |
| 1 | 45 | 19.2 |
| 2 | 47 | 20.1 |
| 3 | 34 | 14.5 |
| 4 | 26 | 11.1 |
| 5 | 34 | 14.5 |
| Total | 234 | 100.0 |

A correlational matrix was created to illustrate the relationship results of the racial ethnic microaggressions checklist, Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, the Beck Depression Inventory, gender, and academic performance. All hypothesis tests were conducted with a Type I Error rate of 0.05 unless otherwise specified. Table 11 shows a statistically significant positive relationship between racial ethnic microaggressions and depression (BDI raw scores; r = .622, p < .001; BDI classifications r = .563, p <.001). The racial ethnic microaggressions checklist was also found to have a significant positive relationship with self-esteem, (RSES; r =.206, p =.002). Based on the analysis, the hypothesis that no relationship exists between REM and RSES and BDI is rejected. The data in Table 11 also supports the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between academic performance and REM (r = -.034, p = .605) as well as gender (r = .-.046, p = .489).

Academic performance was found to have a strong positive relationship with depression raw scores (r = .258, p < .001) and depression classification (r = .284, p < .001). This statement means that the lower grade point average reported (1 = 4.0 – 3.51; 2 = 3.5 – 3.01, etc.) the higher the score on the BDI, stating a more intense expression of depression. A positive significant relationship was found between academic performance and self-esteem (r = .266, p =.001) as well as with the Beck raw score (r. = .258, p <.001). In others words, higher academic performance was correlated with higher self-esteem and higher depression.

**Table 11**
Correlational Matrix

| | REM | Gender | Academic Performance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Beck Raw Score | .622** | -.126 | .258** |
| Sig. | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | | | |
| Beck Categories | .563** | -.170** | .284 |
| Sig. | .000 | .009 | .000 |
| | | | |
| Self-Esteem | .206** | -.221** | .226** |
| Sig. | .002 | .001 | .001 |
| | | | |
| Gender | -.034 | ----- | .242** |
| Sig. | .605 | ----- | .000 |
| | | | |
| REMS | ----- | -.046 | -.034 |
| Sig. | ----- | .489 | .605 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01level (2 – tailed).

The REM's subscale Inferiority was found to have a statistically significant positive relationship with self-esteem (r = .177, p = .007), Beck classification ( r = .205, p = .002) and BDI raw score (r = .315, p < .001). Criminality has a positive relationship with self-esteem (r = .145, p = .027) and depression raw scores ( r = .333,  p < .001). However, no statistically significant relationship was found between criminality and Beck classifications (r = .121, p = .064).

A statistically significant relationship was found between the subscales Invalidation (r = .209, p = .001), Exoticization (r = .190,  p = .003), and Workplace and School Microaggression (r = .250, p < .001) and the psychological wellbeing factor, self-esteem measured by RSES. A statistically significant negative relationship was found between Environmental Microaggressions and self-esteem (r = -.157, p = .016). A positive significant relationship was found to exist between Beck depression raw scores and Invalidation (r = .333, p < .001), Exoticization (r = .284, p < .001), and Workplace and School Microaggression (r = .328, p < .001). No relationship was found between Beck depression raw scores and environmental microaggressions.

Lastly, the classification of the severity of depression symptomatology was examined for relationship significance among racial ethnic microaggression subscale factors. A statistically significant positive relationship was found with Inferiority (r =.205, p = .002), Invalidation (r = .271, p < .001), Exoticization (r = .195, p = .003), and Workplace and School Microaggressions (r = .239, p < .001) independently. No statistically significant relationship was found for the subscale of Criminality (r = .121, p = .064) and Environmental Microaggressions (r = -.024, p = .713).

**Table 12**
Correlational Matrix: Subscales of REM

|  | RSES | Beck | Beck Classification | Gender |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inferiority | .177[**] | .315[**] | .205[**] | -.088 |
| Sig. | .007 | .000 | .002 | .182 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Criminality | .145** | .296** | .121 | .099 |
| Sig. | .027 | .000 | .064 | .135 |
| | | | | |
| Invalidation | .209** | .333** | .271** | -.115 |
| Sig. | .001 | .000 | .000 | .080 |
| | | | | |
| Environmental | -.157** | -.079 | -.024 | .052 |
| Sig. | .016 | .232 | .713 | .433 |
| | | | | |
| Exoticization | .190** | .284** | .195** | .058 |
| Sig. | .003 | .000 | .003 | .433 |
| | | | | |
| Workplace/School | .250** | .328** | .239** | -.104 |
| Sig. | .000 | .000 | .000 | .116 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01level (2 – tailed).

The results of this study support the rejection of the null hypothesis that assumption of inferiority, second-class citizen and assumption of criminality, microinvalidation, workplace and school microaggressions, and exoticization and assumption of similarity would not have a relationship with psychological wellbeing, measured by self-esteem and depression. This would suggest that Racial Ethnic Microaggressions have a relationship with psychological wellbeing. Furthermore, the data supports rejecting the null hypothesis that environmental microaggression would not have a relationship with self-esteem and fails to reject the hypothesis that this subscale would not have a relationship with depression. Thus, environmental microaggressions were found to have no relationship with depression.

An ANOVA analysis determined that REMS scores differed by BDI classifications, $F(4, 229) = 4.673$, $p = .001$. Tukey's LSD post hoc analysis indicated that the mean score difference ($M = -6.654$, $SD = 1.758$, $p < .001$) of those classified as

experiencing normal stress and those classified as experiencing mild mood disturbances

was statistically significant (see Table 13).

**Table 13**
Tukey's HSD Post Hoc: Dependent Variable REM Totals

Differences in REMS Total

| (I) BeckCATG | (J) BeckCATG | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Normal | Mild | -6.654* | 1.758 | < .001 |
|  | Borderline | -3.584 | 3.052 | .242 |
|  | Moderate | -5.229 | 2.918 | .074 |
|  | Severe | -10.184 | 6.677 | .129 |
| Mild | Borderline | 3.071 | 3.378 | .364 |
|  | Moderate | 1.425 | 3.257 | .662 |
|  | Severe | -3.529 | 6.833 | .606 |
| Borderline | Moderate | -1.645 | 4.103 | .689 |
|  | Severe | -6.600 | 7.274 | .365 |
| Moderate | Severe | -4.955 | 7.219 | .493 |

**. Mean difference is statistically significant at the 0.01level (2 – tailed).

A second set of ANOVAs were performed to investigate the mean differences

between subscales of racial microaggressions and BDI classifications. A statistically

significant group difference was found to exist in relation to the subscales Inferiority,

$F(4, 229) = 4.190$, p = .003, Microinvalidation, $F(4, 229) = 5.063$, p = .001,

Exoticization, $F(4, 229) = 4.809$, p = .001, Workplace and School Microaggression, $F(4, 229) = 3.806$, p = .005. No statistically significant difference was found between the

variable Second-Class Citizen and Assumptions of Criminality.

Further investigation led to conducting Tukey's LSD post hoc analyses. These

analyses indicated a statistically significant difference between those who reported

normal stressors and those who reported mild mood disturbance (M = -1.530, SD = 4.30,

p < .001) and normal stressors, and those who reported severe depression (M = -3.412,

SD = 1.634, p = .038). The subscale of Microinvalidation has a statistically significant

mean difference between those with normal stressors and those who reported mild mood

disturbance (M = -2.164, SD .534, p <.001), and normal stressors and moderate

depression (M = -1.835, SD .887, p = .040). The subscale of Exoticization and

Assumption of Similarity showed statistically significant mean differences for those who

experienced normal stress and those who reported mild mood disturbance (M = -.926, SD

.423, p = .029), normal stressors and severe depression (M = -5.573, SD = 1.606, p =

.001), mild mood disturbance and severe depression (M = -4.647, SD = 1.643, p = .005),

and lastly those who experienced moderate depression and those who scored as severe

depression (M = -4.318, SD 1.736, p = .014). Lastly, the subscale of Workplace and

School Microaggression was found to have statistically significant mean differences

across BDI classifications. The following differences were found to be statistically

significant: those who experienced normal stressors and mild depression (M = -.911, SD

= .311, p =.004) and those who expressed normal stressors and moderate depression (M =

-1.119, SD = .515, p = .031).

**Table 14**

Tukey's LSD Post Hoc: Dependent Variable REM Subscale - Inferiority

Differences in Inferiority

| (I) BeckCATG | (J) BeckCATG | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Normal | Mild | -1.530* | .430 | .000 |
| | Borderline | -.012 | .747 | .987 |
| | Moderate | -.594 | .714 | .406 |
| | Severe | -3.412* | 1.634 | .038 |
| Mild | Borderline | 1.518* | .826 | .068 |
| | Moderate | .936 | .797 | .241 |
| | Severe | -1.882 | 1.671 | .261 |
| Borderline | Moderate | -.582 | 1.004 | .563 |
| | Severe | -3.400 | 1.779 | .057 |
| Moderate | Severe | -2.818 | 1.766 | .112 |

**. Mean difference is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (2 – tailed).

**Table 15**

Tukey's LSD Post Hoc: Dependent Variable REM Subscale - Microinvalidation

Differences in Microinvalidation

| (I) BeckCATG | (J) BeckCATG | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Normal | Mild | -2.164* | .534 | .000 |
| | Borderline | -1.217 | .928 | .191 |
| | Moderate | -1.835* | .887 | .040 |
| | Severe | -1.517 | 2.029 | .456 |
| Mild | Borderline | .947 | 1.027 | .357 |
| | Moderate | .329 | .990 | .740 |
| | Severe | .647 | 2.076 | .756 |
| Borderline | Moderate | -.618 | 1.247 | .621 |
| | Severe | -.300 | 2.211 | .892 |
| Moderate | Severe | .318 | 2.194 | .885 |

**. Mean difference is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (2 – tailed).

**Table 16**

Tukey's LSD Post Hoc: Dependent Variable REM Subscale - Exoticization

| Differences in Exoticization (I) BeckCATG | (J) BeckCATG | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Normal | Mild | -.926* | .423 | .029 |
| | Borderline | -.873 | .734 | .235 |
| | Moderate | -1.255 | .702 | .075 |
| | Severe | -5.573* | 1.606 | .001 |
| Mild | Borderline | .053 | .812 | .948 |
| | Moderate | -.329 | .783 | .675 |
| | Severe | -4.647* | 1.643 | .005 |
| Borderline | Moderate | -.382 | .987 | .699 |
| | Severe | -4.700* | 1.749 | .008 |
| Moderate | Borderline | .382 | .987 | .699 |
| | Severe | -4.318* | 1.736 | .014 |

**. Mean difference is significant at the 0.05level (2 – tailed).

**Table 17**

Tukey's LSD Post Hoc: Dependent Variable REM Subscale - Workplace and School Microaggression

| Differences in Workplace and School Microaggression (I) BeckCATG | (J) BeckCATG | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Normal | Mild | -.911* | .311 | .004 |
| | Borderline | -.628 | .539 | .245 |
| | Moderate | -1.119* | .515 | .031 |
| | Severe | -2.028 | 1.179 | .087 |
| Mild | Borderline | .282 | .597 | .636 |
| | Moderate | -.209 | .575 | .717 |
| | Severe | -1.118 | 1.207 | .355 |
| Borderline | Moderate | -.491 | .725 | .499 |
| | Severe | -1.400 | 1.284 | .277 |
| Moderate | Severe | -.909 | 1.275 | .476 |

**. Mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level (2 – tailed).

Chapter 5

It is commonly accepted that many factors of identity development occur during

the traditional college years and that this age period (18 -25) is congruent with

diagnosable criteria for mental health concerns. Understanding student development is

necessary for fostering psychological wellbeing and promoting successful academic

performance amongst college students. Currently there is a deficit in literature reviewing

how racial microaggressions impact student development, mental health concerns, and

psychological wellbeing for minoritized college students. Investigating racial

microaggressions, "the subtle and commonplace exchange that somehow conveys

insulting or demeaning messages to people of color" (Constantine, 2007) in relation to

college students' psychological wellbeing decreases the said deficits in literature. This

study investigated the relationship between subtle racist experiences, racial

microaggression, and the psychological wellbeing defined by measures of self-esteem

and depression. This chapter will discuss the limitations, findings, and implications.

*Limitations*

There were several limitations of this study. The survey was administered online

via Survey Monkey, a popular electronic database (www.surveymonkey.com). The

survey required an active electronic mail address affiliated with the targeted institution to

access the site. A barrier was created to prevent duplicate entries using options provided

by surveymonkey. During the survey process, the website malfunctioned for a noted

period of one day that allowed five known students who did not meet this study's criteria

to access the site. As the primary investigator, I was unable to decipher responses from

individuals who did not meet criteria from the responses of individual who did meet criteria during this noted time. In addition, some participants for this study were recruited via Twitter, an electronic social media website, and I was not able to control the parameters of recruitment on the said site. A re-tweet was posted and a Facebook note was created asking students only to participate if they met the requirements. This study is based on the honest self-reports of students.

Limitations exist with the REMS instrument as well. The assessment is worded with the assumption that solicited participants are both socially and cognitively aware of racial discrepancies within their environment. Furthermore, the instrument asks participants how many times "Someone told me (the participant) that she or he was colorblind." This question infers participants are familiar with the theory of colorblindness. As previously mentioned the acts of colorblindness are often innocuous, socially accepted, and covertly oppressive, making them hard to identify. Participants who are not familiar with the theory cannot appropriately report how many times he or she may have experienced the event.

Lastly, it should be noted that participants were solicited through student organizations and activities. This study most accurately captures the experiences of African American students who are engaged or attached to the institution. This study did not directly target students who live off-campus, do not participate in student led organization, or are not socially affiliated with the institution. Student who may have disengaged due to disidentification may not be represented in this sample. In further research, I would suggest contacting department leaders with a large enrollment of

African American students such as the African American Studies department, Youth

Studies, and Business Marketing Education at the current institution to possibly capture

the experiences excluded in this sample.

*Discussion*

A significant amount of literature exists that links minoritized college student's

maladjustment to decrease psychological wellbeing (Bruno, 2002; Phelps, Taylor &

Gerard, 2001; Worthington et al., 2008) and lower academic performance (Brockleman,

2009; Crocker et al., 2003; Dixon et al., 2008; Field et al., 2012). The variable of race has

been an integral factor in these analyses. Literature used to support this study indicates

minoritized college students experience racist events or race related stress. Furthermore,

the literature in Chapter 2 discussed the possible influence of racist events on minoritized

student's psychological wellbeing. Van Laar (2000) concluded that racist events

contributed to the decrease of self-esteem, while Lett and Wright (2003) found racist

events to contribute to the increase of self-esteem. Both studies focused on minoritized

communities and used a self-esteem assessment as a measure of psychological wellbeing.

Similarly, depression as part of psychological wellbeing has been connected to

decreased academic achievement (Baker, 2001; Murris 2002). Researchers have

concluded that depression and racism may result in isolation causing decreased academic

achievement, efficacy, and participation. The object of this study is to extend the ideas of

the previously mentioned research by investigating a possible relationship between racial

microaggressions, subtle racism, and psychological wellbeing.

The REMS assessment was developed from several qualitative interviews and themed to create subscales. Based upon a critical review of literature, hypotheses were tested to investigate the possible relationships between racial microaggressions and psychological wellbeing, as well as racial microaggressions and academic performance. It is important to note that the present study is one of the first to investigate racial microaggressions using REMS to quantify racial microaggression experiences. As stated earlier, many researchers have attempted to use mixed methodology, postulating qualitative reported themes of microaggression with quantitative measures of stress (Sue, 2008) and other measures of psychological wellbeing (Constantine & Sue, 2007).

Researchers have historically discussed the misdiagnosis and under reporting of mental health concerns by African American communities (Phelps, 2001). Over 90% of the participants of this study reported experiencing at least one symptom of depression as measured from the BDI. Using the classifications of BDI, 24.4% of participants were experiencing stress beyond normal life ups and downs. These descriptive results are consistent with research of under-reporting compared to previous research that states that 87% of college students are likely to report depressive symptoms (Dixon & Robinson Kurpius, 2008). The results demonstrate that symptoms of depression are likely to be a routine part of college student experience. Furthermore, the study results indicate that African American college students report some symptoms of depression despite psychological and cultural mistrust of mental health professionals.

Also, this study's population reflects the concern presented in the literature review regarding gender. The literature states that African American females are enrolling and

matriculating at a much higher rate than that of male counterparts. The enrollment summary at the targeted institution reflects a larger enrollment of females compared to males both overall and within the demographics of this study. This solicited population of college students was composed of 160 females and 70 males, while 4 individuals opted not to endorse this item.

Participants in this study endorsed items of subtle racist events with 232 of the 234 participants endorsing at least one item on the microaggression scale. This result is noteworthy, as microaggressions are often seen as unidentifiable, harmless, and as over dramatic reactions on the part of the offended. Moreover, the experience of racial microaggressions has been contended by those who believe that the United States is currently experiencing racial harmony. Many well meaning individuals, researchers, clinicians, and educators alike subscribe to a blindness or humanistic approach including ideal concepts such as color-blindness, melting pot theories, and a post Obama racialized society (Worthington et al., 2008). A post-Obama racial society (Haney-Lopez, 2010, Ifill, 2009; Paramewaran, 2009) states that because the United States has elected its first African American President, race is no longer a negative influence in our nation's daily functioning. This study proves that race continues to be a contributing factor to some college experiences, and the psychological wellbeing of students.

A further analysis of racial microaggressions was conducted within the subscales. Descriptive statistics reveal that 18.8% of the people surveyed endorsed experiencing each of the eight items on the assumption of inferiority scale. The following statements were two items included in the measuring of this subscale: "Someone assumed that I

would not be intelligent because of my race" and "Someone told me that I was 'articulate' after she/he assumed I wouldn't be." These statements are very similar to the statements recorded in the qualitative research from Constantine and Sue (2007), Hernandez et al. (2010), and Sue et al. (2008). Specifically, Hernandez (2010) reported these statements in reference to stressors and barriers to academic achievements. These statements are evidence of African American students' experiences that contradict the theory of the United States as a colorblind nation, a melting pot, and a post Obama racialized society.

**Inferiority.** The literature reviewed suggested that there would be a relationship between participants who endorsed the items in the inferiority subscale and higher depressive symptoms as well as lowered self-esteem. Researchers postulate that self-esteem and depression are negatively correlated. The results of this study reveal a positive relationship between the subscale of inferiority and self-esteem (r= .177[**], p = .007) at 0.01 level of significance. Also, a positive relationship was found between the subscale and depression (r = .315[**], p = .000). This means that the study subjects who experienced more Inferiority microaggressions endorsed more self-esteem. The results are congruent with Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry (2003) as well as Oyserman, Gant, and Ager's (1995) study that showed awareness of racism is positively correlated with self-esteem, suggesting that recognition of racism either in one's own life or as a general force in society preserves and protects one's sense of personal worth.

The data concluded that the more participants endorsed experiencing microaggression events of inferiority, the more severe expressions of depression

manifested as well as a higher sense of self-esteem. It was not surprising that one who feels he/she is viewed as inferior would report increase feelings of depressive symptoms. Furthermore, the idea that both variables are able to have a positive relationship with Inferiority is profound. The results showing an increase in both self-esteem and depression will be reviewed later in this chapter.

No significant relationship was found between inferiority and gender ($r = -.088$, $p = .182$) however there were significant differences between the mean scores of inferiority and classifications of depression. A post hoc Tukey's HSD exam found that individuals whose depression levels would be classified as normal life ups and downs reported experiencing less microaggression events of inferiority compared to those who reported mild mood disturbances ($M_{i-j} = -1.530^*$, $SD = .430$, $p = .000$), and participants who experience normal life ups and downs experienced less events of inferiority compared to individuals who were classified as experiencing severe depressive symptoms ($M_{i-j} = -1.530^*$, $SD = 1.634$, $p = .038$) at a 0.05 level of significance. There were no significant mean differences for the remaining categories; see Chapter 4, Table 14.

The relationships between categories of depression and reports of racial microaggressions require further review beyond the scope of this study. I hypothesize that an individual who experiences greater symptoms of depression than are quantified as normal ups and downs may be more likely to endorse items on the Inferiority subscale that are congruent with feelings of hopelessness, poor self-worth, and loneliness. The relationship may be attributed more to feelings of depression and less to identifying inferiority.

**Second-class Citizen and Assumption of Criminality.** Researchers continue to discuss some African American student experiences on college campuses where students reported they were assumed to be criminals (Smith, Allen & Daleny, 2007; U.S. Department of Justice, 2001, 2004). Sue et al. (2008) reported that students believed other students were frightened of them just because of their race. Students reported feeling pressures of racism in adjacent college campus environments as well. Almost 90% of the students in the study reported experiencing at least one microaggressive event pertaining to Second-Class Citizenship and Assumption of Criminality. Also, 34% of students surveyed endorsed experiencing two or three microaggressions in this subscale of eight items (see Chapter 4, Table 6). In the present study, a positive significant relationship between Second-Class Citizen and Assumption of Criminality and self-esteem ($r = .145^{**}$, $p = .027$) as well as second-class citizen and assumption of criminality and depression ($r = .296^{**}$, $p = .000$) was found. The data shows that there was no relationship between the subscale and Beck Classifications ($r = .121$, $p = .064$). This suggests that individuals who experience assumptions of criminality are experiencing an increase in depressive symptomology. However, it is not a significant enough increase to influence clinical depressive categories.

Once again, the positive significant relationship between this subscale and self-esteem may be attributed to a protective racial factor discussed in chapter 2. It is argued that African American student experiences may include an expectation of being seen as a second-class citizen. Subsequently, this allows African American students to not place

stock in this domain. This may be an example of attributing the beliefs that African

Americans are second-class citizens to the characteristic of the evaluation and not to self.

**Microinvalidation.** The results of Microinvalidation found that 30 of the research

participants never experienced Microinvalidation, 29 endorsed three items, 27 endorsed

all nine items, and 26 endorsed four items. The frequency spread for this subscale can be

explained by Sue et al (2007) writings on the difficulty of identifying microaggressions.

The complication in identifying a microaggression event comes from one's understanding

of racial identity and the potential to misinterpret an event. Specifically, with

Microinvalidation it is often hard to decipher the intention, leaving the potentially

offended to question how they themselves interpret an event, and what that may mean for

future interactions.

It is important to note that this study was conducted in the state of Minnesota,

which is colloquially known for its avoidance of conflict, including cultural issues.

"Minnesota Nice," is a commonplace phrase used by Minnesotans to describe the societal

expectation of being nice to others and avoiding displays of anger

(www.thrivemnnice.com/home/nicetips/what-is-mn-nice). Some Minnesotans will smile

in person-to-person communication and wait until the other is absent to disclose feelings

or opinions that may cause tension. I believe that items in this subscale are worded with

the assumption that the participants understood race-related terms such as "color-

blindness." Some research participants may not have understood the concepts and

therefore could not endorse such an item. Microinvalidation was found to have a

significant relationship with self-esteem ($r = .209^{**}$, $p = .001$) and Beck classifications ($r$

= .333$^{**}$, p = .000). The only significant mean difference for this subscale existed

between normal and mild (M = -2.164$^{*}$, p = .000), and normal and moderate depression

(M = -1.835, p = .040).

As a result of microinvalidations having innocuous intent, it may be difficult to

identify items in this subscale. Further investigation of this subscale may include positive

regards, which will be explained later in this chapter. Microinvalidation has an

underlying assumption of equality and sameness that may be more easily identified by

those who have experienced more stages of racial identity development (Cross, 1971).

**Environmental**. The majority of the respondents reported experiencing

Environmental Microaggressions with 15% endorsing each of the seven items (see

Chapter 4, Table 8). Environmental microaggressions were found to have a significant

negative relationship with self-esteem (-.157$^{**}$, p = 016). However, this subscale was not

found to have a significant relationship with variables of depression. The negative

relationship of this subscale and self-esteem are congruent with narratives of some

African American college students who experienced the feeling that their academic

works, behaviors and ideas will undergo an extra amount of scrutiny as result of their

race. Many definitions and research of self-esteem consider internalized messages about a

person's inability to reach a desired goal (Twenge & Crocker, 2002) further supports the

results of this study

The REMS measure defines environment to include literature, government

representation, and social media. Using the domain specific approach to explain the

found relationship between environmental racial microaggressions and self-esteem would

raise questions. If one places no value or low value in the political domain, social domain, and education domain, it would be interesting to know where their stock lays.

**Exoticization.** Approximately 60% of the respondents endorsed 3 or fewer of the nine items in this subscale. This may be because many statements in this subscale are not related to recorded narratives of African American experiences such as "Someone assumed that I spoke a language other than English" and "Someone did not believe me when I told them I was born in the U.S. (United States)." However, some of the items seem more relevant such as "Someone wanted to date me only because of my race." The factor of exoticization was found to be significant to self-esteem ($r = .190^{**}$, $p = .003$), depression ($.284^{**}$, $p = .000$), and Depression classification ($r = .195^{**}$, $p = .003$). The statements in this subscale may have required a level of racial and cultural awareness that was not accounted for in the study's population.

Furthermore, as previously stated, this study is one of the first to use Nadal's (2010) Racial Ethnic Microaggression Checklist (REMS). Although the reliability and validity of this instrument was reportedly sound (Nadal, 2010), the demographic norming population for this instrument needs to be expanded. As the REM gains more exposure, the reliability and validity will likely be modified. Furthermore, the subscale of Exoticization asks about non-hegemonic factors such as accents and norms not associated with traditional American culture. In reviewing the data of this research and other supporting literature, African Americans do not often endorse being accused of speaking another language or not being a native of the United States. However, the supporting research does discuss African American students feeling that others did not expect them

to be articulate, or for African American students to have a sameness that was deemed as deficient outside the majority culture (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Sue et al., 2008). The Exoticization subscale does not appear to take into account local exoticization such as ebonics. African Americans possess a culture that is both hegemonic and non-hegemonic to America. This means that African Americans share the same language as the majority culture and majority culture is most likely educated or exposed to African American culture differences which may lessen felt exoticization. It could be argued that this subscale does not adequately investigate the experience of African Americans as a novelty.

**Workplace and School Microaggressions.** The data for this subscale assessed direct racist events that occurred at school or in a working environment. Forty-five research participants endorsed one of the five items. Two statements in this subscale are, "I was ignored at school because of my race" and "Someone assumed that I speak a similar language to other people in my race."  I contacted the original author of the REMS checklist, Dr. Nadal, to investigate why the latter statement was not included in the subscale of Exoticization, however I received no response. Perhaps the statement, "Someone assumed that I speak a similar language to other people in my race" is a reference to urban vernacular Ebonics. I hypothesize that individuals at the workplace and school assumed that individuals would speak with poorly formatted grammar, loaded words, and slang.  Once again, the items in this subscale assume that participants possess cultural awareness to discern that events were a result of a subtle racist act. The scores on

this subscale may vary based on the ability to recognize racist events. This is, in fact, an important factor in the use and value of this subscale.

Throughout the literature, several researchers used an example of a teacher overlooking or dismissing a student's idea as a negative factor on psychological wellbeing (Constantine, 2007; Sue et al., 2008). However, the interpretation of such events is individualized and often riddled with the stress of trying to identify the action as a racist event. This variable was found to be positively related to self-esteem (r = .250[**], p = .000), depression (r = .328[**], p = .000), and depression classification (r =.239[**], p = .000). Individuals who scored in the category of having normal life ups and downs scores were significantly less than those who scored in the mild depression category, and those who scored in the moderate mood disorder category were more likely to have experienced Workplace and School microaggressions.

**Summary.** The results of the study are supported by empirical evidence from peer-reviewed articles in Chapter 2. The overall results indicate that racial microaggressions are correlated to depression (BDI; r .622[**], p =. 000) and self-esteem (RSES; r = .206[**], p = .002). However there is no significant relationship to gender (r = -.034, p =.605). This is one of the first studies to use the Racial Ethnic Microaggression Checklist to measure subtle racism. Researchers have discussed the effects of subtle racism and they report that many African American college students' experiences of loneliness, isolation and alienation accompanied with racist events create barriers for success. It is important to note that some studies assert that many African Americans express depression differently. Watkin (2007) wrote that African Americans reported

stress to be a part of survival, something deemed as a normal part of life as a minority. It is likely that many of the depression scores were influenced by other individualized conceptualizations of depressive symptoms. Baker (2001) suggested that African Americans will often not endorse depressive statements as a result of their faith or their expressions may not be tearful or sorrowful but rather aggressive or abrasive. This researcher believes that the cultural understanding of depression accounts for the scoring in the BDI classifications.

This study seeks to bridge the gap of information available about psychological wellbeing, academic achievement, and racism. My research suggests that a multi-dimensional relationship exists between subtle racism and psychological wellbeing. To better understand the relationship, it would be helpful to investigate concepts such as positive racial regard as well as racial identity development. I believe understanding how an individual feels or relates to their race can provide important information to assist in interpreting their experiences of racial microaggressions. The idea that African Americans express self-esteem as well as depression differently is novel. The idea that racist events were positively related to self-esteem as well as depression can be explained by the manner that they were measured and assessed. Future investigations should seek to explore the relationship between racial microaggressions and the use of self-esteem for survival instead of self-esteem as a global measure.

An investigation to understand positive regard would provide additional information about how self-esteem is being conceptualized by participants. Some researchers propose that African Americans may self-report higher self-esteem because

African Americans may culturally externalize self-esteem. In other words, it is possible that the items that would decrease self-esteem are the items that African Americans would not attribute to self. Van Laar (2002) states that African Americans are not likely to report values that are congruent with appraisal from others.

The present researcher believes that a measure of racial positive regard and Cross's (1971) racial identity model would further provide insight into surveyed population's understanding of their racialized self. An understanding of racialized self may assist understanding how one identifies racial microaggressions. Cross' (1971) model has 5 stages: (1) pre-encounter is a time when a person of color is unaware of how their race influences experiences, (2) encounter refers to the first event that brings about a racial awareness, (3) immersions is a stage when individuals assume an identity that is grounded in all elements of their race, (4) emersion is an absolute immersions of all things that are identified as congruent with one's race, and (5) internalization is a balance of comfort with one's race and everyone around them. The present research hypothesizes that individuals who are in the pre-encounter stage may not identify acts of microaggressions as a result of their lack of awareness of how their race influences experiences. Subsequently, individuals who are in the emersion stage may over identify acts of microaggression, seeing every event as a subtle racist slight due to a lack of racial congruency.

The present study reviewed literature that discussed that African Americans are less likely to report depressive symptoms compared to others. This is partly because of the cultural understanding of depression. It was stated that culturally, some African

Americans believe that their emotional state, physical state, spiritual state, and health are all interconnected. This can result in lower depression scores because people's idea that their discomfort can be relieved through their faith. In addition, strong religious beliefs among African Americans allow people to not internalize psychological maladjustments.

This study identified some of the racial microaggression encounters to have a positive relationship with self-esteem. The explanation of a protective factor, not placing stock in certain domain, is important to understand because it does not preclude individuals feeling down or stress from feeling misunderstood. It is important to state that overall the present study detailed connections between microaggressions and psychological wellbeing. However this study, like many others, produced more research questions as well as some tentative answers. This study proves that race is still a negative influential factor in African American college student experiences. The innocuous and malice intentions of microaggressions are just as harmful as overt racism. African Americans are forced to spend time, energy, and emotional space, away from academic progress, on deciphering racist events. Colleges and universities are responsible for the development of their student's need to consider what the environment, material, and teachings available to teachers and students regarding the influences of subtle oppression.

**Implications**. The results of this study have implications for higher education as well as mental health. This study provides evidence that racism is experienced at institutions of higher education. It is important that this fact is recognized. Furthermore, it is more important that institutions acknowledge the subtle racisms that are experienced by people of color within its community. As previously stated in this study, often times

the offenders have a reality that does not include oppressing minoritize communities. Subsequently, instructors, workers, and administrators are not exempt from the above thinking. Institutions of higher education have a responsibility to create environments that are inclusive and acknowledge cultural differences. This study concludes that regardless of malice or innocuous intentions, the racial slights are felt.

I believe that institutions should provide education regarding the negative influence of color-blindness, melting pot, and other racial avoidant approaches to staff. Constantine and Sue (2008) discussed the negative influence these approaches had on students-faculty relationships and development. Institutions need to prepare departments with tools to anticipate difficult dialogue about multiple identities and understanding how one's identity influences relationships as well. It is important for institutions to undertake the task of making the invisible visible (Constantine & Sue, 2008). When institution staff are trained and repeatedly practice acknowledging existing visible and invisible power structures such as race, the difficult conversation becomes less difficult. The practice will assist in making the invisible acts of microaggressions more visible to members of the environment. Institutions have a responsibility to develop a culturally competent environment.

A culturally competent environment could include signage addressing commonplace behaviors and phrases. For example a sign may state, "Not seeing color is not seeing me. I don't see color." The purpose is to expose the subtle oppression that exists in these statements. The more commonplace the conversation of microaggression becomes the more likely individuals will be able to recognize these acts. Institutions have

the responsibility to audit the campus environment to evaluate the representation of students' of color in advertisements, literature, and communication in areas of fellowship as well as common campus facilities. The goal is to create spaces for conversation between and amongst staff and student at the institution, while showing support to minoritized populations.

Supporting students of color while discussing experiences of microaggressions can appear to be difficulty. Often helping professionals, staff, and advocates fear saying the wrong thing or increasing the felt hurt in the situation. In these conversations it is necessary that the listening party validate the offended. I caution the listening party to be cognizant and avoid pathologizing or explaining the offended's experience to the offended. In validating it is important to listen as well as acknowledge stated and felt emotions. After listening acknowledge the courage and self-esteem needed to speak about the microaggressive event. At the conclusion of the conversation staff members should provide resources that will assist in coping with microaggressions. In making a recommendation of resources it is necessary to clear as to the reason the resources was chosen.

Each person at the institution has the power to influence the frequency of microaggression acts. I believe that with practice and a constant journey of self-awareness can decrease microaggressions on predominantly white colleges and universities.

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Appendix A

Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS)

Kevin L. Nadal, Ph.D.

John Jay College of Criminal Justice- City University of New York

Instructions: Think about your experiences with race. Please read each item and think of how many times this event has happened to you in the PAST SIX MONTHS.

0 = I did not experience this event.

1 = I experienced this event 1 time in the past six months.

2= I experienced this event 2 times in the past six months.

3= I experienced this event 3 times in the past six months.

4= I experienced this event 4 times in the past six months.

 5= I experienced this event 5 or more times.

1. I was ignored at school or at work because of my race.

2. Someone's body language showed they were scared of me, because of my race.

3. Someone assumed that I spoke a language other than English.

4. I was told that I should not complain about race.

5. Someone assumed that I grew up in a particular neighborhood because of my race.

6. Someone avoided walking near me on the street because of my race.

7. Someone told me that she or he was colorblind.

8. Someone avoided sitting next to me in a public space (e.g., restaurants, movie theaters, subways, buses) because of my race.

9. Someone assumed that I would not be intelligent because of my race.

10. I was told that I complain about race too much.

11. I received substandard service in stores compared to customers of other racial groups.

12. I observed people of my race in prominent positions at my workplace or school.

13. Someone wanted to date me only because of my race.

14. I was told that people of all racial groups experience the same obstacles.

15. My opinion was overlooked in a group discussion because of my race.

16. Someone assumed that my work would be inferior to people of other racial groups.

17. Someone acted surprised at my scholastic or professional success because of my race.

18. I observed that people of my race were the CEOs of major corporations.

19. I observed people of my race portrayed positively on television.

20. Someone did not believe me when I told them I was born in the US.

21. Someone assumed that I would not be educated because of my race.

22. Someone told me that I was "articulate" after she/he assumed I wouldn't be.

23. Someone told me that all people in my racial group are all the same.

24. I observed people of my race portrayed positively in magazines.

25. An employer or co-worker was unfriendly or unwelcoming toward me because of my race.

26. I was told that people of color do not experience racism anymore.

27. Someone told me that they don't see color

28. I read popular books or magazines in which a majority of contributions featured people from my racial group.

29. Someone asked me to teach them words in my "native" language

30. Someone told me that they do not see race.

31. Someone clenched her/his purse or wallet upon seeing me because of my race.

    assumed that I would have a lower education because of my race.

32. Someone assumed that I would have a lower education because of my race.

33. Someone of a different racial group has stated that there is no difference between the two of us.

34. Someone assumed that I would physically hurt them because of my race.

35. Someone assumed that I ate food associated with my race/culture every day.

36. Someone assumed that I held a lower paying job because of my race.

37. I observed people of my race portrayed positively in movies.

38. Someone assumed that I was poor because of my race.

39. Someone told me that people should not think about race anymore.

40. Someone avoided eye contact with me because of my race.

41. I observed that someone of my race is a government official in my state

42. Someone told me that all people in my racial group look alike.

43. Someone objectified one of my physical features because of my race.

44. An employer or co-worker treated me differently than White co-workers.

45. Someone assumed that I speak similar languages to other people in my race.

Appendix B

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

Instructions: The scale is a ten item Likert scale with items answered on a four point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. If you strongly agree, circle SA. If you agree with the statement, circle A. If you disagree, circle D. If you strongly disagree, circle SD.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

2.* At times, I think I am no good at all.

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

5.* I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

6.* I certainly feel useless at times.

7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

8.* I wish I could have more respect for myself.

9.* All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Scoring: SA=3, A=2, D=1, SD=0. Items with an asterisk are reverse scored, that is, SA=0, A=1, D=2, SD=3. Sum the scores for the 10 items. The higher the score, the higher the self esteem.

Appendix C

Beck's Depression Inventory

This depression inventory can be self-scored. This scoring scale is at the end of the questionnaire.

1.
      0       I do not feel sad
      1       I feel sad
      2       I am sad all the time and I can't snap out of it.
      3       I am so sad and unhappy that I can't stand it.

2.
      0       I am not particularly discouraged about the future.
      1       I feel discouraged about the future.
      2       I feel I have nothing to look forward to.
      3       I feel the future is hopeless and that things cannot improve

3.
      0       I do not feel like a failure.
      1       I feel I have failed more than the average person.
      2       As I look back on life, all I can see is a lot of failures.
      3       I feel I am a complete failure as a person.

4.
      0       I get as much satisfaction out of things as I used to.
      1       I don't enjoy things the way I used to.
      2       I don't get real satisfaction out of anything anymore.
      3       I am dissastisfied or bored with everything.

5.
      0       I don't feel particularly guilty
      1       I feel guilty a good part of the time.
      2       I feel quite guilty most of the time.
      3       I feel guilty all of the time.

6.
      0       I don't feel I am being punished.
      1       I feel I may be punished.
      2       I expect to be punished.
      3       I feel I am being punished.

7.
    0    I don't feel disappointed in myself.
    1    I am disappointed in myself.
    2    I am disgusted with myself.
    3    I hate myself.

8.
    0    I don't feel I am any worse than anybody else.
    1    I am critical of myself for my weaknesses or mistakes.
    2    I blame myself all the time for my faults.
    3    I blame myself for everything bad that happens.

9.
    0    I don't have any thoughts of killing myself.
    1    I have thoughts of killing myself, but I would not carry them out.
    2    I would like to kill myself.
    3    I would kill myself if I had the chance.

10.
    0    I don't cry any more than usual.
    1    I cry more now than I used to.
    2    I cry all the time now.
    3    I used to be able to cry, but now I can't cry even though I want to.

11.
    0    I am no more irritated by things than I ever was.
    1    I am slightly more irritated now that usual.
    2    I am quite annoyed or irritated a good deal of the time
    3    I feel irritated all the time.

12.
    0    I have not lost interest in other people.
    1    I am less interested in other people than I used to be.
    2    I have lost most of my interest in other people.
    3    I have lost all my interest in other people

13.
    0    I make decisions about as well as I ever could.
    1    I put off making decisions more than I used to.
    2    I have greater difficulty in making decisions more than I used to.
    3    I can't make decisions at all anymore.

14.

    0      I don't feel that I look any worse than I used to.

    1      I am worried that I am looking old or unattractive.

    2      I feel there are permanent changes in my appearance that make me look unattractive.

    4      I believe that I look ugly.

15.

    0      I can work about as well as before.

    1      It takes an extra effort to get started at doing something.

    2      I have to push myself very hard to do anything.

    3      I can't do any work at all.

16.

    0      I can sleep as well as usual.

    1      I don't sleep as well as I used to.

    2      I wake up 1-2 hours earlier than usual and find it hard to get back to sleep.

    4      I wake up several hours earlier than I used to and cannot get back to sleep.

17.

    0      I don't get more tired than usual.

    1      I get tired more easily than I used to.

    2      I get tired from doing almost anything.

    3      I am too tired to do anything.

18.

    0      My appetite is no worse than usual.

    1      My appetite is not as good as it used to be.

    2      I get tired from doing almost anything.

    3      I am too tired to do anything.

19.

    0      I haven't lost much weight, if any, lately.

    1      I have lost more than five pounds.

    2      I have lost more than ten pounds.

    3      I have lost more than fifteen pounds.

20.

    0      I am no more worried about my health than usual.

    1      I am worried about physical problems like aches, pains, upset

stomach, or constipation.

2        I am very worried about physical problems and it's hard to think of much else.

3        I am so worried about my physical problems and it's hard to think of

anything else.

21.

0        I have not noticed any recent change in my interest in sex.

1        I am less interested in sex than I used to be.

2        I have almost no interest in sex.

3        I have lost interest in sex completely.

## INTERPRETING THE BECK DEPRESSION INVENTORY

Now that you have completed the questionnaire, add up the score for each of the twenty-one questions by counting the number to the right of each question you marked. The highest possible total for the whole test would be sixty-three. This would mean you circled number three on all twenty-one questions. Since the lowest possible score for each question is zero, the lowest possible score for the test would be zero. This would mean you circles zero on each question. You can evaluate your depression according to the Table below.

Total Score_____Levels of Depression

1-10_____These ups and downs are considered normal 11-16_____ Mild mood disturbance 17-20_____Borderline clinical depression 21-30_____Moderate depression 31-40_____Severe depression

over 40_____Extreme depression