

Disarming Microaggressions:
How Black College Students Self-regulate Racial Stressors
Within Predominately White Institutions

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ABSTRACT

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The nature of racism in the United States has transformed from overt prejudice and blatant discrimination to more covert, embedded, ambiguous manifestations called racial microaggressions (Constantine, 2007; Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Willis, 1978; Sue, Capodilupo et al., 2007). Researchers have demonstrated the unique, harmful, and cumulative impact of racial microaggressions in the lives of people of color (Rivera, Forquer, & Rangel, 2010; Sue, Nadal, Capodilupo, Lin, Torino, & Rivera, 2008). By way of primarily qualitative, exploratory research, scholars have found that Black students' experiences with perceived racial microaggressions are linked with negative psychological and physical health, educational, and career performance (Greer & Chwalisz, 2007; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Watkins, LaBarrie, & Appio, 2010). Despite these findings, some Black students appear resilient in toxic microaggressive college environments, while others seem negatively affected. To gain insight about factors that cultivate resiliency and buffer against negative outcomes, the following study utilizes a quantitative methodology to examine (a) how Black students navigate microaggressive and culturally incongruent environments in predominately White colleges, (b) the role of social support in buffering their experiences, and (c) various self-regulatory styles employed in reaction to the academic climate. Implications of this study will contribute to research, theory, and educational practices as it applies to the promotion of culturally congruent college environments and the diversification of the academy.

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“If I do not speak in a language that can be understood there is little chance for a dialogue.”

—Bell Hooks

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Given the historical legacy and modern perpetuation of racial inequalities throughout United States society, literature related to this phenomenon warrants critical attention (Brondolo et al., 2009; Clark et. al, 1999; Jones, 1997). Racism has been shown to generate disparities in education, employment and health care (Chang, 1999; Dobbins, & Skillings, 2000; Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Jones, 1997; Pierce, 1995) as well as having detrimental impact upon the physical (Krieger & Sidney, 1996; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007) and psychological (Aronson et. al, 1999; Harrell, 2000; Rivera, Forquer, & Rangel, 2009; Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, et al., 2007) well-being of people of color. To combat the negative effects of racism, scholars have been concerned with uncovering adaptive strategies that people use to cope with race-related stressors (Brondolo et al., 2009; Fisher & Shaw, 1999). Scholars have recently begun to examine the deleterious relationship between racial microaggressions and Black students' college adjustment (Lewis, Harwood, Mendenhall, & Brown Hunt, 2009; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Watkins, LaBarrie, & Appio, 2010) and little is known about the differential outcomes of encountering microaggressive environments.

A longstanding question arises about what contributes to people's varied reactions to apparently similar stressful events. For example, the sudden death of a loved one is universally considered a major trauma, and while some individuals demonstrate normal patterns of grievance and resilience, others exhibit maladaptive, destructive behaviors following such a loss. What contributes to people's ability to manage distressing incidents? What internal strategies may better equip some individuals to adjust to adverse environments? And how does one's perception of an event relate to their psychological well-being and other outcomes? Scientific

investigations into these questions have influenced the formulation of self-regulation theory – a body of literature examining how individuals self monitor and adjust themselves, conscious or automatic, in order to maintain stability or achieve a desired outcome (Vohs & Baumeister, 2004). Self-regulation most often involves people’s capability to restrain unwanted behavioral and emotional impulses in an effort to modify their reactions into more desirable outcomes (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999). Given that everyone must adapt to the demands of everyday life (e.g. school, work, family, etc.), numerous researchers contend that the ability to effectively self-regulate provides individuals with numerous psychological, affective, and behavioral advantages (Vohs & Baumeister, 2004).

Several theorists have focused on self-regulation of affect in particular, and suggest that affective reactions frame one’s subjective experience and modulate subsequent behaviors and cognitions (Bless & Forgas, 2000; Larsen & Prizmic, 2004). In particular, affect regulation refers to the strategies people employ to manage their emotions about their experiences. In other words, the way in which an individual appraises a life event can be just as important as the actual event itself. Affect is defined as the automatic, transitory, situation-based feelings that a person experiences at a specific point (Larsen & Prizmic, 2004). Returning to the previous example, many people feel intense sadness after the sudden death of a loved one and the expression of that sadness may be translated into physical (e.g. tightness in the chest and difficulty breathing), psychological (e.g. depression, anxiety, etc.), and cognitive (e.g. need to understand why the person died) indicators. While the capability to grieve the loss of the loved one is important, individuals able to minimize maladaptive physical, psychological, and cognitive expressions will be more likely to maintain healthy functioning. Namely, findings suggest that the major function of affect regulation is to limit negative residual emotions and to increase positive ones (Larsen &

Prizmic, 2004). At its core, effective affect self-regulation promotes other components of adaptive self-regulation, including psychological, cognitive, and physical well-being.

In the past, research focused primarily on stress associated with major life events, examples include bereavement, divorce, and military combat. Contemporary stress researchers have begun to consider that a single daily stressor in itself may not disrupt one's ability to effectively self-regulate; however, the accumulation of chronic, ambiguous slights could exhaust the resources of an individual (Outlaw, 1993). An emerging body of literature suggests that daily hassles tend to have powerful influences on the physical and psychological well-being of people (Gruen, Follunan, & Lazarus, 1988; Harrell, 2000).

Some general daily hassles (e.g. job and relationship dissatisfaction) have been examined within the literature, however stress associated with reports of racism tend to be minimized because of the subjective quality of the experience (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Cohen, & Willis, 1985). Some researchers have argued that social conditions, such as environments characterized by racial hierarchies and oppression, contribute to the increased frequency of exposure and vulnerability to stressors among marginalized racial groups (Brondolo et al., 2009; Pieterse, & Carter, 2007).

People of color (POC) in the United States have an extensively documented history of enduring daily racism-related stressors (Dobbins & Skillings, 2000; Harrell, 2000; Jones, 1997; Pierce et al., 1978; Solórzano et al, 2000; Sue & Sue, 2008). Racism-related stressors have been described as “race-related transactions between individuals or groups and their environment that emerge from the dynamics of racism, and that tax or exceed existing individual and collective resources or threaten well-being (Harrell, 2000, p. 45).” Research reveals that stress resulting from race-related experiences act as a form of trauma and impinge psychological well-being that

is unique from, and at times are more powerful than, the effect of other stressful life events (Pieterse & Carter, 2007; Utsey, Giesbrecht, Hook, & Stanard, 2008). Furthermore, racism has been identified as a source of emotional abuse and trauma in the lives of people of color (Sanchez-Hucles, 1999).

Conceptualized by the minority stress model, racism-related stress has been described as a unique stressor encountered by people of color in addition to daily life stress (Meyer, 2003). For many people of color, the enduring experience of racial discrimination and bias serves as a overt reminder of their ascribed second-class status in society, diminished capacity to assert counter cultural perspectives, and invalidation of their thoughts, feelings, and experiential reality (Sue, 2010). Furthermore, the minority stress model suggests that the cumulative burden of stress experienced by people of color increases their vulnerability to deleterious physical and psychological health outcomes (Meyer, 2003). In other words, the outcomes of everyday stress are compounded by racism-related stress in the lives of people of color. Considering that the relationship between increased stress and trauma to decreased capacity for self-regulation has already been established (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Gailliot et al., 2007), the unique relationship between insidious, ubiquitous racism-related stressors and self-regulation deserves clearer investigation. Given the nature of racism-related stressors, their influence upon individuals' of color self-regulatory process is of great interest. The link between racism-related stressors and self-regulation has remained largely unexplored.

Racial microaggressions theory provides a comprehensive model of framing contemporary racism-related stress in the United States (Sue, 2010). Racial microaggressions was a term first coined by Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Willis (1978) to describe common, subtle, seemingly innocuous, conscious or automatic slights that serve to disparage and cause

psychological harm toward Black Americans. In their seminal work, Pierce and colleagues (1978) analyzed television commercials to investigate the stereotypical and racially-biased images. To demonstrate the real world manifestations of racial microaggressions theory, the researchers used content analysis to empirically investigate the covert visual and verbal messages transmitted throughout television commercials. Findings illustrated that Black people were often entirely excluded from television commercials. Furthermore, the researchers found that among the limited incidences that Black women and men were included they were represented in highly negative and stereotypical ways. For example, Black people were portrayed as subservient, wage workers, unintelligent, and unattractive. Moreover, Black people were never shown in the context of a family unit or as leaders in managerial positions. In contrast, White women and men were continually portrayed in positions of power and influence and with strong family ties. Early racial microaggression theorists established how racial microaggressions could be hidden within the context of seemingly harmless communication (e.g. television commercials; Pierce et al., 1978). The researchers demonstrated that subtle racist images and ideologies are often left unchallenged, and increasingly perpetuate negative stereotypes and racial bias about Black people to large audiences (Pierce et al., 1978). Thus, the scholars revealed the covert, common, and insidious nature of racial microaggressions embedded throughout American's cultural subconsciousness (Sue, 2010).

Expounding upon the original definition provided by Chester Pierce, researchers developed a conceptual framework stressing the everyday implications of racial microaggressions in the lives of people of color (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). Racial microaggression theory posits that people of color encounter microaggressive environments across life domains, including work, school, in the media, and in the community. Racial

microaggressions were further categorized into three major categories: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (a more comprehensive description of microaggression theory will be outlined shortly).

Historically, researchers have sought to understand how to reduce prejudice and racism by focusing on the internal processes of the perpetrators (Mellor, 2004; Jones, 1997). In contrast, very little is understood about the methods that victims of racism (e.g. people of color) use to cope and thrive in the face of such oppressive assaults (Jones, 1997). As such, understanding the impact of covert, deeply-rooted, racial-cultural biases and talking about race proves beneficial to investigate from the perspective of people of color. In particular, research findings indicate that unspoken cultural misunderstandings and unresolved racial tension (i.e. racial microaggressions) foster hostile, invalidating, and emotionally-charged environments for Black people (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Such ethnocentric racial-cultural dynamics are routinely translated into the classroom under the cloak of unspoken cultural norms and the unchallenged power hierarchy of White administrators and professors. Thus, students of color are often underrepresented and obligated to learn culturally invalidating curriculums under the pretense of colorblindness.

The U.S. political and social structure historically excluded Black people from equal access to educational attainment through racial segregation, restricted social mobility and limited access to resources, and enforced economic, health, and political disparities (Steele, 1997). As a consequence, Black students, as the direct recipients of such an oppressive legacy, must often navigate culturally incongruent environments where they receive continual direct and indirect social cues that they are intellectually inferior and not expected to succeed. Plausibly, Black students must expend considerable cognitive resources (e.g. second guessing oneself, working

twice as hard, etc.) guarding against culturally devaluating depictions (e.g. criminals, lazy, and unintelligent, etc.) of Black people, while attempting to persist and excel in predominately White institutions (Lewis, Harwood, Mendenhall, & Brown Hunt, 2009; Watkins, LaBarrie, & Appio, 2010). Findings suggest that the internalization of those negative messages (i.e. stereotype threat) accounts for increased vulnerability to poorer academic performance, deflated educational motivation, and diminished academic self-efficacy for Black students (Steele, 1997). Thus, the question remains: how can Black students overcome numerous obstacles in pursuing academic achievement?

Black students, who are often the recipients of everyday racial microaggressions, are tasked with making attributions about 1) appraising what just occurred in the context of past life experiences, 2) determining the intentionality of the perpetrator, 3) managing personal thoughts and feelings that arise from the event, and 4) evaluating the most effective immediate and long term responses. During this often exhaustive appraisal process, Black students' cognitive and affective resources are depleted during the microaggressive exchanges (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Watkins, Labarrie, & Appio, 2010). For those reasons, experiences with racial microaggressions are distinguished from traditional overt forms of racism because these microaggressive incidents are inherently obscured by perception. Indeed, the interpretations of the metacommunication within microaggressions encounters are inferred and not necessarily explicit. Thus subtle, ambiguous contemporary racism is usually referred to as perceived racial microaggressions because the definition can vary depending on the perspective of the appraiser.

For many Black students in predominately White institutions, a major conflict exists between their standards or cultural values system and White Eurocentric cultural standards, stereotypes, and prejudices toward Black people. While Black students may vary in their

endorsement of specific cultural values and represent a diversity of experiences, the literature has noted the systematic exclusion and cultural isolation of Black individuals. Indeed, Black people often encounter a non-just world permeated by inequality and social oppression. In many ways, Black cultural values and experiences clash with White cultural norms and assumptions. For instance, the White American belief that hard work results in success can minimize Black peoples struggle for academic, economic, and social equality. This belief is assumed to be the result of internal factors such as lack of motivation, which does not take into account the external factors like racial microaggressions that obscures the merit and effort of Black individuals.

Black cultural values often reflect esteem of a collective Black identity, emotional expressiveness, religious commitment, and nonverbal communication. Another example of cultural conflict is the belief in a just world – in which good things happen to good people. This notion implies that members of the Black community may face so many problems because they are inherently bad rather than as a result of the society-driven disparities. Other examples of cultural differences include, White cultures value of individualism over collectivism (e.g. “I am an individual person not a member of a racial group), competition valued over cooperation, science as separate from religion, logical thought as separate from emotions (i.e. emotional expression is interpreted as weakness and/or as inappropriate), and verbal communication valued over nonverbal (Sue & Sue, 2008).

Not surprisingly, diverse perspectives and value systems can create a clash of cultural norms for Black students in academic institutions where White cultural values govern. For those reasons, Black students may perceive predominantly White academic institutions as being inhospitable to their racial-cultural values (DeFreece, 1987) and may feel as if they cannot or do not wish to assimilate to the standards set by the majority group. Black students often

experience significant cultural incongruence, friction in trying to balance identification with their racial-cultural heritage, while trying to succeed within the parameters of White, middle-class values in academia (Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 1996). In response, Black students likely self-regulate their affective reactions (e.g. sadness, hopelessness, and anger, etc.) and cognitive reactions in order to survive in microaggressive college environments. Balancing their cultural worldview without disrupting the White cultural norms may prove a challenging proposition for Black students; however, little is understood about how this process is navigated.

Social support has been identified as a “stress buffering” mechanism that can immunize people from the potential hazardous effects of stressful environments (Cohen & Willis, 1985). Stress occurs when an individual appraises an event as upsetting or threatening and does not have a foreseeable solution toward fixing it (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Launier, 1978). First, social support may intervene during the appraisal period, by lessening the importance of the event. For example, an African American female college student may deem it less impactful that her White classmates do not invite her to participate in their study groups, because she has friends who support her. In contrast, the impact of not being asked to participate in study groups with her White classmates could be experienced as a more significant stressor without the resources of friends who support her academic pursuits.

Second, social support may also decrease the intensity of the appraisal of stress by creating an outlet to resolve the problem –in essence, “the perception that others can and will provide necessary resources may redefine the potential for harm posed by a situation and/or bolster one's perceived ability to cope with imposed demands and hence may prevent a particular situation from being appraised as highly stressful (Cohen, 1988, p.278).” As such, numerous scholars have associated social support, individuals who seek and receive material and

psychological resources, with positive mental and physical health outcomes (Cohen, 1988; Plummer & Slane, 1996; Utsey et al., 2007; Utsey, Giesbrecht, Hook et al., 2008). For those reasons, social support will be included within the investigation into factors that promote positive college adjustment among Black students.

Another explanation about how Black students cope with race-related stressors may be found in examining their overall self-regulatory strategies. Notably, it has been posited that people cope with stressful situations by attempting to effectively self-regulate (Carver, Scheier, Weintraub & 1989). Self-regulation has been defined as any attempt to self-monitor and adjust one's cognitions, affect, and behaviors in order to adapt to perceived environmental demands (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, and Tice, 1998). Yet it remains unclear which self-regulatory strategies buffer against the negative psychological and physical outcomes associated with perceived racial microaggressions and college cultural incongruence compared to those self-regulation strategies that are not helpful.

The attempt to self-regulate could be confounded by the ambiguous and hidden nature of perceived racial microaggressions, which can be even more stressful because of the psychological dilemmas, such as the clash of racial reality, invisibility of unintentional bias, perceived minimal harm of microaggressions, and the catch-22 of responding to racial microaggressions (see chapter II for comprehensive review of each psychological dilemma).

The psychological dilemmas of racial microaggressive exchanges can create a circular pattern of second-guessing ones responses and feelings (e.g. was that a racial microaggression that just occurred, did the person intend to do it?) and others failing to recognize perceived racial microaggressions or challenging there existence (e.g. will this person understand that what he or she said was offensive?). In order to adjust within a predominately White, microaggressive

campus environment, Black students are tasked to develop and utilize adaptive self-regulatory strategies to be resilient in the face of such subtle but threatening racial microaggressive attacks. The ability to reframe negative stereotypical images into a more positive, collective group identity is an essential adaptive tool used to promote healthy self-esteem and defend against racist assaults to mental well-being (Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000). Previous research suggests that the use of less adaptive self-regulation strategies (e.g. distraction, withdrawal, venting, substance abuse, fatalism, intellectualizing, and active forgetting) were associated with poorer physical and psychological outcomes than participants who used more adaptive ones (Larsen, 1993; Lerner & Larsen, 2002). To date, no researchers have explored which self-regulatory styles may be adaptive for Black students within microaggressive and culturally incongruent college environments. The process through which Black college students are capable of adaptive self-regulation in context of racist and culturally incongruent college environments is the central purpose of this dissertation. Indeed, this study is rooted in developing greater understandings about the link between self-regulatory behaviors and well-being for Black students.

Purpose of the Study

This dissertation is designed to expound upon the literature about the effects of racial microaggressions and college cultural congruence on the quality of college adjustment for Black students. Black students were selected because after decades of growth in college admission, persistence, and retention rates, their educational attainment trends have declined. Thus, Black students still remain an underrepresented, marginalized group within predominately White academic institutions (United States Census, 2008). Whereas the detrimental influence of racial microaggressions and cultural incongruence in the lives of Black people has been well-documented, factors that promote resilience have not been as clearly understood. In particular,

the focus of this study is to investigate how self-regulatory styles buffer the negative relationship between perceived racial microaggressions and adjustment outcomes among Black college students. In addition, I will explore how self-regulatory styles enhance the positive relationships between college cultural congruence and Black college student adjustment. Previous research findings have identified social support as a protective factor against the effects of perceived racial discrimination; I will examine the role of social support in context of perceived racial microaggressions and cultural congruence for Black college students at predominately White colleges and universities.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to understand the interplay between racial microaggressions and Black students' college adjustment, it is first necessary to delineate the history of race related disparities and racism in the United States (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). First, a summary of the evolution of racism in the United States and a description of contemporary manifestations of racial microaggressions will be provided. Second, I will review the literature examining Black students experiences, the campus climate, and college cultural congruity. Third, consideration will be given to the influence of social support as a valuable resource Black college students pursue in trying to adjust within predominately White college environments. Previous findings between the self-regulation and coping literatures will be explored. Last, a summary of the results, description of the hypotheses and research question, and proposed theoretical model will conclude the chapter.

The Evolution of Racism

The nature and relevance of racism continues to be an evolving and controversial topic in the United States, which accentuates that the concept and experience of race represents different things to different people. Therefore disentangling the complex and universal aspects of racial experiences and the role that race and racism play in everyday life must be a multifaceted undertaking. Historically, racial injustice, prejudice, and oppression have been blatantly manifested throughout laws, policies, institutions, and individuals (Jones, 1997; Harrell, 2000). For hundreds of years, the United States sanctioned slavery, racial segregation, racial discrimination and biases toward people of color. For most of U.S. history, social justice and racial equality were not recognized as a political precedent in the United States. Indeed, the

original civil rights act of 1875, which guaranteed that everyone, regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude, was entitled to the equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of inns, public conveyances on land or water, theaters, and other places of public amusement; was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1883. Almost 100 years would pass before the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968, prohibited voting, school, workplace, public venue, and housing racial discrimination practices.

The 20th and 21st centuries marked a number of social, educational, and political advancements and firsts for Black Americans. The Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka court ruling of 1954 overturned the Plessy vs. Ferguson finding of 1896, which resulted in the dismantling of the separate but equal doctrine. With the realization of the Civil Rights act, public schools, workplaces, and public facilities were no longer legally racially segregated. The racial climate in the U.S. began to shift and Black Americans continued to excel beyond racial barriers. Bessie Coleman became the first Black licensed pilot in 1921. The Brooklyn Dodgers drafted the first Black major league baseball player, Jackie Robinson, in 1947. In 1967, Thurgood Marshall was appointed the first Black U.S. Supreme Court Justice and Robert Lawrence, Jr. was recognized as the first Black astronaut. Vanessa Williams was voted the first Black, Miss America in 1984. Toni Morrison was the first Black American to win the noble prize for literature in 1993. In 2001 Colin Powell became the first Black American male U.S. secretary of state, his successor, Condoleezza Rice was the first Black American female in the position. In the historic 2008 presidential election, Barrack Obama was elected as the first Black American president of the United States.

Despite the notable aforementioned accomplishments and other examples, racial disparities for Black Americans still abound (Harrell, 2000; Thompson & Neville, 1998). Across

many contexts, opportunities for advancement and inclusion of Black Americans tends to be the statistical exception and not the standard in United States society, which suggests that the legacy of negative treatment and racial oppression still merits further attention. For example, even though Hiram Revels broke the White only color barrier to become the first Black American senator in 1870, there have only been a total of five Black American senators throughout U.S. congressional history to date. In fact, long-standing racial disparities in politics, education, employment, health care, and the judicial system provide compelling evidence that investigating and obliterating the power of racism still remains a critical issue.

In the United States, racial signifiers were socially constructed to differentiate and establish hierarchy among racial groups and to assert the cultural dominance of White individuals over people of color (Banks, 1995; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). A brief comparison of the terms White and Black in the dictionary yields striking insight about the connotation hidden and coded within the English vernacular of those racial labels. For example, some contemporary definitions of the word Black include: 1) soiled or stained with dirt: 2) gloomy; pessimistic; dismal: a black outlook., 3) deliberately; harmful; inexcusable: a black lie., 4) boding ill; sullen or hostile; threatening: black words; black looks, 5) pertaining or belonging to any of the various populations characterized by dark skin pigmentation, specifically the dark-skinned peoples of Africa, Oceania, and Australia 6) without any moral quality or goodness; evil; wicked: His black heart has concocted yet another black deed., 7) indicating censure, disgrace, or liability to punishment: a black mark on one's record., and 8) marked by disaster or misfortune: black areas of drought; Black Friday (Dictionary.com; 2010). In contrast to the forbidding and negative definitions of the term Black, the word White is associated with positive and neutral characterizations. Examples of the definition of White include: (1) of the color of pure snow, (2)

light or comparatively light in color, (3) (of human beings) marked by slight pigmentation of the skin, as of many Caucasoid, (4) (politically) ultraconservative, (5) Slang. Decent, honorable, or dependable: That's very white of you, (6) auspicious or fortunate, (7) morally pure; innocent, and (8) without malice; harmless: white magic (Dictionary.com; 2010). Ostensibly, the terms White and Black may appear as innocuous markers of racial identity; however, upon closer review the embedded messages within the terms becomes visible – White is associated with pure, good, and decent things, while Black is linked to bad and menacing ones. In light of the nuanced racial dynamics and White racial hierarchy manifested throughout U.S. culture (Sue & Sue, 2003); it is important to examine the literature on racism and racial microaggressions.

The nature of racism has been conceptualized in numerous ways. For instance, Jones (1997) described three types: individual, institutional, and cultural racism. Individual racism is the overt, conscious belief that one's racial group is superior to others, which provokes racial prejudice (i.e. negative assumptions and judgments about members of other racial groups), stereotypes (i.e. automatic, distorted, over-generalized assumptions about other racial groups), and discrimination (i.e. unjust treatment of other racial groups). Institutional racism is the, intentional or unintentional, perpetuation of policies, standards, and procedures that restrict, minimize, encumber upon, or exclude members of the non-majority racial group. As an overreaching umbrella for the first two types, cultural racism is the individually and institutionally imposed assumption that one's cultural values are superior, ideal, and normal (Sue, 2010).

The negative effects of racism can be triggered by direct or vicarious experiences, including witnessing or hearing about racism among family members, friends, or even strangers (Essed, 1991). In a qualitative study examining Black people's experiences with racism, Essed

(1990) found that African Americans encounter racism on a daily basis in workplaces, public spaces, on televisions, and throughout public media outlets. Given the findings, she coined the term “everyday racism” to reflect its ubiquitous and cumulative existence (Essed, 1990).

Many social scientists have documented the evolution of racism over time from overt, old-fashioned forms to more covert, contemporary forms (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Essed, 1991; Harrell, 2000; Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Willis, 1978; Sue & Sue 2008). Numerous early empirical studies document the culturally sanctioned, overt, blatant expressions of racism by White Americans, who were openly racist toward Black Americans in both their assumptions and behaviors (e.g., Cook & Sellitz, 1964; Edmunds, 1954; Riker, 1944); however, as a result of the countless legal, social, and political shifts during the mid 1900s, the manifestation of traditional racism in America began to shift dramatically (Allport, 1954). Old-fashioned expressions of racism, including Jim Crow laws, cross burnings, lynching, use of racial epithets, and hate crimes have become less socially acceptable and have transformed into more indirect, ambiguous, subtle forms (Constantine, 2007; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998; Harrell, 1997; McConahay, 1986; Sue & Sue, 2003).

Scholars have conceptualized contemporary racism in various ways, examples include modern racism (McConahay, 1986), daily hassles (Harrell, 1997), aversive racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998), and racial microaggressions (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). While the scope of this analysis will focus primarily on racial microaggression theory; brief mention of related contemporary racism theories is necessary.

An original theory about the evolution of modern racism was that ambivalent racial attitudes lead to inconsistent reactions across different races and contexts, which often results in negative, discriminatory behaviors among White Americans (Gaertner, & Dovidio, 1981;

McConahay, 1986). Modern racism theorists posit that many White people may unintentionally express unconscious stereotypical beliefs and discriminate against people of color by using shifting standards to evaluate them. In one example of modern racism, White participants demonstrated a clear hiring bias against Black applicants (McConahay, 1983). Contemporary racism has also been framed within the daily hassles paradigm, which conceptualizes race-related stressors as common occurrences that are subtle and routinely experienced by individuals (Harrell, 2000). Daily hassles have been defined as “irritating, frustrating, distressing demands that to some degree characterize every day transactions with the environment” (Smith, 1993, p. 18). It is important to note that similar studies of racial microaggressions found that daily hassles were more distressing than other major life stressors because of the cumulative, chronic effects (Deitch et al., 2003; Harrell, 2000). Aversive racism outlines the dichotomy of subtle racist behavior in that most White people view themselves as moral, good, equitable human beings who are not racially biased, prejudiced, or discriminatory, and yet they will demonstrate subtle racially discriminatory behavior (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998). The notion of aversive racism is closely aligned with the racial microaggression taxonomy (Sue, 2010). Studies of racial microaggressions also suggest that despite an outward endorsement of social justice ideals and intention toward cultural inclusiveness, many U.S. citizens are still infected with deeply entrenched racial biases, prejudices, and discriminatory behaviors (Watkins, LaBarrie, & Appio, 2010).

Although assorted ideologies and measures about the specific nature of contemporary racism exist, there are significant overlaps between concepts. Most scholars would agree on the centrality of three universal features: 1) the hierarchy of power, dominance and privilege, 2) the subtle, ambiguous, and difficult to discern manifestations, and 3) the harmful impact. The

emergent racial microaggression taxonomy examines these three central components of contemporary racism in addition to addressing other psychological dilemmas, resulting in the construction of a multifaceted theory. For those reasons, racial microaggression theory will be used to investigate the contemporary manifestations of racial bias, prejudice, and discrimination in the lives of Black college students.

Racial Microaggressions Theory & Research

Racial microaggressions are defined as commonplace, verbal and nonverbal slights that communicate denigrating or demeaning messages to people of color based on their racial group membership (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Willis, 1978). In their seminal research, Pierce, Carew, Peirce-Gonzales, and Willis (1978) coined the term racial microaggressions to describe “subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are ‘put downs’ (p.66).” Indeed, racial microaggressions have been conceptualized as more threatening than old-fashioned racism because of the pervasiveness of the occurrence, difficulty to detect and prove, and seemingly innocuous exterior presentation. Researchers have noted the subtle and often invisible nature of racial microaggressions, which occur exclusive of the awareness of the perpetrator(s) and frequently cause more damage in their wake (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007).

While racial microaggressions may be conscious and deliberate, research has focused on subtle and unconscious exchanges (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Willis, 1978), which reveal that many well-intentioned individuals perpetuate racial discrimination without being conscious of their intention. Although it is possible that anyone could be the perpetrator of racial microaggressions, the most harmful and threatening ones usually occur between those who hold power over those who are disempowered (Sue, Capodilupo, Nadal, & Torino, 2008).

Racial microaggressions can be communicated through verbal, nonverbal, or environmental channels. Verbal examples include negative statements made about Black people, Black cultural values, and experiences. Some statements include, “why are they always so loud,” an implicit message being that Black people are disruptive and bothersome or “I believe the most qualified person should get the job and race should not be considered,” the perceived coded message being that “race does not matter and White privilege does not exist.” Nonverbal microaggressions can also foster racial tension or hostility. For example, awkward silences, failure to make eye contact, and closed body posture during dialogues about race could be interpreted as “I do not want to talk about this or race is not important.” Other interpretations include “I am not listening or what you are saying is not important, etc.” Perhaps the most insidious platform on which racial microaggressions fester are environmental, which do not always originate from interpersonal exchanges and can often remain unchallenged. Environmental racial microaggressions are demonstrated through media, educational, economical, societal, political, or workforce symbolic representations that ridicule, ostracize, and threaten Black people. For instance, environmental microaggressions occur when Black students note the absence of other students of color or the lack of Black history in the curriculum. The perceived coded message is that “racial diversity is not valued and diverse perspectives are not welcomed.” Verbal, nonverbal, and environmental racial microaggressions perpetuate racial disparities in the lives of Black people.

Racial microaggression theory outlines three major forms: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (See figure 2.1: Racial Microaggressions Taxonomy; Sue, et al, 2007). Microassaults are frequently compared to the old fashioned concept of racism, because both consist of overt, racially charged, intentional discriminatory attacks or avoidant behaviors.

Most perpetrators of microassaults intend to harm and insult others, to propagate an ethnocentric worldview, and to express the superiority of White cultural values. Examples include using racial slurs, hate crimes, and discriminatory treatment toward people of color. The bigoted Archie Bunker character from the *All in the Family* T.V. series typifies microassaults through his offensive commentary, negative assumptions, and stereotypical notions of people of color. Notably, the majority of real life perpetrators may not be as candid as the Archie Bunker archetype; even though they may endorse racist ideologies privately. Most people maintain a veneer of politically correct racial equality in their public persona. Hidden behind a cloak of anonymity (e.g. online bloggers with anonymous racist posts), provoked by a loss of impulse control (e.g. racist slurs spoken after alcohol or drug consumption), and limited to enclosed, private discussions (e.g. racist jokes told between a group of friends and family), microassaults are often premeditated, deeply rooted aggressions toward people of color. In contrast to microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations function as unconscious expressions of racist ideals, making it difficult to detect.

Microinsults are described as “communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person’s racial heritage or identity” (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007, p.274). Racially rooted microinsults convey hidden offensive messages to people of color, while the perpetrators may remain unaware of the negative connotation reflected by their words and actions. For instance, an advisor expressing significant surprise and hesitation that a young Black woman would like to pursue a medical degree. In this example, the recipient may perceive the underlying message as “Black women are not intelligent enough to succeed in medical school,” whereas the advisor may assume his or her reaction was innocent and not racially motivated.

Microinvalidations are defined as “communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a Person of Color.” (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007, p.274). Similar to microinsults, perpetrators of microinvalidations often do not recognize the concealed messages in their behaviors during interracial exchanges. When a Black American student is constantly confused for other Black students, the outcome is to negate their experience as a distinct individual and to convey that all Black people look the same. Another example of microinvalidations is when a Black student confides in a peer about the disproportionately abundant security screenings that he receives while on campus, only to be told “It’s not a big deal” or “Everyone has to provide their identification at some point.” The experience may result in feelings of rejection and invalidation for the recipient.

It is important to highlight that previous microaggression studies have focused less on overt microassaults and instead examined the nuanced, ambiguous nature of microinvalidations and microinsults. Consequently, microinvalidations and microinsults, have been further broken into nine themes of microaggressions: 1) Alien in one’s own land, 2) Ascription of intelligence, 3) Color blindness, 4) Criminality & assumption of criminal status, 5) Denial of individual racism, 6) Myth of meritocracy, 7) Pathologizing cultural values & communication styles, 8) Second-class status, and 9) Environmental microaggression (Sue, et al, 2007; see figure 2.1 for an illustration of the taxonomy).

The following taxonomy was taken from Sue, et al, (2007) and forms the basis of the subsequent analysis. The first four themes emerged as subcategories of microinsults. First, ascription of intelligence is characterized by individuals who make assumptions about cognitive abilities based on their race. Second, second class citizen refers to treating people of color as less than White people. Third, pathologizing cultural values and communication styles include the

idea that the values and communication styles of people of color are abnormal or undesirable. Fourth, the assumption of criminality is defined by assumptions that someone is a criminal or dangerous because of their race.

The following four themes are subcategories of microinvalidations. First, alien in own land refers to the assumption that racial and ethnic minority citizens are outsiders and perpetual foreigners. Second, color blindness is the racial attitudes that assume that recognizing race is bad, thus promoting the avoidance of discussing race and racial dynamics. Third, the myth of meritocracy refers to statements which assert that race does not influence one's success or failure in life. Lastly, the denial of individual racism describes the rejection of the existence of racism and the personal agency involved in its perpetuation. The final theme, environmental microaggressions, occurs across the three categories of racial microaggressions. Thus, environmental microaggressions refer to microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations that are manifested on systemic and environmental levels.

In addition to the categories and themes, microaggression theory describes the four psychological dilemmas that arise from experiences with racial microaggressions: clash of racial reality, invisibility of unintentional bias, perceived minimal harm of microaggressions, and the catch-22 of responding to racial microaggressions. The subsequent section will further outline the psychological dilemmas, which presumably provide greater insight about the internal processes of the recipients and perpetrators during microaggressive exchanges.

Clash of Racial Realities

Black people oftentimes experience interracial dialogues as racially charged, workplace and school environments as inhospitable to diversity, and view racism as a contemporary threat to their life success (Rankin & Reason, 1998; Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007; Watkins, LaBarrie,

& Appio, 2010). In contrast, many White people view racism as a thing of the past that no longer affects people of color (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). For example, in a 2009 CNN/Gallop poll of 1,136 adults, Black and White people were significantly divided in their beliefs about “*how widespread you believe the problem of racism is against blacks among police officers in this country,*” and their experience with racial discrimination from police officers, “*have you personally ever felt treated unfairly by the police or by a police officer specifically because of your race?*” While 49% of White people reported that widespread racism against Blacks was fairly rare or very rare, 86% of Black people reported that widespread racism against Blacks was fairly commonly or very common. An even greater discrepancy existed among reported experiences with racial discrimination, 6% of White people reported being treated unfairly by the police specifically because of their race, compared to 92% of Black people. Taken together, White people tend to underestimate the influence of racial discrimination and biases, whereas in contrast, Black people tend to be hypervigilant to its potential effects (Rankin & Reason, 1998). Moreover, both White and Black people report very different experiences with racial discrimination and biases. It follows that this contrasting worldview and lived experiences among Black and White people facilitates different constructions about one’s racial reality. A direct consequence of the subtle and ambiguous nature of racial microaggressions is that individual perception and interpretation of microaggressive experiences and the coded messages fosters conflict about the nature and existence. Oftentimes, when there is a dispute about what occurred, the perpetrator, usually from the dominant racial group, is more likely to have their racial reality validated above the victim from a marginalized group. As such, in the aftermath of the clash of realities, further racial microaggressions are perpetuated by invalidating the lived, racially antagonist experiences of people of color.

The Invisibility of Unintentional Expression of Bias

Given the nebulous nature of racial microaggressions, the perpetrators behaviors are many times overlooked or minimized as innocent or unimportant, which can lead perpetrators to challenge the very existence of racial microaggressions. In Sue and Sue's (2008) description of *The Invisible Whiteness of Being*, the authors underscore the difficulty many White people experience in accepting the notion of unearned White privilege conferred systematically within society. This serves to demote people of color and elevate White people. Environmental racial microaggressions or the institutional process of racial discrimination within economic, academic, political, and social spectrums, are often more recognizable to people of color who are disadvantaged by the inequality and become invisible to White people who are the benefactors. In *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, Peggy McIntosh (1998) illustrates the racial socialization of White supremacy, "Whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work that will allow "them" to be more like "us." As such, White people receive implicit messages throughout their entire lives that subtly reinforce "racial biases, misinformation, deficit portrayals, and stereotypes" (Sue & Sue 2008) and that validates Whiteness as normative, idiosyncratic, and worthwhile.

Due to such social conditioning, many people unknowingly perpetrate microaggressive acts without conscious recognition of the underlying racial bias. As previously noted, on the surface, racial microaggressions can appear as minor snubs or *normal* aspects of U.S. culture, concealing the underlying message of White supremacy and racial oppression. For instance, when a White professor expresses his or her surprise and delight about the quality of a Black student's presentation, the professor may respond with confusion or anger when the Black

student is reluctant to accept it as a “compliment.” Unbeknownst to the White professor, the “compliment” could actually be perceived as a racial microaggression, the coded message being, “I’m surprised that a Black person would excel at this task or this Black student is only the exception to the standard that Black people are not good presenters.”

Many well-intentioned White people do not believe themselves as capable of racist behavior (Kiselica, 1998; Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). And yet, previous scholarship authenticates the existence of unconscious racial bias in well meaning individuals, who have been socially conditioned by a racist society (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Kiselica, 1998; Jones, 1997; Sue, 2010). As a consequence, many racial microaggressive acts are automatic, hidden, and culturally sanctioned expressions of racial bias, which may occur outside of one’s awareness (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). According to previous findings, the most accurate perception about whether a racial microaggression transpired likely resides within the disempowered victim, rather than the privileged perpetrator (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007).

Perceived Minimal Harm of Racial Microaggressions

More often than not, “when individuals are confronted with their microaggressive acts, the perpetrator usually believes that the victim has overreacted and is being overly sensitive or petty (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007, p. 278).” On the surface, the occurrence of a racial microaggression can appear seemingly minor, unintentional, be rationalized as occurring for an alternative purpose, or even innocuous (Franklin, 1999); however, these indignities and coded messages communicate racial hierarchy, establish White Eurocentric values as the normative standard for comparison, and denigrate people of color. In addition, racial microaggressions often result in psychological distress, sap spiritual energy, seriously impair relationships, and foster inequities for Black people (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue, 2010).

Unlike overt racism, racial microaggressions can be “invisible” and often go unnoticed and unchallenged by many, even well-intentioned White people (Constantine, 2007; Sue, 2003; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). To further illustrate this point, Franklin and Boyd-Franklin (2000, p.33) state that “encountering repeated racial slights can create within the individual a feeling of not being seen as a person of worth. This subjective sense of psychological invisibility takes the form of a struggle with inner feelings and beliefs that personal talents, abilities, and character are not acknowledged or valued by others, nor by the larger society, because of racial prejudice.”

These findings reinforce the damaging and isolating effects of racial microaggressions, which are exacerbated by the ambiguity and the subjectivity inherent within the experience (Harrell, 2000). Many Black college students spend substantial time and energy defending their integrity against microaggressive attacks, which consequentially distracts from their ability to concentrate and focus on academic studies (Sue, Lin, et al., 2009; Watkins, Labarrie, & Appio, 2010). The accumulation of these subtle slights and unacknowledged racism may foster an oppressive climate and invalidate the experiences of students of color, “in and of itself a microaggression may seem harmless, but the cumulative burden of a lifetime of microaggressions can theoretically contribute to diminished mortality, augment morbidity, and flattened confidence (Pierce, 1995, p.281).” Taken together, the findings suggest that racial microaggressions are traumatic stressors that create a hostile, unwelcoming, oppressive college environment. For those reasons, the strain of racial microaggressions on Black students can create undue burdens that are difficult to overcome.

The Catch-22 of Responding to Microaggressions

As the recipient of microaggressive communication, Black students find themselves in a catch-22 bind, a situation where they have to sacrifice something no matter what course of action is chosen. Although racial microaggressions may be a universal experience for Black college students, they can react in varied ways, including confusion, hesitancy, sadness, or anger (Watkins, Labarrie, & Appio, 2010). According to the Catch-22 psychological dilemma of responding to microaggressions, there are a number of factors that influence how Black students respond to a perceived racial microaggression: 1) an appraisal of whether the action or event actually qualified as a racial microaggression, placing the burden of proof on the target of the microaggression, 2) evaluation of the intention of the perpetrator (i.e. was it intentional or not?), and 3) assessment of the consequences for confronting or avoiding confrontation with the perpetrator of the microaggressive action. For the perpetrator, feelings of being misunderstood, reluctance to deal with feelings of anxiety when engaging in interracial dialogues and defensiveness of appearing racist often occur (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), which makes it even more difficult to confront their microaggressive actions. In most cases, the perpetrator is likely to be unaware of the harm nestled within their actions. For the recipient of racial microaggressions, how they react may result in differential outcomes (Sue, 2010). Saying nothing and repressing one's affective reactions is common because the alternative of confronting a defensive perpetrator and having to prove their experience is valid, can often be a daunting challenge. However, when left unchallenged, microaggressions fester and cause significant psychological and physical damage to the recipients (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). Regardless of the recipients' course of action, other negative affective, cognitive, and behavioral

reactions may occur, such as diminished self-worth, rejection and isolation, and systematic disadvantages.

Currently researchers have not identified the adaptive strategies utilized by Black individuals to cultivate resilience in microaggressive environments (Harrell 2000; Solórzano et al., 2000; Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). In essence, how can future research use the psychological dilemmas and categories of racial microaggressions to produce more information about how recipients of microaggressions persist, despite the great toll associated with microaggressions? Which strategies and tools are most helpful in cultivating life success? The preceding questions form the bases for this study, which aims to examine self-regulation strategies Black students use to manage racial microaggressive encounters within a predominately White college environment.

The Black College Student Experience

The U.S. government instituted a number of educational policies (e.g. Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, Title IX, and Affirmative Action initiatives), anti-discrimination legislation, and expanded student-aid resources (e.g. Pell grants, work-study, loans, and scholarships; Roksa, Grodsky, Arum, & Gramoran, 2007) with the aim to decrease widespread educational disparities among disadvantaged groups,. By function of the governmental policy shifts in tandem with the struggle of the Civil Rights Movement agenda, an upward trend in educational access and attainment among Black people occurred during the late 20th century. For instance, remarkably in 1960, only 3% of African Americans were likely to earn a college degree, compared to in 2000, with more than 16% earned degrees (Department of Health and Human Services, 2001; Roksa, Grodsky, Arum, & Gramoran, 2007).

Despite marked societal achievements and advancements among Black people, persistent inequalities in higher education preparation, admission, and retention still exist. Notably, Black people are still disproportionately less likely to hold bachelor's degrees (19%) compared to their White counterparts (32%; United States Census, 2007). The intersection between racial minority status and class-based oppression has also been noted (Watkins, Labarrie, & Appio, 2010). Regrettably, social, economic, and political disparities persist for many Black individuals, including substandard access to health care, housing, education, and employment compared to their White counterparts. On average, Black people also experience disproportionately higher rates of unemployment, health issues, violence, substance abuse, and poverty rates. Black people earn an annual average salary less than \$22,000 annually than their comparable White colleagues and in general, Black people are 16.3% more likely to live at the poverty level (United States Census, 2007). These socioeconomic inequalities demonstrate race and class stratification perpetuated within American society. The cyclical pattern follows that White people are frequently paid more; subsequently White individuals are more likely to be able to afford to pursue college degrees and thus, graduate at higher rates. And yet even for those who do graduate with advanced degrees, White people continue to earn higher salaries with an average of \$83,785 compared to Blacks people's average salary of \$64,834 (United States Census, 2007). For all these reasons, understanding the obstacles Black students face and developing strategic advances in the diversification of academic pathways is essential (Watkins, LaBarrie, & Appio, 2010).

Scholars have documented how race-based maltreatment, discrimination, and bias toward Black people have been pervasive throughout U.S. history (Combs, et al., 2006); however, current research does not delineate clear strategies to minimize the effect of race-based

inequalities. The aim of this study is to identify resilience/self-regulatory strategies used to cope with racial microaggressions and to promote educational and socioeconomic advances in the lives of Black people. In particular, the following section will further explore how racial microaggressions manifest in the lives of Black college students.

The legacy of legalized slavery, Black codes, and Jim Crow laws and customs continue to shape contemporary disparities in societal, economic, educational, and health among Black and White people in this country (Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). Indeed, racial stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination are embedded into the structural framework of U.S. society. By design, the ubiquitous nature of White racial dominance and hierarchy are often indistinguishable within the normative standards maintained by institutions, including within academic institutions. Consequently, White and Black students may experience the same institution in very different ways (Steele, 1997; Rankin & Reason, 1998).

Multiple findings suggest that on college campuses, Black students encounter racial microaggressions perpetuated by White faculty, students, administrators, and staff (Feagin, 1992; Solórzano et. al., 2000; Watkins, Labarrie, & Appio, 2010). The first empirical study to examine microaggressions within the college environment (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000) used ten focus groups with 34 African American students from predominately White universities. Participants were asked about the types of racial microaggressions they experienced on campus and to describe their reactions to the campus climate. Content analysis revealed various negative outcomes caused by microaggressions. The respondents reported racial microaggressive interactions with faculty, administrations, and other students. Examples of reported racial microaggressions included being ostracized by others at the institution, expectation to perform poorly, and assumed to have gained admission solely through affirmative action programs.

Black students reported feeling on guard, tokenized, perceived as intellectually inferior, and racially segregated. Those experiences of being in an oppressive campus climate resulted in some students changing majors or transferring colleges. One way Black students found support in such oppressive environments was through involvement in formal organizations and informal groups that provide resources and support in the academic setting. Black student reported that involvement in social organizations was used as a coping strategy to foster supportive environments against the daily barrage of campus-wide racial microaggressions.

Racial stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination are racism-related stressors that negatively affect mental and social adjustment for Black college students (Dobbins and Skillings, 2000). In college institutions, racial microaggressions perpetuate academic inequalities for Black students (Steele, 2003 & Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008) Thus, reducing the incidence of racial microaggressions is paramount in addressing the impact of racial disparities within higher education. Although emergent literature has begun to identify the manifestations of racial microaggressions, the way that Black students cope with those experiences still remains unclear.

Constantine and Sue (2007) investigated the three ways racial microaggressions are transmitted on college campus, including (a) overt actions, (b) verbal statements, and (c) environmental offensives. Students reported their experiences with all three types, for example (a) overt actions, including events, such as being stopped by police officers while driving (e.g., “driving while Black”) or being asked to provide identification at the library and other campus settings because they are not perceived to be students because of their race; (b) verbal statements to Black students that demean or dismiss their racial experiences (e.g., “I believe the most qualified people should be accepted into the college.”) or expressing color blind attitudes (e.g., “People are people” or “We are all human beings, so skin color shouldn’t matter”); and (c)

environmental offenses that include Black undergraduates noticing an absence of Black students, faculty, and administrators at their institution, or noting that there are no campus buildings or statues named in honor of any Black leaders, alumnus, or donors.

A qualitative, focus group study investigating the types of racial microaggressions experienced in the lives of Black Americans found six emergent themes: 1) Intellectual Inferiority, 2) Second-Class Citizen, 3) Assumption of Criminality, 4) Assumption of Inferior Status, 5) Assumed Universality of the Black/African American Experience, and 6) White Cultural Values/Communication Styles are Superior (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). In addition, a sub-theme labeled White Standards of Beauty are Superior emerged through reports from the Black female participants.

One recent, major development in conducting microaggression research occurred with the development of the first quantitative measure of racial microaggressions, the Racial and Ethnic Minority Scale (REMS; Nadal, 2010). Until this year, the emerging microaggression literature has focused on qualitative study designs (i.e. interviews and focus groups) or used other racism-related stress measures, such as the Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire (Brondolo et al., 2005), the Schedule of Racist Events (Klonoff & Landrine, 1999), or the Daily Hassles Scale (Harrell, 2000) to approximate racial microaggressions. Each of the measures reflects certain aspects of racial microaggression theory; however, none of the preexisting scales directly measure the phenomenon (Sue, Capodilupo et al., 2007). In contrast, the REMS is a self-report measure that assesses the actual type and frequency of experiences with racial microaggressions and was developed from a review of the microaggression literature. A preliminary validation study of the REMS demonstrated sound psychometric properties (see the method section, Chapter III, for a full review); however, more research is needed to establish the

effectiveness of the measure. Recent scholars have begun to investigate the link between college students of color experiences with perceived racial microaggressions and risk factors, such as alcohol abuse (Blume, 2012), decreased self-efficacy (Sue, Capodilupo et al., 2007), and college attrition (Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008). While extant literature further purports the harmful consequences of racial microaggressions (Sue, 2003; Franklin and Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Harrell, 2000; Jones, 1997; Pierce, 1995), there remains a dearth of empirical research quantitative investigating this phenomenon.

The Academic Cultural Climate & Black Students

Campus cultural climate refers to the attributions and evaluations that individuals make regarding cultural inclusiveness or exclusiveness of an academic institution (Santos, Ortiz, Morales, & Rosales, 2007). Investigating the cultural climate at predominately White institutions has yielded important clues into factors that promote or hinder Black students' academic adjustment and persistence (Skinner & Richardson, 1988). At predominately White institutions, college culture has been characterized by ethnocentric, White cultural values and norms that include the belief in a just world, in which good things happen to good people, individualism valued over collectivism, competition valued over cooperation, science valued over religion, logic valued over emotional expression, and verbal communication valued over nonverbal communication (Sue & Sue, 2003). While some of these values may resonate with Black people others may be contradictory to some of their experiences and cultural traditions, such as encountering a non-just world of inequality and oppression, relating to a collective Black identity, valuing emotional expressiveness, and a value in nonverbal communication.

Black college students often have to balance the tension between divergent cultural values (Bowleg et al., 2003; Kimbrough, R. M., Molock, S. D., & Walton, K., 1996). At

predominately White colleges, Black students are often one of few Black students at their institution. Whether they choose to assimilate or not, they may very likely be perceived as deviant from the norm in the college settings. As a result, Black students are often relegated to an outsider status within an invalidating cultural climate (Laden, 2004; Twigg, 2005). Through various experiences with racial microaggressions, Black students receive explicit and implicit messages, which reinforce the message that they are not welcome and cannot integrate into the college community.

It is important to consider the implications of students' indoctrination in Eurocentric curriculums throughout the U.S. educational system. For instance, during elementary school, most children are taught that White Europeans "discovered" America without regard to the biased message it sends about the perspective and experiences of indigenous people in this country. In countless ways, people of color are misrepresented as secondary, stereotypical characters during the story-telling about the founding of this nation. How many can recall making costumes or other superficial decorations to celebrate "Indians" and European settlers supposed peaceful formation of the Thanksgiving holiday without any consideration for the perspective of Native Americans? How many were erroneously taught that the history of African Americans began with slavery without regard to the history of early African settlers and homeowners in the U.S.? Also, consider how few were encouraged to learn about any Black leaders beyond the tokenization of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. or Malcolm X during Black History month?

Due to the limited representation of people of color and the Eurocentric historical accounts taught in the educational system, United States history is narrated through the narrow lens of White-European conquerors and forefathers. Unfortunately, people of color are cast as

subservient, simple-minded helpers, barbaric savages, second-class citizens, or completely overlooked. Unfortunately, the few college courses that emphasize multicultural historical lenses are regulated to elective status, which consequently demotes people of color to footnotes within the academic curriculum. In the sustaining Eurocentric standards, college environments are often governed by White, male, middle-class values, consequently ostracizing students who do not share those values or identities and fostering a strong sense of cultural incongruity for many Students of Color (Menges & Exum, 1983).

The continual minimization and devaluation of people of color is exemplified by the suppression of diverse cultural values and perceptions, while the White American racial-cultural experience is elevated as integral, normative, and supreme (McIntosh, 1998). Students of color may perceive the predominantly White academic cultural climate as unreceptive and invalidating toward their racial-cultural values (DeFreece, 1987). Within predominately White institutions, Black students often receive indirect and direct messages that they a) do not belong and are not welcome, b) are invisible, or c) hold cultural values that are less than those of the majority. Students may experience significant difficulty trying to maintain their identification with their racial and cultural heritage, while trying to succeed within the White, middle-class values of academia (Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996). The cumulative effects of racial microaggressions and cultural incongruence can have destructive effects on Black students, resulting in self-doubt, mistrust, alienation and isolation, sadness, and anger (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

Black students attending predominantly White institutions are likely to experience race-related stress and experience difficulty adjusting to the campus setting. For instance, Black students attending predominately White institutions reported higher levels of minority status

stress than students attending historically Black colleges and universities (Greer and Chwalisz, 2007). The Minority Status Stressors Scale measures five areas of stress that students of color experience and attribute to their racial and ethnic minority status, areas include environmental, interpersonal, achievement-related, race-related, and intragroup race-related stressors. For Black students, a hostile and negative college climate has been associated with negative academic outcomes, including lower academic performance, persistence rates, and psychological adjustment (Hurtado et al., 1998; Santos et al., 2007).

Black College Student Adjustment

College students' persistence, psychological, and physical well-being has been linked to the capacity to adjust to the college environment (Baker & Siryk, 1989). Not surprisingly, empirical evidence suggests that college student adjustment plays an integral role in a student's academic successes or failures (Anglin & Wade, 2007; Baker & Siryk, 1989). In particular, it has been noted that Black students deal with stressors concurrent with academic demands that impact their college adjustment (Alford, 2000; Schwitzer et al., 1999). Thus far, perceived racial discrimination has been identified as one of the most disruptive factors for Black student adjustment (Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Watkins, LaBarrie, & Appio, 2010). Researchers have only begun to examine the factors that inhibit and promote adaptive college adjustment (Anglin & Wade, 2007).

College student adjustment consists of different aspects of functioning, including (1) academic adjustment – how well students adjust to educational demands, (2) social adjustment – how well students manage interpersonal relationships and their satisfaction with the college social environment, (3) personal-emotional adjustment – to what extent students experience

psychological distress and somatic symptoms, and (4) institutional attachment – how committed and connected students feel within the overall college community (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

The numerous studies linking experiences with racial discrimination, racism, and racial microaggressions to negative college student outcomes provides a preliminary platform toward for recognizing a driving force behind the disparities in student adjustment among Black college students. Unfortunately, most of the empirical research does not clarify the differential factors among Black students that contribute to their adaptive adjustment and academic successes compared to the reasons that some fail. The study of dispositional self-regulation strategies could add to the burgeoning theory about the relationship between racial microaggressions and college student adjustment for Black students. The aim of the current study is to increase the understanding of college adjustment by investigating the role self-regulation and social support play in defusing some of the negative effects that racial microaggressions and college cultural incongruence wield in the experiences among Black college students.

Racism & Stress

Throughout one's life cycle, encountering stress is a universal experience. Thus, the experience of some degree of stress can be considered a common developmental experience that all individuals encounter throughout their lifetime. Stress has been defined as a transactional relationship between environmental triggers and individual characteristics (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stress has been linked to various sources, such as bereavement, trauma following acts of violence, academic and work demands, financial and martial conflicts, and other life transitions. General life stress has been associated with adverse psychological and physical outcomes (Cohen, & Willis, 1985). Findings indicate that stressors tend to build momentum in that exposure to one stressor leads to secondary stressors and so forth, a process that has been

referred to as stress proliferation (O'Rand, 1996; Pearlin, 2010; Pearlin, Schieman, Fazio, & Meersman, 2005). Stress proliferation can result in an increase of what is referred to in the coping literature as the allostatic load (i.e. similar to the notion of ego depletion that will be described in detail below). A high allostatic load unbalances the self and places undue pressure on the self-regulatory processes (McEwen & Seeman, 1999).

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) often-cited model of stress outlines three major dynamics: 1) person-environment interaction, 2) primary appraisal, and 3) secondary appraisal. First, the person and the environment involve a reciprocal feedback loop such that information is transmitted to the person from the environment and from the person to the environment. Stress results during the person-environment interaction when the characteristics of the person and the nature of the environmental event are incongruent. Stress can also develop when the person evaluates an inciting event as taxing his or her psychological resources. Second, the primary appraisal is the assessment of an event made by an individual. The event can be assessed by individuals in a variety of ways, such as positive, negative, innocuous, irrelevant, or impactful. When an event is appraised as meaningful and stressful, the coping or self-regulatory response is triggered. Third, the secondary appraisal occurs as an evaluative phase of the cognitive appraisal process. During this important step, coping resources are self-evaluated and ineffective strategies are modified. The amount of stress, quality of the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral response, and the intensity of the reaction is influenced by an individual's primary and secondary appraisals of the experience (Outlaw, 1993).

Although the previous model of stress provides an important theoretical framework (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), empirical studies have not fully established the connection between the individual differences in appraisal of the type and intensity of stressors and the stress outcome. For example, researchers have noted a range of responses among individuals who

experience similar life events, not all suffering the same toxic health effects associated with stress (Lazarus, 1977; Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Pearlin, 2010). One major gap within the current literature is in the clarity of life event-stress-outcome process. Stated plainly, there is a lack of explanation about the onset, frequency, and range of negative health consequences that result from the exposure to stressors (Pearlin, 2010). For example, adverse reactions, such as anxiety, fear, or anger, can emerge directly following a stressful incident and subside shortly thereafter or the onset of psychological and physical consequences can be delayed, manifesting years after the inciting stressor (Pearlin, 2010). There remains controversy about what types of life events can trigger stress with theorists arguing that the appraisal of a stressful incident is more important than the event itself. It is further posited that available coping resources mediates the resulting affective, cognitive, and behavior response to stress inciting life events (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). One way to address these issues may be found in investigating the interplay of the mediating and moderating variables that affect the relationship between stress and health outcomes.

The findings suggest that there is a mediating role of personal and contextual factors that serve as protective barriers between the distressing life event and poor health outcomes. The ability to develop successful coping strategies and availability of satisfactory social support can influence the outcome of distressing events (Cohen, Kamack, Stein, 1983; Pearlin, 2010). Given that racial discrimination and oppression can deeply plague the lives of Black people, scholars emphasize the importance to further understand the context of racial stratification as a link between racism that may shape health disparities (Brondolo, 2009; Feagin and Sikes, 1994; Pearlin, 2010).

In contemporary society, Black Americans still encounter racially charged environments that surface as common occurrences or daily hassles, often perceived as an inescapable part of life (Harrell, 2000; Jones, 1997; Sue, 2010; Meyer, 2003). As previously noted, Black people are more likely than their White counterparts to encounter housing, workplace, healthcare, and educational discrimination (Jones, 1997; Kirschenman & Neckerman 1991; Krieger, & Sidney, 1996). Within the stress literature, chronic, daily hassles are distinguished from major life stressors in regard to prevalence and impact (Meyer, 2003). Indeed, racial microaggressions, a form of racism-related daily hassles, have been described as “ubiquitous, constant, continuing, and mundane as opposed to an occasional misfortune” (Pierce, 1975, p. 195).

Researchers further establish that stress resulting from racism-related experiences has an impact on psychological well-being that is unique from, and at times more powerful than, the impact of other stressful life events (Pieterse & Carter, 2007; Utsey, Giesbrecht, Hook, & Stanard, 2008). Racial disparities thrive within the accumulation of stressors and multiply exponentially over the span of a lifetime. This creates a racially stratified, differential experience of cumulative stress, which is labeled as the weathering process (see Gee & Payne-Sturges, 2004 for a full review). Findings emphasize that the high frequency and impact of racial discrimination elevates it to one of the most stressful triggers in the lives of people of color (Harrell, 2000; Williams & Neighbors, 2001).

In light of previous findings, more thorough investigations of the relationship between race-based, chronic minority stress and psychological and physical consequences merit further attention (Harrell 2000, Lewis, 2003). Minority stress is defined as “stressful stimuli such as prejudice, discrimination and attendant hostility from the social environment” (Moritsugu & Sue, 1983, p. 164 as cited by Bowleg et al., 2003) on the basis of one’s marginalized social identity.

The deleterious effects of racism-related minority stress have been extensively documented in the literature, such as diminished self-efficacy (Aronson et al., 1999), poor physical health (Krieger & Sidney, 1996; Williams & Neighbors, 2001), negative emotional and cognitive reactions (Sue & Sue, 2003), and increased vulnerability to psychological risks factors (Clark et al., 1999; Harrell, 2000).

College students report a variety of general college stressors, ranging from interpersonal to academic to financial difficulties (Ross, Niebling, & Herkert, 1999); however, in addition to everyday stressors, Black students are vulnerable to the effect of race-related stressors (Banks, 2010; Watkins, Labarrie, Appio; 2010). Studies have investigated college hassles among Black college participants reporting everyday stressors, such as juggling multiple responsibilities, managing social relationships, and making important academic and career decisions (Banks, 2010; Watkins, Labarrie, & Appio, 2010). Previous research on the experiences of Black students establishes the argument that minority stress is related to anxious and depressive psychological symptoms (Clark et al., 1999; Harrell, 2000) and increased levels of isolation, alienation, and low cultural congruence within the college environment (Ponterotto, 1990; Solórzano, Ceja, Yosso, 2000).

By experiencing multigenerational race-based stress and trauma (Elder, Van Nguyen, & Caspi, 1985), some Black students may be able to utilize skillful self-regulatory strategies to successfully cope within racial microaggressive settings. For example, it has been hypothesized that although race-based minority stressors are taxing, racially stigmatized individuals may develop “unique resources and resiliencies honed from” a lifetime of overcoming adversity (Bowleg et al., 2003, p. 89; Greene, 1995). There exists a paucity of research about how Black students may demonstrate resilience despite minority-based stressors (i.e. racial

microaggressions and cultural incongruence). To address the gap in the literature, this study will examine the strategies used to defend against the experience of perceived racial microaggressions and cultural incongruence among Black college students.

Self-Regulation Theory

Limited focus has been given to the process of perceiving, interpreting, and reacting to microaggressive experiences (Solórzano et al., 2000). Clarity about how to manage the internal process of encountering racial microaggressions and cultural incongruence may better equip Black students with the tools to understand their reactions and dilemmas and inoculating them to the harmful effects (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). Self-regulation theory offers a theoretical foundation and conceptually maps next to the stress coping literature to generate further understanding of how people cope with stressful situations.

The development of self-regulation theory was framed by cybernetic theory – how inanimate objects can autocorrect themselves based on programmed goals, one example is the way a thermostat modulates heating and cooling system to sustain a desired temperature in a room (Vohs & Baumeister, 2004). Conceptually, self-regulation has been defined as the strategies people use to monitor and adjust their emotional and cognitive states in order to achieve internal goals and meet external expectations (Carver & Scheier, 1981).

Current scholarship posits that self-regulation processes are defined by four major components (See Baumeister & Vohs, 2007 for full review). First, standards represent the underlying goals that influence how people change (self-regulate) in order to meet their culturally and societal sanctioned goals. Variations in standards between cultural norms and group defined normative behaviors can account for some of the differences among people's reactions to similar events (Higgins, 1987), which is similar to the notion of person-environment

fit. For example, it is conceivable that someone who believes that it is appropriate to maintain a silent, stoic character following the death of a loved one will react very differently than someone who values emotional expressiveness. For an individual who values emotional expression, nevertheless attends a funeral where the group norms dictate muted affective reaction, the person may experience considerable negative consequences from either course of action. On one hand, if the person chooses to express emotions (e.g. crying out), it may result in negative judgment, harassment, or exclusion by the other attendees, whereas repressing ones affect could result in a loss of integrity, sadness, or disappointment with one's self. Notably unclear, ill-defined, or conflicting standards can impede self-regulation processes and ultimately lead to harmful health outcomes.

Second, effective self-regulation requires self-monitoring, which is similar to the concept of the continual appraisal process. In order to assess whether standards are being met, individuals must continually observe themselves and adjust accordingly. Thus, self-regulation processes are illustrated as feedback loops – an individual evaluates his or her performance in relation to a standard and modifies the self in order to achieve the intended goal until the desired outcome has been reached (Carver & Scheier, 1981).

The third component of self-regulation is motivation, a concept not directly addressed within the stress literature. Motivation levels describe the amount of investment an individual has in meeting (internal or external) standards, which in turn relates to how much the person is willing to self-regulate. If someone is not motivated to meet a standard, the drive to correct oneself or restrict natural impulses will not likely occur.

Self-regulation has been compared to the homeostatic managing systems of the body that regulate breathing, body temperature, and other life-sustaining functions. In comparing the

automatic functions of brain and the capacity to self-regulate, both are continually adapting to external stimulus. For instance, as the weather cools, the body automatically adjusts by raising its temperature; however, once it passes a certain cold threshold, chills erupt and the body shakes to signify distress. Correspondingly, functional self-regulation processes can be disrupted by an onslaught of stressors and/or traumatic event(s). Similar to the multifaceted operational systems of the brain, the self-regulatory process includes both automatic and effortful functions. The majority of researchers have focused on how people actively self-regulate their affect, thoughts, and behavior.

The fourth component of self-regulation is called ego depletion, which could be compared to the idea of an allostatic load, the notion that the self possesses a finite amount of resources and energy, which can be taxed and consumed, resulting in compromised, exhausted functioning (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). In this transitory state of decreased capabilities, symptoms of ego depletion included a depression of one's ability and willingness to self-regulate, which can result in numerous negative outcomes. For example, energy required to self-regulate has been recently linked to neurological substrates, such as the consumption of blood glucose – a source of fuel for the brain (Gailliot et al., 2007). Higher stress or trauma leads to higher self-regulation and has been correlated to lower levels of blood glucose in the bloodstream, which equates to less available energy for brain functioning (i.e. lower problem solving and concentration abilities).

Taken together, the four components interact to maintain effective self-regulation. As such, friction within any of the four domains threatens self-regulatory processes. Deepening our knowledge regarding the application of self-regulation is tantamount to revealing how the self actively pursues congruence with its social and physical environment (Vohs & Baumeister,

2004). Although self-regulation theory has focused mainly on how self-regulation occurs for individuals in their perception of an event, less is understood about how the self manages the cumulative impact of multidimensional, chronic external stressors (e.g. racial microaggressions).

Previous researchers of self-regulation have not investigated the way in which race-related stress may serve as chronic stress or as trauma in the lives of Black people and thus, impact their self-regulation strategies. For example, a number of the studies do not report participant demographics or fail to take into consideration how racial microaggressions may exacerbate the experience of stress for participants of color. Therefore, it seems imperative to address this gap in the literature and to investigate the role external, chronic race-related stressors serve in the self-regulation processing loop.

Ego Depletion

Ego depletion has been characterized as the finite capacity for effortful self-regulation that varies among individuals. Ego depletion has been theorized to function like a muscle that can be exhausted after exercise; therefore one's ability to effectively self-regulate requires time to replenish after repeated use (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000; Neshat-Doost, Dalglish, & Golden, 2008). Studies have demonstrated that successive exertion of self-regulation processes results in diminished performance abilities (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998; Glass, Singer, & Friedman, 1969; Muraven, Tice, and Baumeister, 1998). One empirical study found that when comparing the participants who had to exert self-regulation processes in order to resist eating chocolates by consuming undesirable radishes, to participants who consumed radishes without the temptation of chocolate, they had quit earlier on complex problem solving tasks (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998).

The findings yield important information about individuals with depleted ego resources that those participants demonstrated less motivation and effort to complete the assigned task. Several studies have since established the harmful outcomes associated with ego depleted states, such as consumption of higher amounts of alcohol (Muraven, Collins, & Nienhaus, 2002), poorer performance on cognitive, problem tasks (Schmeichel, Vohs, & Baumeister, 2003), less impulse control (DeWall, Baumeister, Stillman, & Gailliot, 2007), difficulty maintaining healthy eating habits (Vohs & Heatherton, 2000), and higher vulnerability to depressive and anxious moods (Neshat-Doost, Dalgleish, & Golden, 2008).

The function of ego depletion has not been directly studied among racial microaggressions and cultural incongruence; nevertheless, it follows that since both sap significant cognitive and affective energy, presumably a connection exists between them. For example, each of the four psychology dilemmas of racial microaggressions that were presented earlier requires the exertion of significant cognitive resources. That said, the psychic resources individuals use to replenish in microaggressive and culturally incongruent environments still remain unclear. This study will endeavor to begin examining the role of self-regulation strategies in the context of racial microaggressions and cultural incongruence encountered by Black college students.

Self- Regulation & Coping Strategies

As Black Americans perceive certain exchanges as stressful and racially motivated, there are individual differences in the psychological and physiological stress responses. The amount and the duration of the stress responses will likely depend on the availability and use of specific coping responses (Clark et al., 1999). As an extension of Lazarus and Folkman's theoretical model of stress (1984), scholars have begun to investigate the coping processes that individuals

use to adapt to stress. There is no consensus about the definition and types of coping among the various studies within the literature; however, a uniting theme is that the purpose of coping is to avoid or reduce the psychological and physiological threats posed by stressors (e.g. racism; Mellor, 2004). Coping strategies that do not effectively alleviate stress are considered maladaptive and may exacerbate or maintain negative health outcomes associated with racial stressors (Harrell, 2000). In contrast, adaptive coping strategies buffer the relationship between psychological and physiological stress reactions, such that the negative effects of racism-related stress and health are reduced (Clark et al., 1999).

It has been hypothesized that coping strategies serve two broad functions, 1) modulating stress-induced affective reactions through defensive appraisals that deny the harm or significance of stressors is referred to as emotion-focused coping and 2) managing or eliminating the inciting stressors is called problem-focused coping (Folkman et al., 1986; Mellor, 2004). Individuals are likely to use different combinations of the coping strategies to varying degrees when confronted with stressors (Holahan & Moos, 1985 as cited by Mellor, 2004). Utilization of more action-oriented or problem-focused coping has been associated with better psychological outcomes. On the contrary, the dependence on emotion-focused coping or affective-regulatory strategies, such as distraction, avoidance, denial, resignation, and withdrawal, may result in unresolved distress and magnify future issues (Larsen, 1993; Lerner & Larsen, 2002; Mellor, 2004).

Conceptually related to coping, self-regulation strategies have been explored in a number of studies. Throughout the literature, numerous self-regulation patterns have been identified and many conceptual theories have framed the notion of what may be adaptive for coping with or self-regulating in reaction to trauma and stressful life events. Previous research concurred that the use of less adaptive self-regulation strategies, including withdrawal, venting, substance

abuse, fatalism, intellectualizing, and active forgetting or denial were associated with poorer physical and psychological stress outcomes (Larsen, 1993; Lerner & Larsen, 2002).

A measure developed from a review of the self-regulation literature on strategies, is the cognitive emotional regulation questionnaire (CERQ, Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006). The scale was developed as a multidimensional inventory that assesses various types of self-regulation strategies. The measure is comprised of nine subscales: 1) Self Blame, 2) Acceptance, 3) Rumination, 4) Positive refocusing, 5) Planning, 6) Positive reappraisal, 7) Putting into perspective, 8) Catastrophizing, and 9) Other blame (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006). The subscales of Catastrophizing, Rumination, and Self-blame were significantly correlated to greater symptoms of depression and anxiety. On the contrary, positive reappraisal was correlated to fewer depressive and anxious symptoms (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006).

Social Support as a Protective Factor

Social support has been defined as the availability of network of people who demonstrate concern, love, acceptance, care and offer resources (Sarason et al., 1983; Sarason, Pierce, & Sarason, 1990). Numerous studies have identified social support as a resource that aids individuals in managing and minimizing stressful life events. For example, social support has been shown to reduce anxiety, (Felsten & Wilcox, 1992) depression (Reifman & Dunkel-Schetter, 1990), and enhance physical and psychological well-being (Lahey, 1989; Reifman & Dunkel-Schetter, 1990). Thus, the perceived availability of social support during stressful life events has been linked to positive psychological and physical outcomes (Lewis et al., 2001; Sarason, Pierce, & Sarason, 1990). Abundant studies emphasize the benefit of forming and maintaining strong social support networks as an outlet during adverse encounters and to

establish adaptive defenses against stress (Dahlem, Zimet, & Walker, 1991; Harrell, 2000; Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli, 2000).

Access to social support resources can serve various beneficial functions. For instance, social support has been correlated with an optimistic outlook. Optimistic people with satisfactory social support report fewer feelings of isolation and higher comfort in diverse social environments (Aspinwall & Taylor 1993). In addition, people with optimistic dispositions may attract more social alliances, consequently further enhancing their social support networks, which in turn leads to better psychological and physical health (see Shelby et. al, 2008 for full review).

Social support has been characterized as a protective factor in buffering the effects between life stress and negative health outcomes for Black Americans (see Utsey et al., 2006). Social support has been conceptualized as a preferred outlet among Black individuals contending with race-related stressors (Harrell, 2000; Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli, 2000). Black Americans, in particular, benefit from social support that affirms their cultural heritage and reinforces their lived experiences (Coon & Kimmelmeir, 2001).

Three types of multidimensional support has been outlined for Black Americans: 1) intragroup support, which includes support from other Black people; 2) intergroup support, which includes support from others (e.g. White people & other people of color); and 3) environmental and institutional support, which includes policies that protect individuals from discrimination and cultural inclusive curriculums (Harrell, 2000). The three forms of multidimensional social support described by Harrell (2000) seem to be reflected within one measure, the Multi-Dimensional Support Scale (MDSS; Winefield, Winefield, & Tiggemann, 1992), which investigates social support in terms of the availability and adequacy of support

from three sources: confidants, peers, and experts. The MDSS has been negatively correlated to measures of depressive affect and overall psychological distress, such that people with lower levels of social support report higher levels of psychological distress (Winefield et al., 1992). In addition, the MDSS demonstrated that people with higher levels of social support demonstrated better psychological well-being and higher self-esteem compared to those with lower reported levels of social support (Winefield et al., 1992).

A number of studies have documented the relationship between stress, social support, and well-being among all college students (Felsten & Wilcox, 1992; Lakey, 1989; Reifman & Dunkel-Schetter, 1990). Family, friends and peers, and academic role models can each serve as social support outlets within the academic milieu. Indeed, many Black students seek out other Students of Color and mentors as social resources (Suarez-Balcazar et al; 2003; Watkins, LaBarrie, & Appio, 2010). Previous research established that effective social support can diminish racial and ethnic minority students' distress on predominantly White campuses (Griffin, 1991; Kimbrough, Molock, & Walton, 1996).

Despite the extensive theory that proposes the role of social support as a protective factor for reducing race-related stress among Black Americans (Dahlem, Zimet, & Walker, 1991; Harrell 2000), only a few scholars have empirically examined these variables with this population (Utsey et al., 2006). To address this limitation, I will empirically test the proposition that multidimensional social support moderates the effect of racial microaggressions and cultural congruity on Black college student adjustment.

Statement of the Problem

Although emergent literature has highlighted the harmful impact of racial microaggressions (Harrell 2000; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue, Capodilupo et al., 2007),

the best available strategies to manage the impact still remain unknown. Studies on self-regulation strategies have focused on general life stressors or traumatic events, while failing to contextualize the experience of race-related stress in their participants' lives. There is a paucity of research on the relationship of adaptive and maladaptive self-regulatory styles in managing racism related stressors that result from ubiquitous encounters with racial microaggressions. To address the significant gap in the existing literature, self-regulation theory will be linked to the emerging taxonomy of racial microaggressions.

Despite the fact that researchers have well documented the physical and psychological toll caused by racial microaggressions and cultural incongruence, the moderating variables that buffer or exacerbate the relationship remain unclear. Social support has been studied as one contributor that moderates the experience of Black college students; however, findings suggest that other variables may also be involved. For those reasons, revealing the process through which Black students are capable of effectively self-regulating in the context of a racist and culturally incongruent college climate is the central purpose of this dissertation. Moreover, the focus of this study will be geared toward providing deeper appreciation of the association between self-regulatory behaviors and college student adjustment for Black college students.

Table 1
Variable Definitions & Examples

Key Term	Definition
Perceived Racial Microaggressions	<p>Racial microaggressions have been defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group (Sue, Capodilupo et al., 2007, p. 273).” People of color encounter racial microaggressive experiences that are often ambiguous racial slights, which can lead to general feelings of invisibility and disrespect from others (Sue, Lin, et al., 2010). Being followed around in a store or always asked to show identification to verify that you are a student, being <i>complimented</i> by a professor, with a hint of surprise, that “you speak so well or that you are articulate,” or noticing a lack of Black administrations, professors, and students are all examples of racial microaggressions because they perpetuate covert stereotypical messages about Black people: “You are a criminal likely to steal something or be disruptive, Black people do not go to college, thus you are not a student here,” It is surprising and the exception to the rule when Black students demonstrate academic aptitude,” and “Black people are not welcomed or valued at this institution.”</p>
Perceived College Cultural Congruence	<p>Perceived college cultural congruence is defined as the cultural fit and inclusiveness between an individual’s cultural values and the college’s endorsed institutional culture. Many Black students identify predominantly White institutions (PWI) as being unwelcoming to their cultural values (DeFreece, 1987; Greer & Chwalisz, 2007; Watkins, LaBarrie, & Appio, 2010). A relationship has been established between the college persistence of students of color and students’ perceptions of cultural congruity within the college environment (Cervantes & Pena, 1988; Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996). In general, students of color are more likely to report feelings of isolation, alienation, and low cultural congruence with their predominantly White college campuses (Ponterotto, 1990), which can impede their ability to adjust and earn an academic degree (Cheatham & Berg-Cross, 1992; Feagin, 1992). Previous research findings suggest that African Americans often experience racial tension, and</p>

	differential, negative treatment within college environments (Hurtado, 1992; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003).
Self-regulation Strategies	Self-regulation is defined as the strategies people use to monitor and adjust their emotional and cognitive states in order to achieve internal goals and meet external expectations (Vohs & Baumeister, 2004; Carver & Scheier, 1981). Self-regulation theory offers a theoretical foundation and conceptually maps next to the stress coping literature to generate further understanding of how people cope with stressful situations. In order to adjust within a predominately White, microaggressive campus environment, Black students are tasked to develop and utilize adaptive self-regulatory strategies to be resilient in the face of such subtle but threatening racial microaggressive attacks. The ability to reframe negative stereotypical images into a more positive, collective group identity is an essential adaptive tool used to promote healthy self-esteem and defend against racist assaults to mental well-being (Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000).
Perceived Social support	Perceived social support is defined as “feelings that you are loved, valued, and unconditionally accepted” (Sarason, Pierce, & Sarason, 1990, p. 110). It is important to note that the perceived availability of social support has been identified as a preferred coping strategy among Black individuals dealing with race-related stressors (Harrell, 2000; Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli, 2000). In fact, many Black students often seek out other students of color as social resources (Suarez-Balcazar et al; 2003; Watkins, LaBarrie, & Appio, 2010). Social support has been identified as a protective factor in buffering the effects between life stress and negative health outcomes (see Utsey et al., 2006). Numerous scholarship emphasize the benefit of forming and maintaining strong social support networks as a way to cope with adversity and establish an adaptive defense against stress (Dahlem, Zimet, & Walker, 1991; Harrell, 2000; Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli, 2000).
College Student Adjustment	College student adjustment is defined as students’ adaptive capacity within the college milieu as measured by persistence, social and adaptive functioning, and psychological and physical well-being (Baker & Siryk, 1989). U.S. academic institutions have historically excluded and marginalized people of color (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). As such, contemporary academic settings are not impermeable to the oppressive forces, prejudicial treatment, and racial discrimination (Harrell, 2000; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003; Gay, 2004). Indeed, college students of Color must navigate additional stressors related to racial/ethnic discrimination

	<p>and prejudice within the academic environment (Alford, 2000; Schwitzer et al., 1999), which has been found to negatively influence cognitive, emotional, and social development (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999). As a consequence of the permeating Eurocentric worldviews, the college climate can generally hostile, uninviting, and despairing toward Students of Color (Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado et al., 1996; Hurtado et al., 1999; Rankin & Reason, 1998). For these reasons, it may be particularly challenging for Black students to adjust to the college environment (Anglin & Wade, 2007).</p>
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Statistical Hypotheses & Research Questions

The statistical hypotheses and research questions for the current study will be outlined in the following section. To address the previously stated gaps within the literature, several hypotheses and research questions have been proposed. The main variables of interest include (1) perceived racial microaggressions, (2) perceived cultural congruence, (3) college student adjustment, (4) self-regulation strategies, and (5) social support (see Table 1 for Variable Definitions).

First, three hypotheses address the relationships between the predictor variables: perceived racial microaggressions and college cultural congruence, and predictions regarding how the predictor variables relate to the criterion, college student adjustment:

Hypothesis 1a. Perceived racial microaggressions will be negatively correlated with college cultural congruence, such that Black students who perceive higher incidences of racial microaggressions will report lower college cultural congruence than Black students who report lower incidences of perceived racial microaggressions.

Hypothesis 1b. Black college students who perceive higher incidences of racial microaggressions will report lower college student adjustment outcomes than Black college students who report lower incidences of perceived racial microaggressions.

Hypothesis 1c. Black students who perceive lower college cultural congruence will report lower college student adjustment outcomes than Black students who report higher perceived college cultural congruence.

Second, three hypotheses address the relationships between a proposed moderator variable, social support, and the predictor variables: perceived racial microaggressions and college cultural congruence, and the criterion variable, college student adjustment:

Hypothesis 2a. Perceived social support will be positively correlated with college student adjustment for Black students, such that Black students who perceive higher social support will report higher college student adjustment.

Hypothesis 2b. Social support will buffer the **negative** relationship between perceived racial microaggressions and college student adjustment, such that for Black college students with higher levels of social support, the relationship between perceived racial microaggressions and college student adjustment will be *weaker* compared to Black college students who report lower levels social support.

Hypothesis 2c. Social support will enhance the **positive** relationship between perceived college cultural congruence and college student adjustment, such that for Black college students with higher levels of social support, the relationship between perceived cultural congruence and college student adjustment will be *stronger* compared to Black college students who report lower levels social support.

Third, two research questions are posed regarding the relationships between self-regulation strategies and the predictor and criterion variables:

Research Question 1a. What is the relationship among the different strategies of self-regulation and student adjustment for Black college students?

Research Question 1b. Do self-regulation strategies moderate the relationship between the predictor variables, racial microaggressions and college cultural congruence, and the criterion variable college student adjustment?

Chapter III

METHOD

The aim of this study is to examine factors that promote resiliency among Black college students. Specifically, the focus of this dissertation is how Black college students adjust within potentially microaggressive and culturally incongruent, predominately White campuses. A quantitative framework was utilized to measure (a) to what extent Black students experience microaggressive and culturally incongruent predominately White college environments, (b) the role of social support in buffering their experiences, and (c) various self-regulatory styles employed in reaction to the academic cultural climate. Within the current chapter, the study's participants, measures, procedures, and analysis design will be outlined.

Participants

The sample was comprised of 249 Black college students who attend predominately White colleges and universities throughout the United States. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 66 years old with a mean age of 27.38 (SD = 8.62). Seventy-seven percent (n=193) of the participants were female and twenty-two percent (n=56) were male. The majority of the participants were graduate students (63.9%), while the rest were undergraduates (36.1%). With regard to ethnic identity, the majority of participants identified as African American (61.8%), while the remainder identified as West Indian/Caribbean (13.7%), African (4.8%), Hispanic or Latino/a (0.8%), and Bi- or Multiethnic (18.9%). Most of the participants self-identified as heterosexual (87.6%), whereas the remaining participants (~23%) identified as sexual minorities (i.e. Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, or other). Approximately seventy-nine percent of the participants identified as Christian, seventeen percent self-identified as non-religious, and the remaining four percent reported a range of religious orientations, including Jewish, Muslim, African-Orientated,

and spiritual. Participants endorsed diverse socioeconomic statuses, ranging from family incomes of less than \$15,000 annually to more than \$100,000. Comprehensive demographic information about the sample is provided in Table 1.

Measures

Six measures will be used within the proposed research study including: 1) a brief Demographic Questionnaire, 2) the Racial and Ethnic Minority Scale (REMS; Nadal, 2010), 3) the Cultural Congruity Scale (CCS; Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996), 4) the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire – short (CERQ-short; Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006), 5) the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1989), and 6) the Multi-dimensional Support Scale (MDSS; Winefield, Winefield, & Tiggemann, 1992).

Demographic Questionnaire. The brief demographic questionnaire was developed to obtain participants general background information, including racial-ethnic group membership, sex, age, sexual identity and orientation, socioeconomic status of their family, academic year, and religious/spiritual affiliation. Previous literature has established that demographic questions should be reflective of the rich constellation of within group variability among Black populations (Banks, 2010; Bynum, Burton, & Best, 2007; Lewis, 2003; Utsey, Giesbrecht, Hook, & Stanard, 2008).

Racial and Ethnic Minority Scale. The Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale (REMS; Nadal, 2010) has been developed as a self-report inventory used to measure the type and frequency of experiences with racial microaggressions in work place and academic settings. The 45-item inventory employs six subscales, including (1) Assumptions of Inferiority, (2) Second-Class Citizen & Assumption of Criminality, (3) Microinvalidations, (4) Exoticization & Assumptions of Similarity, (5) Environmental Microaggressions, and (6) Workplace & School

Microaggressions. The subscales reflect categories of racial microaggressions that emerged in previous research investigating the microaggressive experiences among people of color (Sue, Nadal, et al., 2008). The REMS uses dichotomous anchors ranging from 1 (*I did not experience this event*) to 2 (*I experienced this event*). Each subscale produces an individual score, in addition to a combined total score. Higher scores signify higher incidences of racial microaggressive encounters. Sample items include, “I was told that people of all racial groups experience the same obstacles,” and “Someone assumed that I would have a lower education because of my race.”

In the scale development and validation study with over 500 racially and ethnically diverse student sample population (n=506), the six subscales of REMS demonstrated sufficient reliability coefficients and sound internal consistency (see Nadal, 2010 for a full review). In particular, among a sample of Black/African American college students, the overall scale composite score and each of the 6 subscales demonstrated reliability coefficients, ranging from 0.853 to 0.932, (Nadal, 2010). Additionally, the REMS garnered sound convergent validity; it was significantly correlated with the Racism and Life Experiences Scale – Brief Version (RaLES-B) - a measure of experiences with prejudicial treatment and racial discrimination that has been used with Black American populations (Ong, Fuller-Rowell, & Burrow; 2009; Sellers et al., 2006; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). For the purpose of this study, two of the items on the REMS will be slightly modified to contextualize experiences within academic institutions instead of within the workplace. For example, “An employer or co-worker was unfriendly or unwelcoming toward me because of my race.” will be reworded to “A [*professor or classmate*] was unfriendly or unwelcoming toward me because of my race.” In the second example, “An

employer or co-worker treated me differently than White co-workers” will be reworded to “A [*professor, advisor, or classmate*] treated me differently than White [*classmates*].”

College Cultural Congruence. The cultural congruity scale (CCS; Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996) was created to measure students’ sense of cultural fit within the college environment. The scale assesses the perception of cultural congruity between an individual’s cultural value system and those held by the cultural majority at the college institution. The 13-item scale is comprised of a 7-point Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 (*Not At All*) to 7 (*A Great Deal*). Sample items include “I feel that I have to change myself to fit in at school,” and “My family and school values often conflict.” Higher scores indicate an increased cultural congruity or fit between the individual and the environment.

Adequate cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients (0.81 to 0.89) were reported from the initial scale development and validation study with a sample of Chicano/Chicana undergraduates (Gloria & Robinson., 1996). The CCS was negatively correlated ($r = -0.34$) with the Persistence/Voluntary Dropout Scale, a measure of students’ decision to drop out of college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980). In other words, when students perceived greater cultural congruence or fit with their college they made more positive decisions about staying in school. With a sample of African American undergraduate students, the scale demonstrated sound internal consistency coefficients (0.80; Gloria, et. al., 1999) and subsequent studies have been conducted with Black American college students (Constantine & Watt, 2002).

Self-regulation. The Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire – short (CERQ-short; Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006) was developed as a short version of the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ; Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2001) - a multidimensional inventory that measures adaptive and maladaptive self-regulation strategies. The CERQ-short

scale is an 18-item self-report measure comprised of nine subscales. The brief version was developed because studies of coping in applied settings (e.g. hospitals, schools, etc.) benefit from a measure that minimizes time demands on participants and provides an effective, quick screening tool (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006). The scale yields nine subscales, comprised of two items each: 1) Self Blame – thoughts rooted in assigning fault of what occurred onto oneself; 2) Acceptance – thoughts of resigning oneself to what happened; 3) Rumination – persistent reoccurring thoughts and feelings associated with the negative experience; 4) Positive refocusing – thoughts focused on positive experiences instead of recalling the negative event ; 5) Planning – thinking about what steps to take to deal with the negative event; 6) Positive reappraisal – thoughts of associating positive meanings to the negative experience (e.g. personal growth); 7) Putting into perspective – thoughts and feelings related to minimizing the potential impact of the event; 8) Catastrophizing – intense thoughts and feelings revolving around the horror and trauma of the negative event; and 9) Other blame – thoughts related to placing the fault of what occurred onto others(Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006).

The measure offers general or trait response format options with directions to orient participants to the items. Given the ubiquitous nature of racial microaggressions, the general format was selected to investigate how people commonly respond when they confront difficult or stressful everyday race-related events in their lives. The measure asks questions about what participants typically do and feel when they experience stressful events. Although diverse stressors may illicit various responses, this measure assesses an individuals' general (i.e. dispositional) reactionary style. Participants respond to the items on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1(*I usually don't do this at all*) to 4 (*I usually do this a lot*). Sample items include, "I feel that I am the one to blame for it," and "I think I can learn something from the situation."

During the development and validation of the CERQ-short version, a sample population, of 611 adults, was surveyed (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006). The participants ranged in age from 18 to 65 years old; 48% of the sample received vocational training and university degrees, while 52% did not. Unfortunately, the racial-ethnic demographics of the participants were not reported, thus this study will be the first to report psychometric test properties for Black Americans.

Similar to the original CERQ, the CERQ-short subscales also resulted in sound reliability coefficients ranging from lowest, self-blame (0.68) to highest, catastrophizing (0.81). Of note, the subscales catastrophizing, rumination, and self-blame demonstrated a significant positive relationship (correlated to greater symptoms reported) with a measure of depressive and anxious symptoms. In contrast, the CERQ-short subscale positive reappraisal demonstrated a negative relationship (correlated to fewer symptoms reported) with a measure of depressive and anxious symptoms (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006). The CERQ will be used in this study to measure self-regulatory strategies utilized by a sample population of Black college students. It is hypothesized that among the nine different categories of self-regulatory styles, the participants will vary in their usage of each and in the resulting college student adjustment. This dissertation will be the first scientific inquiry used to test the aforementioned hypothesis.

College Student Adjustment. The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1989) has been used to comprehensively evaluate facets of students' adjustment to the college (Anglin & Wade, 2007). The SACQ is a 67-item scale with 9 point Likert-type anchors and participants can choose from responses ranging from 1 (applies very closely to me) to 9 (doesn't apply to me at all).

The SACQ consists of four subscales intended to measure different aspects of college student adjustment including, (1) Academic Adjustment – how well students adjust to educational demands, (2) Social Adjustment – how well students manage interpersonal relationships and their satisfaction with the college social environment, (3) Personal-Emotional Adjustment – to what extent students experience psychological distress and somatic symptoms, and (4) Institutional Attachment – how committed and connected students feel within the overall college community. Higher scores indicate healthier levels of adjustment.

The four subscales demonstrated internal consistency (see Baker & Siryk, 1989 for a full review). Using a sample population of 141 Black American college students (Anglin & Wade, 2007), the internal consistency reliability coefficients were found to be sufficient for each subscale and were reported as the following: 1) Total college adjustment (.92), 2) Academic Adjustment (0.82), 3) Personal-Emotional Adjustment (0.75), and 4) General Institution Attachment (0.81). In addition, significant convergent validity has been established with other instruments, including measures of academic motivation, academic achievement, honor society membership, social activities engagement, depression, loneliness, parental individuation, and utilization of psychological services (see Baker & Siryk, 1989; Chartrand, 1992; Montgomery & Haemmerlie, 1993; Napoli & Wortman, 1998).

Social Support. The Multi-Dimensional Support Scale (MDSS; Winefield, Winefield, & Tiggemann, 1992) was created to measure the availability and adequacy of support from three sources: confidants, peers, and experts. The exact description of the three sources varies on the context; however the general principals remain the constant. For example with college populations the scale has been modified to measure social support among 1) confidants - family members and close friends, 2) peers – other college students, and 3) supervisors – professors and

advisors. The measure is particularly helpful for assessing the quality of support available when people encounter stressful situations. First to measure availability of support, there is a 4-point Likert-type scale with anchors ranging from, 1 (*Never*) to 4 (*Usually/Always*). Then, to assess adequacy of support respondents indicate how satisfied they are with the frequency of the support behaviors, using a 3-point likert-type options, ranging from 1 (Not Enough) to 3 (Very Satisfied). Taken together, the measure produces 16-items divided among six subscales (i.e. availability and adequacy of social support that is provided by three sources), which can be interpreted in a number of ways. For instance, the total availability and adequacy of support across sources could be summed and examined as a total composite score of social support or a comparison of the subscale total support received from one source contrast with the other two, etc. Higher scores indicate greater availability and satisfaction with social support provisions.

The psychometric properties of the MDSS appear sound with alpha coefficients demonstrating adequate internal reliability among the six subscales (i.e., .75 or higher; Winefield et al., 1992). Notably, the MDSS has been correlated with measures of self-esteem, depressive affect, and overall psychological disturbance. In addition, the MDSS demonstrated predictive validity for psychological well-being, such that adequate supportive behaviors were predictive of better affective states and associated with lower levels of stress and depression (Winefield et al., 1992). With a sample of Black American college students, the measure produced an adequate Cronbach's alpha (i.e., .85; Utsey et al., 2006).

Procedure

Subsequent to Teachers College, Columbia University Institutional Review Board approval, participants were recruited through online research announcements describing the purpose of the study (See Appendix H). Electronic invitations to participate were sent to various

student groups and organizational list serves (e.g. Black student networks, Black caucuses etc.), and online social networks (e.g. Facebook). Selecting the appropriate websites and list serves to send research announcements about the study has been identified as a way to optimize the chances of recruiting participants (Illingworth, 2001). In addition, a snowballing technique – participants were encouraged to tell other Black students about the study, was utilized. Snowballing techniques have proved useful in recruiting participants from unrepresented populations (e.g. Black college students; Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004).

Participation was voluntary, confidential, and participants were able to withdraw at any time without consequence. Each participant received a link to access the online survey through a secure research website (i.e. www.surveymonkey.com). The research data was password protected and only the principal investigator had access to the completed survey protocols.

At the onset of the study, participants reviewed a brief cover letter that outlined the purpose of the study, provided background and contact information of the primary investigator, and purported the confidential and voluntary nature of involvement in the research study. Subsequently, participants were asked to read and electronically sign the participants' rights and informed consent form. Next, participants were asked to complete the brief demographic questionnaire (i.e. race, ethnicity, sex, age, etc.), and then complete the five survey inventories. While participants received an unlimited amount of time to complete the online survey materials (Riggle, Rostosky, & Reed, 2005), the study required approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour to complete and had to be finished in one session because the data link could not be saved and reopened. Upon completion participants were thanked for their participation, offered the opportunity to share any feedback in an open dialogue box, and asked to forward the survey link

to other eligible Black college students. Participants did not receive any monetary compensation.

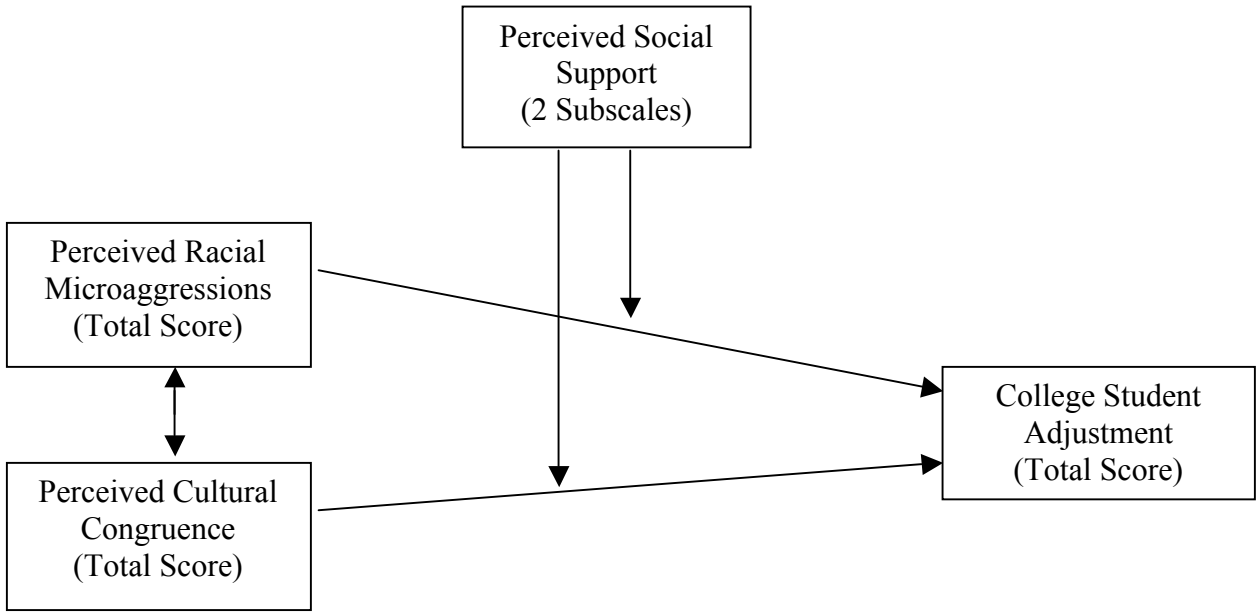
A total of 453 individuals clicked on the online survey link; 11 participants were removed from the data set because they did not meet the inclusion criteria – did not identify as a person of African descent (e.g. Black, African American, Caribbean/West Indian, etc). In addition, an audit of the nationwide sample of participant's identified institution was conducted to assess type: predominately White, historically Black or Latino/a serving, and only those attending predominately White college institutions were included. Of the 442 potential participants remaining, a total of 249 Black college student completed the entire survey protocol (response rate = 56 %). The elevated attrition rate could be in part attributed to participant fatigue or disengagement given the 45 minute to 1 hour duration of the survey. Indeed, survey length and attrition rates have been found to be highly positively correlated, such that the longer the survey the higher the drop out rate (Bernd, et al, 2007). Notably, there were no significant difference in a comparison of the demographic descriptive data among those who completed the survey and those who did not (See Table 2 for descriptive data).

Chapter IV

RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in this chapter. The current study utilized a between-subject correlational research design. First, data screening was conducted to check the accuracy of the data entries, assess for any pattern within the missing data, note any outliers, and examine the normality of the distributions. Second, preliminary analysis was utilized to garner the general characteristics of the collected sample. Finally, multivariate analysis of variance and regression analyses were performed to test the relationships among the study variables and to evaluate the research questions and hypotheses proposed in the model (**Figure 1.1**).

Figure 1.1 Hypothesized Model



Data Screening

To check the accuracy of the data, frequency tables were created (see Table 2 for demographic variables & Table 4 for additional variables). Research data was reviewed for any inconsistent scores or possible errors in imputation. No extreme values appeared throughout the demographic or other study variables.

Second, a missing value analysis was conducted on the data set ($n=249$). The Little's MCAR 'missing completely at random' test statistic: Chi-Square = 204.020, DF = 207, Sig. = .54 was not significant (p value > .05). Non-significant Little's MCAR indicates that the missing data is randomly distributed and no pattern is evidenced (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Third, all of the study variables were assessed for univariate and multivariate outliers. To identify potential outliers, graphs of box plots and histograms were utilized to visually detect cases with extreme values (± 3 standard deviations from the mean). Additionally, Z scores were produced for all of the variables. Cases with Z scores of ± 3.29 ($p < .001$, two tailed test) were identified as potential outliers and evaluated for any undue influence (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

In addition, the assumptions of normality were assessed by reviewing bivariate scatterplots and the homogeneity of variance among the variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). First upon review of the histograms, it was determined that the general assumptions of normality were met for all of the variables. In conjunction, the Levene's test of homogeneity of variance was conducted to test the homogeneity of variance assumption among the demographic and criterion study variables. To examine if the results of the Levene's test of homogeneity of variance indicate a violation of the assumption of homogeneity, one assesses for larger F values

($F > 10$) and P-values that are found to be significant at the $p < 0.05$ level for 2 tailed tests. Results revealed the assumption of homogeneity was upheld (See Table 3).

Table 2

Summary of Self-Reported Demographic Information (N=249)

Categorical Demographic Variable	Percent	Frequency	Total Percent (n=453)
Sex			
Female	77.5	193	75.5
Male	22.5	56	24.5
Ethnic Identity			
African	4.8	12	5.7
African American	61.8	154	56.6
West Indian/Caribbean	13.7	34	12.9
Hispanic or Latino/a	.8	2	1.8
Bi or Multiethnic	18.9	47	20.8
Sexual Orientation			
Bisexual	7.6	19	7.1
Gay or Lesbian	2.8	7	4.2
Heterosexual	87.6	218	87.6
Transgender	1.2	3	.7
Other	.8	2	.4
Family SES			
Less than \$15,000	12.9	32	11
\$15,000 - \$25,000	18.9	47	15.4
\$26,000 - \$35,000	12.9	32	15.6
\$36,000 - \$50,000	16.1	40	15.4
\$51,000 - \$70,000	16.1	40	15.9
\$71,000 - \$100,000	12.9	32	14.9
More than \$100,000	10.4	26	11.4
Religious Identity			
Non-religious	16.9	42	17.1
Christian	78.7	196	76.8
Jewish	.4	1	1.1
Muslim	1.2	3	.9
African-Originated	1.2	3	.3
Spiritual	1.6	4	1.3
Education Level			
Undergraduate Student	36.1	90	38.1
Graduate Student	63.9	159	61.4

Table 3*Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances among Demographic and Criterion Variables*

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
SACQ Academic Adjustment	.791	110	103	.887
SACQ Social Adjustment	.858	110	103	.786
SACQ Personal Emotional	.938	110	103	.630
SACQ Institutional Attachment	.730	110	103	.947
REMS_Total	1.125	110	103	.273
CCS_Total	.857	110	103	.787
CERQ self blame	.979	110	103	.545
CERQ rumination	1.088	110	103	.333
CERQ catastrophizing	1.122	110	103	.278
CERQ acceptance	.947	110	103	.611
CERQ positive refocusing	1.108	110	103	.299
CERQ planning	.862	110	103	.778
CERQ positive reappraisal	1.223	110	103	.151
CERQ putting into perspective	.933	110	103	.640
CERQ other blame	.966	110	103	.571
MDSSAvailability_Total	1.138	110	103	.254
MDSSAdequacy_Total	1.011	110	103	.478

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Sex + EthnicID + SEXORIEN + FamilyIncome + Relaffil + AcademicYear

Preliminary Analysis

The descriptive statistics, including the means, standard deviations, and ranges for the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions total score, the Cultural Congruence total scale, the nine Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire subscales, the two Multi-Dimensional Support subscales, and the four Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire subscales are presented in Table 4. In addition, a correlation matrix was computed to illustrate the strength and direction of the relationship between the each of the study measures (Table 5). Review of the table reveals that the significant correlations are generally low to moderate in most cases.

Table 4

Descriptive Variable Data

Variable	M	SD	Obs/Full Range	Skewness
Racial & Ethnic Microaggressions Scale	66.44	9.78	46-86/45-90	-.24
College Cultural Congruence	66.60	14.69	13-91*	-.48
Multi-dimensional Support Scale				
Adequacy of Support	35.69	7.72	16-48/16-64	-.13
Availability of Support	41.35	7.88	23-62/16-64	.19
Cognitive Emotional Regulation Questionnaire				
Self Blame	4.92	2.68	2-10*	.49
Rumination	6.45	2.39	2-10*	-.24
Catastrophizing	4.75	2.31	2-10*	.54
Acceptance	5.65	2.59	2-10*	.08
Positive Refocusing	5.25	2.16	2-10*	.16
Planning	7.30	2.31	2-10*	-.74
Positive Reappraisal	7.74	2.32	2-10*	-.94
Putting into Perspective	6.43	2.34	2-10*	-.25
Other Blame	5.57	2.33	2-10*	.03
Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire				
Academic Adjustment	151.91	31.20	40-214/24-216	-.57
Social Adjustment	104.18	25.26	27-153/ 17-153	-.42
Personal-Emotional Adjustment	90.16	24.58	26-135/15-135	-.48
Institutional Attachment	51.83	13.95	7-63*	-1.74
Total Score	411.43	79.92	148-556/64-567	-.65

Note: Higher mean scores indicate greater levels for each variable.

*The observed and full potential range are equal.

Table 5
Intercorrelations among Predictor & Criterion Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1	1																	
2	-.34**	1																
3	.15*	-.15*	1															
4	.07	-.11	.39**	1														
5	.16*	-.39**	.32**	.46**	1													
6	.12	-.13*	.59**	.37**	.23**	1												
7	.08	-.00	.24**	.11	.13*	.18**	1											
8	.11	.14*	.29**	.37**	.04	.34**	.16*	1										
9	.07	.21**	.25**	.40**	.05	.30**	.17**	.79**	1									
10	.07	.00	.34**	.27**	.08	.46**	.25**	.44**	.47**	1								
11	.07	-.12	-.13*	.21**	.33**	-.04	.05	.05	.06	-.03	1							
12	-.15*	.23**	-.11	.01	.01	-.15*	.14*	.04	.06	-.05	-.05	1						
13	-.32**	.32**	-.13	-.12	-.11	-.21**	.05	-.01	.05	.00	-.08	.51**	1					
14	-.13*	.21**	-.08	.08	-.09	-.14*	-.03	.01	.01	-.03	.05	.20**	.23**	1				
15	-.18**	.37**	-.04	.02	-.14*	-.12	-.00	.03	.06	.01	-.06	.26**	.30**	.53**	1			
16	-.29**	.34**	-.09	-.08	-.26**	-.15*	-.00	-.05	-.07	-.01	-.11	.13*	.29**	.58**	.46	1		
17	-.23**	.32**	-.06	.03	-.16*	-.13*	-.05	-.01	.04	.021	-.05	.14*	.23**	.71**	.86*	.53	1	
18	-.23**	.35**	-.08	.02	-.19**	-.15*	-.04	-.00	.01	-.02	-.04	.21**	.31**	.88**	.80**	.78**	.89**	1

* $p < 0.05$ level (2-tailed); ** $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed).

Note: 1. Racial & Ethnic Microaggressions Scale, 2. Cultural Congruence Scale, 3. Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire-Self blame Subscale, 4. Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire-Rumination Subscale,

5. Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire-Catastrophizing Subscale, 6. Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire – Acceptance Subscale 7. Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire – Positive Refocusing Subscale, 8. Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire - Planning, 9. Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire – Positive Reappraisal, 10. Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire – Putting into Perspective, 11. Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire – Other Blame, 12. Multi-Dimensional Support Scale – Availability Subscale, 13. Multi-Dimensional Support Scale – Adequacy Subscale, 14. Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire – Academic Adjustment Subscale, 15. Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire – Social Adjustment, 16. Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire – Personal Emotional Subscale, 17. Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire – Institutional Attachment, 18. Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire Total

The preliminary analysis also established that the initial psychometric properties and factor structure of the inventories are reliable among this sample population of Black American college students. Findings produced adequate to good reliabilities with Chronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from $\alpha = .74$ to $.98$ (see table 6 for comprehensive results).

Table 6

Internal Reliability Coefficients

Scale	Alpha Coefficient	Number of Items
REMS Total	.92	45
CCS	.84	13
CERQ Self Blame	.88	2
CERQ Rumination	.74	2
CERQ Catastrophizing	.98	2
CERQ Acceptance	.87	2
CERQ Positive Refocusing	.74	2
CERQ Planning	.84	2
CERQ Positive Reappraisal	.88	2
CERQ Putting into Perspective	.79	2
CERQ Other Blame	.87	2
MDSS Availability	.86	16
MDSS Adequacy	.84	16
SACQ Academic Adjustment	.89	24
SACQ Social Adjustment	.87	17
SACQ Personal-Emotional Adjustment	.89	15
SACQ Institutional Attachment	.88	13
SACQ Total	.95	65

Next, in order to determine whether any categorical demographic variables should be accounted for within the primary analyses, a MANOVA was conducted between demographic groups (i.e. sex, ethnic identity, sexual identity, social economic status, religious identity, and educational level) and the criterion variables (Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale, College Cultural Congruence Scale, Cognitive-Emotional Regulation Questionnaire, Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, and the Multi-Dimensional Support Scale). The results of the MANOVA omnibus multivariate test demonstrated main effects for Sex (*Wilks' Lambda*=.812, $F(17, 176) = 2.40, p=.00$) and Sexual Orientation (*Wilks' Lambda*=.576, $F(68,692) = 1.54,$

$p=.00$). There were no significant differences in the means across the criterion variables by Ethnic identity (*Wilks' Lambda*=.62, $F(68,692) = 1.30, p=.05$); Social Economic Status (*Wilks' Lambda*=.55, $F(102, 1010) = 1.09, p=.026$); Religious Affiliation (*Wilks' Lambda*=.62, $F(85,855) = 1.01, p=.43$) or Educational Level (*Wilks' Lambda*=.92, $F(17,176) = .85, p=.59$).

Follow up ANOVA univariate tests indicated significance differences among the means for Sex on three of the four student adjustment subscales, including Social Adjustment $F(1, 4395) = 7.28, p=.00$, Personal-Emotional Adjustment $F(1, 3861) = 6.39, p=.01$; and Institutional Attachment $F(1,1949) = 4.00, p=.04$ and the self-blame $F(1, 50) = 7.95, p=.00$ and catastrophizing $F(1,28) = 5.53, p=.02$ subscales of the Cognitive-Emotional Regulation Questionnaire. Follow up ANOVA univariate tests for Sexual Identity indicated significant different means on two of the four student adjustment subscales, Social Adjustment $F(4,6277) = 2.60, p=.03$ and Institutional Attachment $F(4,6199) = 3.18, p=.01$.

To test whether the continuous demographic variable, age, should be accounted for within the primary analysis, a multivariate multiple regression was performed with age on each of aforementioned criterion variables. Age was found significant (*Wilks' Lambda*=.02, $F(595, 2560) = 1.13, p=.02$). In particular, an ANOVA univariate analysis revealed the main effect between age and the catastrophizing subscale of the Cognitive-Emotional Regulation was significant $F(35, 284) = 1.64, p=.01$.

Main Analyses

Hypothesis One

Hypothesis 1a. Perceived racial microaggressions will be negatively correlated with college cultural congruence, such that Black students who perceive higher incidences of racial microaggressions will report lower college cultural congruence than Black students who report lower incidences of perceived racial microaggressions.

Perceptions of racial microaggressions were operationalized by the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS), whereas college cultural congruence was operationalized by the College Congruence Scale (CCS). As predicted, perceived racial microaggressions were negatively correlated with college congruence ($\beta = -.33$; $F(1, 6) = 1.08$, $p > .01$). In other words, higher incidences of perceived racial microaggressions were negatively associated with college cultural congruence.

Hypothesis 1b. Black college students who perceive higher incidences of racial microaggressions will report lower college student adjustment outcomes than Black college students who report lower incidences of perceived racial microaggressions.

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was calculated to test the aforementioned hypothesis by analyzing the variance of the covariate demographic variables (age, sexual orientation, and sex) and the predictor variable - racial microaggressions (REMS Total Score), on the criterion variable, college student adjustment (SACQ Total Score). See Table 7 for summary of results. In the first step, the three demographic variables (sex, sexual orientation, and age) were entered simultaneously into the equation and then the REMS total score was entered during the second step. Findings revealed that the variance for academic adjustment was

not significantly accounted for by the first model with age, sexual orientation, and sex as predictors ($Adj R^2 = .01$; $F(3,248) = 2.06$, $p=.10$).

The second step of the regression revealed that over and above sex, age, and sexual orientation perceived racial microaggressions (REMS Total Score) accounted for a significant amount of the variance in academic adjustment among Black college students, ($\Delta R^2 = .06$; $Adj R^2=.07$; $F(4,248) = 5.87$, $p=.00$). Review of the findings in the second model indicate that as predicted perceived racial microaggressions were negatively correlated to student adjustment ($\beta-.25$, $t(248) = -4.11$, $p = .00$).

Table 7
Hierarchical Multiple Regression: College Student Adjustment predicted by Racial & Ethnic Microaggressions over and above Sex, Sexual Orientation, and Age

Variables	B	SE B	β	t	P	AdjR ²	F	ΔR^2
Step 1					.10	.01	2.06	.02
Sex	24.71	12.08	.12	2.05	.04			
Age	.68	.58	.07	1.16	.24			
Sexual Orientation	-4.23	8.50	-.03	-.50	.61			
Step 2					.00	.07	5.87	.06
Sex	30.02	11.78	.15	2.55	.01			
Age	.62	.56	.06	1.10	.27			
Sexual Orientation	-6.44	8.22	-.04	-.784	.43			
REMS	-2.07	.50	-.25	-4.11	.00			

Hypothesis 1c. Black students who perceive lower college cultural congruence will report lower college student adjustment outcomes than Black students who report higher perceived college cultural congruence.

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was calculated to test the aforementioned hypothesis by analyzing the variance of the covariate demographic variables (age, sexual orientation, and sex) and the predictor variable - College Cultural Congruence Scale (CSS), on the criterion variable, college student adjustment (SACQ Total Score). See Table 8 for a summary of results. In the first step, the three demographic variables (sex, sexual orientation,

and age) were entered simultaneously into the equation and then the CCS total score was entered during the second step. Findings revealed that the variance for academic adjustment was not significantly accounted for by the first model with age, sexual orientation, and sex as predictors ($AdjR^2 = .01$; $F(3,244) = 1.95$, $p = .12$).

The second step of the regression revealed that over and above sex, age, and sexual orientation, perceived college cultural congruence (CCS Total Score) accounted for a significant amount of the variance in student adjustment among Black college students, ($\Delta R^2 = .13$; $AdjR^2 = .14$; $F(4,244) = 11.58$, $p = .00$). Review of the findings in the second model indicate that as predicted, perceived college cultural congruence was significantly positively correlated to college student adjustment ($\beta .24$, $t(248) = 3.77$, $p = .00$).

Table 8

Hierarchical Multiple Regression: Student Adjustment predicted by College Cultural Congruence over and above Sex, Sexual Orientation, and Age

Variables	B	SE B	β	t	P	AdjR ²	F	ΔR^2
Step 1					.12	.01	1.95	.24
Sex	24.36	12.19	.12	1.99	.04			
Age	.65	.59	.07	1.10	.26			
Sexual Orientation	-4.41	8.69	-.03	-.50	.61			
Step 2					.00	.14	11.58	.13
Sex	28.17	11.33	.14	2.48	.01			
Age	.91	.55	.09	1.66	.09			
Sexual Orientation	-10.57	8.12	-.07	-1.30	.19			
CCS	2.05	.32	.37	6.28	.00			

Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis 2a. Perceived social support will be positively correlated with college student adjustment for Black students, such that Black students who perceive higher social support will report higher college student adjustment.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of the availability and adequacy social support on college student adjustment. The two social support subscales (availability & adequacy) were entered as predictor variables of the criterion variable, college student adjustment. The resulting model was significant ($AdjR^2 = .99$; $F(2, 237) = 13.97$, $p = .00$). Adequacy of social support ($\beta = .30$, $p = .00$) was significantly associated with college student adjustment, whereas Availability of social support ($\beta = .04$, $p = .51$) was not significantly associated with college student adjustment above and beyond Adequacy (See Table 9).

Table 9
Multiple Regression: Relationship between College Student Adjustment & Social Support

Variables	β	t	P	<i>Adj R</i>	<i>F</i>
Overall Model			.00	.09	13.97
Availability	.04	.64	.51		
Adequacy	.30	4.18	.00		

Hypothesis 2b. Social support will buffer the **negative** relationship between perceived racial microaggressions and college student adjustment, such that for Black college students with higher levels of social support, the relationship between perceived racial microaggressions and college student adjustment will be **weaker** compared to Black college students who report lower levels social support.

Two hierarchical multiple regression equations with steps outlined by Frazier, Tix, & Barron (2004) were calculated to test the previous research question. During the first phase, to reduce any issues with multicollinearity (i.e. high correlations between the moderator and the

predictor variables), the scores of the predictor, racial microaggressions (as measured by the total score on the REMS) and social support (as measured by the total score on the MDSS), were converted into standardized z scores, so that each has a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

First, a regression equation was computed to test moderation of the relationship between perceived racial microaggressions and college student adjustment. The equation consisted of four steps with the social support subscales and perceived racial microaggressions total score as the predictor variables and student adjustment as the criterion variable. In step one, the demographic variables (Sex, Sexual Orientation, & Age) were entered to rule out any confounding influences. In the second step, the predictor variable (Perceived Racial microaggressions) was entered. In step three, the moderator variables (Adequacy and Availability subscales of the social support measure) were entered. During the final step, the interaction terms consisting of perceived racial microaggressions multiplied by each of the Multi-Dimensional Support subscales were entered into the equation.

Results for step one ($AdjR^2=.02$, $F(3,234) = 2.86$, $p = .03$) were significant. In particular, sex ($\beta=.16$, $p=.01$) was a significant predictor, such that on average males reported higher college student adjustment compared to their female counterparts. In Step two, results confirmed that racial microaggressions ($\beta=-.26$, $p = .00$) were significantly negatively associated with college student adjustment over and beyond the influence of the demographic variables ($\Delta R^2=.07$, $F(1,233) = 18.86$, $p=.00$). In Step three, adequacy ($\beta=.24$, $p=.00$) and not the availability ($\beta=.02$, $p=.72$) of social support was found to be a significant predictor of college student adjustment over and beyond the influence of the demographics group membership and incidences of perceived racial microaggressions ($\Delta R^2=.06$, $F(2,231) = 8.52$, $p=.00$). In step four, while the overall model was significant ($AdjR^2= .15$, $F(8,237) = 6.29$, $p=.00$), the

contribution over and above model 3 was not ($\Delta R^2=.01$, $F(2,229) = 1.75$, $p = .17$). In other words, availability of social support did not moderate the relationship between perceived racial microaggressions and college student adjustment. See table 10 for a summary of findings.

Overall, results indicate that both of the availability and adequacy subscales of social support and perceived racial microaggressions contribute individually to college student adjustment; however, social support did not moderate the relationship between perceived incidences of racial microaggressions and student adjustment. While, the adequacy and availability of social support was associated with higher college student adjustment, social support did not buffer the negative impact of racial microaggressions on college student adjustment for Black college students.

Table 10

Hierarchical Multiple Regression: Moderation Effect of Availability of Social Support on the relationship between perceived racial microaggressions & college student adjustment

Variables	β	AdjR ²	ΔR^2	ΔF	P ΔF
Step 1		.02	.03	2.8	.03
Sex	.16*				
Age	.05				
Sexual Orientation	-.05				
Step 2		.09	.07	18.48	.00
Sex	.19*				
Age	.04				
Sexual Orientation	-.06				
REMS	-.26*				
Step 3		.14	.06	8.52	.00
Sex	.17*				
Age	.05				
Sexual Orientation	-.05				
REMS	-.18				
Availability	.02				
Adequacy	.24*				
Step 4		.15	.01	1.75	.17
Sex	.17*				
Age	.06				
Sexual Orientation	-.05				
REMS	-.16*				
Availability	.03				
Adequacy	.24*				
REMSX Availability	.03				
REMSX Adequacy	-.12				

Hypothesis 2c. Social support will enhance the **positive** relationship between perceived college cultural congruence and college student adjustment, such that for Black college students with higher levels of social support, the relationship between perceived cultural congruence and college student adjustment will be **stronger** compared to Black college students who report lower levels social support.

A second hierarchical multiple regression equation was conducted to test whether social support moderates the relationship between the predictor variable, college cultural congruence, and the criterion variable college student adjustment. The equation consisted of four steps with the social support subscales and perceived college cultural congruence total score (CCS) as the predictor variables and student adjustment as the criterion variable. In step one, the demographic variables (Sex, Sexual Orientation, & Age) were entered to rule out any confounding influences. In the second step, the predictor variable (Perceived Culture Congruence) was entered. In step three, one of the moderator variables (Adequacy and Availability subscales of the social support measure) were entered. During the final step, the interaction terms consisting of perceived cultural congruence multiplied by each of the Multi-Dimensional Support subscales were entered into the equation.

Results for step one ($AdjR^2=.02$, $F(3,234) = 2.81$, $p = .04$) were significant. In particular, sex ($\beta=.16$, $p=.01$) was a significant predictor, such that on average males reported higher college student adjustment compared to their female counterparts. In Step two, results confirmed that perceived cultural congruence ($\beta=.369$, $p=.00$) was significantly positively associated with college student adjustment over and beyond the influence of the demographic variables ($\Delta R^2=.13$, $F(1,233) = 36.77$, $p=.00$). In Step three, adequacy ($\beta=.22$, $p=.00$) and not the availability ($\beta=-.00$, $p=.90$) of social support was found to be a significant predictor of

college student adjustment over and beyond the influence of the demographics group membership and incidences of perceived college cultural congruence ($\Delta R^2=.04$, $F(2,228) = 6.42$, $p=.00$). In step four, while the overall model was significant ($AdjR^2 = .18$, $F(8,234) = 6.18$, $p=.00$), the contribution over and above model 3 was not ($\Delta R^2=.00$, $F(2,226) = .52$, $p = .59$). In other words, social support did not moderate the relationship between perceived college cultural congruence and college student adjustment. See table 11 for a summary of findings.

Overall, results indicate that both of the availability and adequacy subscales of social support and perceived cultural congruence contribute individually to college student adjustment; however, social support did not moderate the relationship between perceived college cultural congruence and student adjustment. While, the adequacy and availability of social support was associated with higher college student adjustment, social support did not strengthen the positive influence of cultural congruence on college student adjustment for Black college students.

Table 11

Hierarchical Multiple Regression: Moderation Effect of Social Support on the relationship between perceived college cultural congruence & college student adjustment

Variables	β	AdjR ²	ΔR^2	ΔF	P ΔF
Step 1		.02	.03	2.8	.04
Sex	.16*				
Age	.054				
Sexual Orientation	-.052				
Step 2		.15	.13	36.7	.00
Sex	.18*				
Age	.08				
Sexual Orientation	-.09				
CCS	.36*				
Step 3		.19	.04	6.4	.00
Sex	.17*				
Age	.08				
Sexual Orientation	-.08				
CCS	.29*				
Availability	-.00				
Adequacy	.22*				
Step 4		.18	.00	.52	.59
Sex	.17*				
Age	.08				
Sexual Orientation	-.08				
CCS	.29*				
Availability	.00				
Adequacy	.21*				
CSSXAvailability	-.04				
CSSXAdequacy	-.02				

Research Question One

Research Question 1a. What is the relationship among the different strategies of self-regulation and student adjustment for Black college students?

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of self-regulation strategies on college student adjustment. The nine self-regulation subscales were entered as predictor variables of the criterion variable, college student adjustment. The resulting model was significant ($AdjR^2 = .041$; $F(9, 239) = 2.14$, $p = .02$). Rumination ($\beta = .19$, $p = .01$) was significantly positively linked with college student adjustment whereas Catastrophizing ($\beta = -.24$, $p = .00$) and Acceptance ($\beta = -.20$, $p = .01$) were significantly negatively linked with college student adjustment. The remaining six self-regulation strategies (Self-Blame, Positive Refocusing, Planning, Positive Reappraisal, Putting into Perspective, & Other Blame) were not significantly associated with college student adjustment. See Table 12 for comprehensive details.

Table 12

Multiple Regression: Relationship between College Student Adjustment & Self-regulation strategies

Variables	β	t	P	AdjR ²	F
Overall Model			.02	.04	2.14
CERQ Self-Blame	.04	.52	.59		
CERQ Rumination	.19	2.3	.01*		
CERQ Catastrophizing	-.24	-3.1	.00*		
CERQ Acceptance	-.20	-2.4	.01*		
CERQ Positive Refocusing	-.00	-.00	.99		
CERQ Planning	-.01	-.16	.87		
CERQ Positive Reappraisal	-.01	-.17	.86		
CERQ Putting into Perspective	.04	.61	.54		
CERQ Other Blame	.00	.05	.95		

Research Question 1b. Do self-regulation strategies moderate the relationship between the predictor variables, racial microaggressions and college cultural congruence, and the criterion variable college student adjustment?

Two hierarchical multiple regression equations with steps described by Frazier, Tix, & Barron (2004) were calculated to test the previous research question. During the first phase, to reduce any issues with multicollinearity (i.e. high correlations between the moderator and the predictor variables), the scores of the predictors, racial microaggressions (as measured the REMS Total Score) or the college cultural congruence (as measured by the CCS Total Score), and the moderator, self-regulation strategies (as measured by the 3 significant subscales on the CERQ-short), will be converted into standardized z scores, so that each has a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

First, a regression equation was computed to test the moderation influence of self-regulation strategies on the relationship between perceived racial microaggressions and college student adjustment. The equation consisted of four steps with the social support subscales and perceived racial microaggressions total score as the predictor variables and student adjustment as the criterion variable. In the first step, the demographic variables (sex, sexual orientation, & age) were entered to rule out any confounding influences. In the second step, the predictor variable (perceived racial microaggressions) was entered. In the third step, the moderator variables (rumination, catastrophizing, and acceptance self-regulation strategies) were entered. During final step, the interaction terms consisting of perceived racial microaggressions multiplied by each of the Self-regulation subscales (rumination, catastrophizing, and acceptance) were entered into the equation.

Results for step one ($AdjR^2=.00$, $F(3,239) = 1.60$, $p = .18$) were not significant. In others, the demographic variables were not independent predictors of the criterion variable. In Step two, results established that perceived racial microaggressions ($\beta=-.25$, $p=.00$) were significantly negatively associated with college student adjustment over and beyond the influence of the demographic variables ($\Delta R^2=.06$, $F(1,235) = 16.65$, $p=.00$). In Step three, rumination ($\beta=.17$, $p=.01$) was found to be a significant predictor of college student adjustment, whereas catastrophizing ($\beta=-.24$, $p=.00$) and acceptance ($\beta=-.13$, $p=.05$) were negatively significant predictors of college student adjustment over and beyond the influence of the demographics markers and incidences of perceived racial microaggressions ($\Delta R^2=.06$, $F(3,232) = 5.62$, $p=.00$). In step four, while the overall model was significant ($AdjR^2 = .11$, $F(10,239) = 4.23$, $p=.00$), the contribution over and above model 3 was not ($\Delta R^2=.00$, $F(3,229) = .84$, $p = .47$). In other words, self-regulation strategies did not moderate the relationship between perceived racial microaggressions and college student adjustment. See table 13 for a summary of findings.

Overall, findings indicate that the self-regulation subscales: rumination, catastrophizing, and acceptance, and perceived racial microaggressions contribute individually to the variance in college student adjustment; however, self-regulation strategies did not moderate the relationship between perceived racial microaggressions and student adjustment. Surprisingly, rumination self-regulation strategy was associated with higher college student adjustment. In contrast, catastrophizing and acceptance were both negatively associated with college student adjustment. Self-regulation strategies did not influence the negative relationship between racial microaggressions and college student adjustment for Black college students.

Table 13

Hierarchical Multiple Regression: Moderation Effect of Self-regulation strategies on the relationship between perceived racial microaggressions & college student adjustment

Variables	β	AdjR ²	ΔR^2	ΔF	P ΔF
Step 1		.00	.02	1.60	.18
Sex	.11				
Age	.06				
Sexual Orientation	-.03				
Step 2		.06	.06	16.65	.00
Sex	.14*				
Age	.06				
Sexual Orientation	-.04				
REMS	-.25*				
Step 3		.12	.06	5.62	.00
Sex	.16*				
Age	.08				
Sexual Orientation	-.03				
REMS	-.21*				
Rumination	.17*				
Catastrophizing	-.24*				
Acceptance	-.13*				
Step 4		.11	.00	.84	.47
Sex	.17*				
Age	.09				
Sexual Orientation	-.04				
REMS	-.20*				
Rumination	.15*				
Catastrophizing	-.24*				
Acceptance	-.13*				
REMSX Rumination	.05				
REMSX Catastrophizing	-.11				
REMSXAcceptance	.03				

A second regression equation was computed to test the moderation influence of self-regulation strategies on the relationship between perceived college congruence and college student adjustment. The equation consisted of aforementioned sequence of four steps with perceived college cultural congruence total score substituting racial microaggressions as the predictor variable.

Results for step one ($AdjR^2=.00$, $F(3,239) = 1.60$, $p = .18$) were not significant. In other words, the demographic variables were not independent predictors of the criterion variable. In step two, results indicated that perceived college cultural congruence ($\beta=.37$, $p=.00$) was significantly associated with college student adjustment. In step three, rumination ($\beta=.14$, $p=.04$) was found to be a significant predictor of college student adjustment, whereas catastrophizing ($\beta=-.14$, $p=.04$) was found to negatively predict college student adjustment over and beyond the influence of the demographics markers and incidences of perceived racial microaggressions ($\Delta R^2=.03$, $F(3,232) = 2.83$, $p=.03$). Acceptance strategies ($\beta=-.12$, $p=.06$) were not significant predictors of college student adjustment. In step four, while the overall model was significant ($AdjR^2= .177$, $F(10,239) = 6.12$, $p=.00$), the contribution over and above model 3 was not ($\Delta R^2=.02$, $F(3,229) = 2.32$, $p = .07$). In other words, self-regulation strategies did not moderate the relationship between perceived college cultural congruence and college student adjustment. See table 14 for a summary of findings.

Overall, findings indicate that the self-regulation subscales: rumination, catastrophizing, and acceptance, and perceived college cultural congruence contribute individually to the variance in college student adjustment; however, self-regulation strategies did not moderate the relationship between perceived college cultural congruence and student adjustment. Surprisingly, rumination self-regulation strategies were associated with higher college student adjustment. In contrast, catastrophizing and acceptance were both negatively associated with college student adjustment. Self-regulation strategies did not influence the negative relationship between racial microaggressions and college student adjustment for Black college students.

Table 14

Hierarchical Multiple Regression: Moderation Effect of Self-regulation strategies on the relationship between perceived college cultural congruence & college student adjustment

Variables	β	AdjR ²	ΔR^2	ΔF	P ΔF
Step 1		.00	.02	1.60	.18
Sex	.11				
Age	.06				
Sexual Orientation	-.03				
Step 2		.14	.13	38.25	.00
Sex	.14				
Age	.09				
Sexual Orientation	-.07				
CCS	.37*				
Step 3		.16	.03	2.83	.03
Sex	.15 *				
Age	.09				
Sexual Orientation	-.06				
CCS	.36*				
Rumination	.14*				
Catastrophizing	-.14*				
Acceptance	-.12				
Step 4		.17	.02	2.32	.07
Sex	.13*				
Age	.08				
Sexual Orientation	-.04				
CCS	.32*				
Rumination	.16*				
Catastrophizing	-.17*				
Acceptance	-.10				
CSSX Rumination	.15*				
CSSX Catastrophizing	-.09				
CCSXAcceptance	.04				

Table 15:
Table of Research Questions & Hypotheses with Corresponding Analyses

Research Questions & Hypotheses	Variables Measured	Scales	Statistical Analyses	Significance/ Outcome
<p>H1A. Perceived racial microaggressions will be negatively correlated with college cultural congruence, such that Black students who perceive higher incidences of racial microaggressions will report lower college cultural congruence than Black students who report lower incidences of perceived racial microaggressions.</p>	<p>1. Perceived Racial Microaggressions 2. Perceived College Cultural Congruence</p>	<p>1. REMS– Total Score 2. CCS– Total Score</p>	<p>Correlational Coefficient</p>	<p>Hypothesis Supported</p> <hr/>
<p>H1B. Black students who perceive higher incidences of racial microaggressions will report lower college student adjustment outcomes than Black students who report lower incidences of perceived racial microaggressions.</p>	<p>1. Demographic Variables (Sex, Sexual Orientation, & Age) 2. Perceived Racial Microaggressions 3. College Student Adjustment</p>	<p>1. REMS – Total Score 2. SACQ – Total Score</p>	<p>Hierarchical Multiple Regression</p>	<p>Hypothesis Supported</p> <hr/>
<p>H1C. Black students who perceive lower incidences of college cultural congruence will report lower student adjustment than Black students who report higher incidences of perceived college cultural congruence.</p>	<p>1. Demographic Variables (Sex, Sexual Orientation, & Age) 2. Perceived College Cultural Congruence 3. College Student Adjustment</p>	<p>1. CCS – Total Score 2. SACQ – Total Score</p>	<p>Hierarchical Multiple Regression</p>	<p>Hypothesis Supported</p> <hr/>

<p>H2A. Perceived social support will be positively correlated with college student adjustment for Black students, such that Black students who perceive higher social support will report higher college student adjustment.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Support 2. College Student Adjustment 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MDSS – (2 subscale scores) 2. SACQ – (4 subscale scores) 	Multiple Regression	<p>Reject the Null (+)Adequacy</p>
<p>H2B. Social support will buffer the negative relationship between perceived racial microaggressions and college student adjustment, such that for Black college students with higher levels of social support, the relationship between perceived racial microaggressions and college student adjustment will be weaker compared to Black college students who report lower levels social support.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demographic Variables (Sex, Sexual Orientation, & Age) 2. Perceived Racial Microaggressions 3. College Student Adjustment 4. Social Support 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. REMS – Total Score & 2. SACQ – Total Score 3. MDSS – (2 subscale scores) 	Hierarchical Multiple Regression	<p>Fail to Reject For REMS</p>
<p>H2C. Social support will enhance the positive relationship between perceived college cultural congruence and college student adjustment, such that for Black college students with higher levels of social</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demographic Variables (Sex, Sexual Orientation, & Age) 2. College Cultural Congruence 3. College Student Adjustment 4. Social Support 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CCS – Total Score 2. SACQ – Total Score 3. MDSS – (2 subscale scores) 	Hierarchical Multiple Regression	<p>Fail to Reject For CSS</p>

<p>support, the relationship between perceived cultural congruence and college student adjustment will be stronger compared to Black college students who report lower levels social support.</p>				
<p>RQ1a. What is the relationship between self-regulation strategies and college student adjustment?</p>	<p>1. Self-regulation Strategies 2. College Student Adjustment</p>	<p>1. CERQ-short – (9 subscale scores) 2. SACQ – (4 subscale scores)</p>	<p>Multiple Regression</p>	<p>(+)Rumination (-)Catastrophizing (-)Acceptance</p>
<p>RQ1b. Do self-regulation strategies moderate the relationship between the predictor variables: college cultural and racial microaggressions congruence, and the criterion variable, college student adjustment?</p>	<p>1. Demographic Variables (Sex, Sexual Orientation, & Age) 2. Perceived Racial Microaggressions & College Cultural Congruence 3. College Student Adjustment 4. Self-regulation strategies</p>	<p>1. REMS – Total Score & CCS – Total Score 2. SACQ – Total Score 3. CERQ-short– (9 subscale scores)</p>	<p>Hierarchical Multiple Regression</p>	<p>Fail to Reject <hr/>For REMS Fail to Reject <hr/>For CSS</p>

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

An overview of the research findings are presented in this chapter. First, the preliminary findings will be discussed and then a deeper examination of each major finding. Next, a brief summary of the overall findings will be delineated in Table 16. Then, the limitations will be presented. Lastly, a conclusion of the study and description of future implications will be offered.

Preliminary Findings

The present study focused on the relationship between perceived racial microaggressions, college cultural congruence, social support, self-regulation strategies, and college student adjustment for Black college students. Previous scholars have illustrated that demographic variables should be accounted for in order to address within group variability in studies of Black populations (Banks, 2010; Bynum, Burton, & Best, 2007; Lewis, 2003; Utsey, Giesbrecht, Hook, & Stanard, 2008). As such, demographic markers were assessed to capture any nuances within group differences among Black college students. Although, previous scholars have purported the religion identity, and education, this study's findings did not elicit any differential results. Indeed, many of the demographic markers did not product significant between group differences, such as ethnic identity, family social economic background, religious identity, or education level. A brief discussion of the three significant between group demographic findings, including (1) sex, (2) sexual orientation, and (3) age group distinctions is explicated below.

First, previous literature has established that “some negative Black stereotypes are differentially applied to Black men and Black women, making their experiences of racism nuanced by their gender identities (Watkins, LaBarrie, & Appio, 2010).” In this study, Black

male college students, on average, reported higher college student adjustment outcomes compared to their female counterparts. In contrast, prior research and statistics on Black college students' persistence suggest that Black males would be more likely to struggle with adjustment at Predominately White institutions. One possible explanation for this discrepancy may be accounted for by the sample characteristics of the males in this study. Given that the overall attrition rate was high and the participants were recruited largely through student organizational list serves, the male participants that actually completed the survey may be disproportionately involved in clubs and organizations and more resilient than their counterparts who did not. Accordant with the theory of involvement, Astin (1984) outlined that students learn better when they are concurrently engaged in the academic and social facets of the collegiate experience. Of additional note, the majority of the participants were Black women college students. Future studies should recruit larger samples of Black male college students to obtain a deeper understanding of their college student adjustment process. Replication studies are necessary to determine whether similar results would be found with a broader sample.

Second, Black college students, who identified as bisexual or transgendered, were more vulnerable to lower social and institutional attachment as compared to their heterosexual, gay and lesbian counterparts. Recent meta-analyses have noted that microaggressions can be experienced as a function of intersecting marginalized social identities (Sue, 2010). Scholars have proposed that individuals experience microaggressions based on a combination of marginalized social identities, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. In tandem with the aforementioned findings, emergent studies have begun to shed more attention on the transphobic and sexual orientation based microaggressions and “the toll such pervasive and unchecked discrimination can have on transgender and sexual minority individuals (Skolnik, 2011).”

Third, older Black college students were more likely to endorse catastrophizing self-regulation style – intense thoughts and feelings revolving around the trauma and distress

triggered by negative race-related encounters. Previous scholars have documented the cumulative and insidious impact of racial microaggressions (Sue, Capodilupo et al., 2007, Sue et al., 2008). It follows that the older participants, having been within the college milieu for a longer period of time and likely exposed to greater lifetime incidences of racial microaggressions, were more apt to experience inflated pessimistic thoughts and feelings related to these racially latent exchanges.

Examination of Major Findings

Racial Microaggressions & College Cultural Congruence

Findings supported that racial microaggressions are negatively related to college cultural congruence. In this study, Black students with greater experiences of racial microaggressions rated lower college cultural congruence in their institutions. In comparison, Black students, for whom, lower incidences of perceived racial microaggressions occurred perceived their institutional cultural congruence higher. These results call attention to the notion that the permeation of microaggressions likely impedes the development of culturally congruence within institutions. Consistent with previous research, findings of this study further establish that racial microaggressions create racially tense, hostile, and invalidating campus racial climates for Black students (Lewis-Coles, & Constantine, 2006; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Black students' perceptions of racial discrimination and bias had been negatively related to their academic progress, social experiences, and institutional attachment and commitment (Cabrera et. al., 1999). By contrast, higher perceived college cultural congruence is attributed to an improved sense of belonging on campus, academic commitment, and academic success (Gloria, Robinson Kurpius, Hamilton, & Wilson, 1999; Levin, Van Larr, & Foote, 2006). For those reasons, the

findings correspond with previous literature that implicate racial microaggressions as threats toward developing culturally inclusive spaces within the academy.

Racial Microaggressions & College Student Adjustment

Considerable evidence indicates that Black students facing increasing amounts of racial microaggressions develop lower college student adjustment. The informants in this study confirmed that those with lower incidences of racial microaggressions fared far better with regard to student adjustment outcomes. Burgeoning research findings underscore that for Black college students, racial microaggressions are linked to: (1) lower student academic productivity (Salvatore & Shelton, 2007), (2) higher psychological distress (Ong, Fuller-Rowell, & Burrow, 2009; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008), (3) greater perpetuation of stereotype threat (Steele, 1997; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002), (4) lower self-efficacy (Watkins, Labarrie, & Appio, 2010), (5) lower social support and engagement (Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis, & Thomas, 1999) (6) poorer institutional persistence and retention (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003).

College Cultural Congruence & College Student Adjustment

Across the nation, numerous college campuses take great pride in passing on traditions to new generations of students (Bourke, 2010). First-year orientations, on-campus residence, homecoming events, celebrating sports teams, membership in clubs and organizations, and graduations are each examples of campus activities that are shrouded in institutional ritual. Many students, alumni, administrators, faculty, and staff are committed to maintaining college cultural practices that have been embedded within the institutional fabric over many years. For those reasons, traditions that exclude or devalue Black students' racial-cultural identity can be very difficult to challenge, encumber equal opportunities, and obstruct institution attachment.

As a group, Black students are disproportionately vulnerable to poorer academic performance, deflated educational motivation, and diminished academic self-efficacy compared to their White counterparts (Steele, 1997). Findings indicate that cultural congruence was one possible determinant for college student adjustment for Black students within predominately White college settings. For participants, higher cultural congruence was associated with better personal-emotional, social, and academic adjustment and institutional attachment outcomes.

In the context of racial microaggressions and cultural incongruent environments, Black students must demonstrate mental dexterity to balance competing cultural values, while endeavoring to thrive in predominately White institutions (Lewis, Harwood, Mendenhall, & Brown Hunt, 2009; Watkins, LaBarrie, & Appio, 2010). When investigated perceived race-related distress and discrimination, albeit harmful, generally accounts for a relatively small amount of the racial disparity in psychological outcomes among Black individuals (Forsyth, 2010). Thus, researchers have begun to explore the potential moderating and mediating variables that may account for the gaps in understanding the full impact. Two potential moderating variables, social support and self-regulatory strategies were investigated within this study.

The Role of Social Support

Social support has been argued to decrease the impact of general life stress by creating an outlet through social resources, such as strategizing with others, receiving material and psychological support, and garnering strength from allies (Cohen, 1988; Plummer & Slane, 1996; Utsey et al., 2007; Utsey, Giesbrecht, Hook et al., 2008). Interestingly, this study revealed that the adequacy or satisfaction of social support resources were essential. For those

reasons, fostering meaningful social support opportunities for Black college students is paramount for enhancing their overall college experience.

Participants indicated that they generally had access to social support resources. Regardless, however, it was established by the participants that the adequacy of those social relationships was considerably more related to their adjustment than the availability. In other words, Black student's satisfaction with the available support was what was central to their adjustment. One explanation for the aforementioned finding may be understood by a concept known as a "sanity check," which was described by Sue and colleagues (2008) in a hallmark study examining the everyday life experiences of racial microaggressions among Black Americans. A sanity check was defined by the participants' as a coping technique of depending on support from trusted allies to confirm their appraisal of incidents as racism. To that end, Black Americans in the study noted the importance of being able to check in with others about the nature of a race-related incident, "as opposed to being paranoid—I have people in my sphere of influence that I can call up and share my authentic feelings with, so that there's sort of this healing; there's just this healing circle that I have around myself, and these are people who I don't have to be rational with if I'm battling racism (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008, pp.332)." Taken together, these findings suggest that the *quality* of social support resources is more valuable than the quantity. Furthermore, social support that validates one's racial reality is related to better adjustment outcomes among Black students.

In a review of previous literature, quality social support has been identified as a factor that can inoculate people from the harmful effects of taxing environments (Cohen & Willis, 1985; Lewis, 2003; Reifman, Dunkel-Schetter, 1990; Sarason, Pierce, & Sarason, 1990; Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis, & Thomas, 1999). However, it appears that for these participants,

though social support was significant to their college experience, it did not lessen the deleterious impact of racial microaggressions or college cultural congruence. Perhaps, in the fight against racial-cultural bias and discrimination, allies are necessary but not sufficient in itself to buffer participants' experiences of toxic microaggressive or culturally incongruent college environments.

Role of Self-regulation Strategies

Given the limited information about how Black college students self-regulate in the face of race-related stressors, this study endeavored to identify which self-regulatory styles could be adaptive for Black students within microaggressive and culturally incongruent college environments. The process through which Black college students are capable of adaptive self-regulation in the context of racist and culturally incongruent college environments is one of the central inquiries of this dissertation. Indeed, this study is rooted in developing greater understandings about the link between self-regulatory behaviors and social support as buffers for adjustment among Black students.

Findings revealed that Black college students employed a variety of cognitive-emotional self-regulatory strategies to cope with racial-stressors; however, a significant relationship emerged between only three of the self-regulatory styles and college student adjustment. Specifically, a positive relationship was demonstrated between rumination and adjustment to the academic, social, personal-emotional demands and institutional attachment to college for Black students. In contrast, a negative relationship was found between acceptance, catastrophizing, and college student adjustment.

In the context of this study, rumination strategies are defined as reoccurring thoughts and feelings associated with the negative experience. Intuitively, it could be assumed to be a

maladaptive strategy, given the notion of using cognitive resources to focus on negative experiences. Indeed, previous studies on the impact of rumination and general life stress found an association with depressive and anxious symptoms (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006). And yet results indicated that rumination used in the face of ambiguous racially-related exchanges was associated with higher college cultural congruence. In other words, the use of rumination as a self-regulation strategy may be a relatively effective means of adjusting to racial-based stressors. Though this finding appears somewhat surprising, it is in line with pre-existing theory on self-regulation strategies, which states that the appropriateness of individual self-regulation strategies are situation specific (e.g., Garnefski, Baan, & Kraaij, 2005).

Within the racial microaggression framework, rumination appears to correspond with the psychological dilemma of the catch-22 of responding to microaggressions. The catch-22 paradigm refers to the fact that recipients of microaggressions are tasked with trying to uncover the motivations behind perpetrators' actions, while simultaneously trying to figure out whether and how to respond to the event (Sue, 2010). For Black students at predominately White Institutions, a sense of attributional ambiguity, "what just happened and did they mean to do it," followed by response indecisiveness, "what can or should I do and what will be the consequences," symbolize a difficult and confusing hallmark of repeatedly encountering microaggressions perpetrated by administrators, faculty, staff, and peers (Constantine & Watt, 2002; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue et al., 2008). As a result, attempting to make sense of the complex thoughts, feelings, and behaviors associated with negative microaggressive exchanges may be an essential conduit toward college student adjustment. It seems likely that rumination as a self-regulation strategy permits Black students to assert cognitive energy toward

making meaning in their appraisal of a racial incident, to assess risk, and determine a course of action.

On the other hand, catastrophizing and acceptance self-regulation strategies were associated with poorer college adjustment outcomes. The catastrophizing self-regulation strategy is characterized as pervasive thoughts that emphasize the fear and dread connected to experiencing race-based discrimination and bias. In previous findings, scholars have established the relationship between catastrophizing and depression (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006). In addition, research findings suggest a link between the catastrophizing self-regulatory strategies and anxiety (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006). For similar reasons, Black students who react to microaggressions with intense feelings of doom and fear were at increased risk for negative psychological adjustment results. In contrast to rumination strategies, wherein students may develop a critical awareness of what is occurring, catastrophizing seems to overwhelm students' cognitive and emotional states, which renders them less able to cope and adjust.

Interestingly, acceptance was also found to be negatively associated with Black college students' adjustment. As a self-regulation strategy in this study, acceptance is defined as recognizing a negative race-related exchange without attempting to change, protest, or escape it. Sue (2010) notes that many marginalized individuals feel disempowered during and after microaggressive exchanges and may not respond as a consequence. Left unchallenged, microaggressions can fester and create feelings of insincerity, self-doubt and low self-esteem, invisibility, and a loss of integrity for the target (Swim et al., 2003; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003; Sue, 2010). As a whole, the three significant self-regulation strategies deepen our understanding about how Black students regulate, as well as which approaches may impede adjustment within predominately White settings.

Overall, the findings demonstrated that while some of the individual self-regulation strategies contributed to college student adjustment, specific self-regulation strategies were not found to moderate the relationship between the two predictors and college student adjustment. Most studies of self-regulation study the phenomenon, utilizing an experimental design, whereas this study utilized a correlational survey design to recruit a national sample. In 2001, the cognitive-emotional regulation questionnaire (CERQ) was the first self-report measure developed to examine how and when specific strategies are employed in the face of general life stressors (Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2001). To date, this is the first study designed to examine self-regulation strategies in the context of racial microaggressive and culturally incongruent environmental stressors. While the CERQ demonstrates relatively sound reliability and validity, given the infancy of survey measures designed to assess self-regulation, it remains uncertain if the CERQ measure can fully capture the complexity of this phenomenon.

**Table 16:
Snapshot the of Findings**

Demographic Findings

Sex

Black male college students reported higher college student adjustment rates compared to their female counterparts.

Sexual Orientation

Black college students, who identified as bisexual or transgendered, were more likely to endorse lower social and institutional attachment as compared to their heterosexual, gay and lesbian counterparts.

Age

Older Black college students were more likely to endorse intense thoughts and feelings revolving around the trauma and distress triggered by negative race-related encounters.

Main Findings

Racial Microaggressions & Cultural Congruence

When Black students experience higher incidences of racial microaggressions, they tend to rate their Predominately White College institutions as less culturally congruent.

Racial Microaggressions & College Adjustment

When Black students experience higher incidences of racial microaggressions, they do not adjust as well within Predominately White College environments.

Cultural Congruence & College Adjustment

When Black students perceive the college as more culturally congruent, they are better able to adjust within Predominately White institutions.

Moderation Findings

Social Support

- The majority of Black students reported that social support resources were available. Nonetheless, the adequacy of those social relationships was found to be the determining factor for healthy college student adjustment and was shown to be more important than solely the availability of social support.
- On the whole, social support resources played a significant role, but were NOT sufficient in itself to buffer participants' experiences of toxic microaggressive or culturally incongruent college environments.

Self-regulation Strategies

- Black college students employed a variety of the nine cognitive-emotional self-regulatory strategies to cope with racial-stressors; however, only three strategies emerged as influential self-regulation strategies for college student adjustment.
 - Specifically, a positive relationship emerged between rumination strategies and adjustment to the academic, social, personal-emotional demands and institutional attachment to the college for Black students.
 - In contrast, acceptance and catastrophizing strategies were linked with poorer college student adjustment outcomes.
- Overall, while some of the individual self-regulation strategies individually impacted college student adjustment, specific self-regulation strategies were NOT found to buffer participants' experiences of toxic microaggressive or culturally incongruent college environments.

Limitations

The results of the current study should be considered within the context of several potential limitations. First, the research design was correlational, not experimental, and by definition the relationships among the study variables may be inferred, instead of definitively declared. Second, perceived racial microaggressions, college cultural congruence, social support, and self-regulatory strategies taken together did not account for a large portion of the

variance in the college students' adjustment. Consequently, other mitigating variables should to be identified in the future to develop a richer perspective about the college adjustment process among Black students.

Although a review of the literature reveals an enduring debate regarding the benefits and consequences of utilizing compensation for study participation, overall findings indicate that prize incentives can promote higher response rates. With a 56% response rate, the lack of compensation or prize raffles in this study was perhaps compounded by the average length of the survey's completion – 45 minutes to an hour. While it is important to note that no significant demographic differences were found between participants who completed the survey and those who did not, because there were no exit interviews, it is not possible discern why some participants elected not to complete the survey.

The reliance on self-report measures, in this study, signifies another possible limitation. In contrast to behavioral observations or an experimental design, there is a subjective response bias inherent in self-report surveys. In other words, the results are contingent upon individual participant factors, such as identity salience and awareness, vulnerability to social desirability, and accuracy of memory recall of previous thoughts, feelings and behaviors. In spite of the aforementioned issues with self-report measures, such instruments have been ubiquitous and useful techniques for gathering social science research data (Chan, 2009).

Another potential limitation is that participants were recruited through online organizational list-serves and internet-based social networks. While recruiting via research announcements on the web has become an increasingly popular and effective method for attracting a nationwide sample of participants (Illingworth, 2001), there may be some inherent bias toward Black college students who are involved in student organizations or active within

online social networks and communities. In consideration of this potential sampling bias, the generalizability of findings to Black college students, who are not active in any student organizations or engaged in online social media forums, may not be appropriate.

Next, transgender identity was incorrectly categorized under the label of sexual orientation, instead of accurately recognized as a form of gender expression. One of the participants left a comment in an open dialogue box to inform the primary investigator of this error. Consequently, it is unclear if some of the participants would have self-identified differently if given the option of mutual inclusive gender and sexual orientation categories. It is hoped that by noting this design flaw, future researchers will employ even more culturally sensitive demographic measures.

A final limitation may be the basic assumption that the measures accurately and fully measure what was intended. Indeed findings could be due in part to the novelty and limited scope of the measures. For example, this study made use of one of the first quantitative measures of racial microaggressions (Nadal, 2010) to measure how racial microaggressions impact Black college students' persistence and retention within predominately White institutions. A few participants left comments at the end of the survey, providing supplemental information regarding their perceived experiences with racial microaggressions. One participant noted "...a lot of the discomfort I feel in my school comes not only from my struggles to fit in with the largely Caucasian student body, but also with the Black students on campus." Another participant remarked that "professors of color are highly underrepresented [at her institution] and expectations of students are not culturally [inclusive to diverse learning or communication styles]." This feedback highlights the need for more qualitative and quantitative research studies that deepen our understanding of the lived racial reality of Black college students. Similarly, the

cognitive-emotional regulation questionnaire was used with this population for the first time. To date, no studies have empirically examined the self-regulation strategies in relation to investigate this phenomenon among Black college students. As a consequence, the existing measures may not capture the full complexity of self-regulation strategies in reaction to race-based stressors.

The aforementioned limitations indicate that the results should be interpreted with caution. Replication studies are necessary to confirm that the results are generalizable to a broader population of Black college students. While the study results provide preliminary perspective about the types of strategies Black college use to cope with racial stressors, more information is needed to further understand this phenomenon.

Future Implications & Conclusion

The evolving demographic diversity in the United States springs forth an era characterized by increased awareness of the value of cross-cultural perspectives. Such trends and transitions contribute to the shaping of American higher education. This study utilized a quantitative survey method to explore (a) how Black students navigate microaggressive and culturally incongruent environments in predominately White colleges, (b) the role of social support in buffering their experiences, and (c) various self-regulatory styles employed in reaction to the academic climate. While the results begin to answer some of the aforementioned inquiries, additional information is required to further identify factors that promote positive college student development, culturally congruent college milieus and the diversification of the academy.

Indeed, findings confirm that racial microaggressions are implicated as agents of destruction in academic, personal-emotional, and social adjustment as well as institutional attachment for Black college students. Racial microaggressions have been recognized as a reason

for Black students deciding to drop a course, change majors, or transfer institutions (Solórzano, Ceja, Yosso, 2009). Many contemporary scholars have called attention to the physical and psychological health, academic, social, and institutional access disparities associated with racial microaggressions (Roksa et al., 2007; Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000) and cultural incongruence (Cabrera et al., 1999; Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1999; Santos et al., 2007). This study propels the notion that students, who sense college cultural congruence, are more likely to report higher adjustment within their college institutions. Consequently, for Black students who perceive their college institution to be less culturally congruent or inclusive, they were more likely to endorse poorer student adjustment outcomes, such as feeling less connected to the institution, dissatisfied with the curriculum, decreased motivation related to academic persistence, more isolated, homesick, depressed, anxious, fatigued, and pessimistic.

Perhaps not surprising given the insidious and universal nature of subtle racism, every one of the participants endorsed some experience with racial microaggressions during the past six months. Oftentimes, perpetrators of microaggressions are unaware of their compliance in maintaining subtle forms of racism (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). This research and additional studies will increase the public consciousness regarding the perpetuation and impact of microaggressions. Raising critical awareness serves to dispel the ambiguity inherent in microaggressive exchanges that can result in added pressure for Black students to identify and confront microaggressions as they occur (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Watkins, Labarrie, Appio, 2010). Future research is also critical in exposing strategies to effectively combat the embedded and systemic nature of racial microaggressions, and to promote college cultural congruence for students from diverse backgrounds within collegiate institutions.

There are a number of recommendations to combat microaggressions and create culturally inclusive college atmospheres. First and foremost, it is fundamental that institutional leaders address various forms of diversity: (1) structural diversity – ensuring a diverse demographic make-up of the members of the institution; (2) diversity initiatives – incorporating culturally conscious curriculum and programming in support of multicultural student centers, clubs, and organizations; and (3) diverse interactions – facilitating individual and group interracial interactions (Milem, 2003). In order to fully realize the advantages of a diverse student body, institutions must continually develop improved methods for attracting, retaining, and promoting inclusion among students from socio-culturally variant backgrounds.

Understandably, Black students report feeling more at ease and safe within cultural inclusive spaces on campus, punctuated by visibility and integration of faculty, staff, and students of color (Watkins, Labarrie, & Appio, 2010). Results of this study reveal that linking Black students into satisfying social support networks significantly enhances their college development and adjustment. Such benefits task parents, administrators, faculty, and staff in the role of creating opportunities for leadership, interaction, and engagement with students from diverse backgrounds (Santos, Ortiz, Morales, & Rosales, 2007).

Developing culturally inclusive spaces at predominately White institutions is central to student engagement and college adjustment. Moreover, culturally inclusive spaces should reflect a welcoming climate where cross-cultural dialogues about race and culture are embraced, and the inevitable incidence of microaggressions are acknowledged and non-defensively addressed. Academic administrators must develop culturally inclusive curriculums that facilitate the development of multicultural awareness, knowledge and skills (Sue & Sue, 2010). To that end,

institutions must continually evaluate multicultural training programs and initiatives to assure the cultural competence of administrators, faculty, and staff (Bourke, 2010).

Findings have particular significance for college mental health practitioners. In order to best serve Black college students, therapists must be aware of their own potential to inadvertently perpetuate microaggressions or cultural incongruence. For instance, if all or the majority of the staff is White, the counseling center may represent another campus space where Black college students perceive they are not welcome. Consequently, it is essential that threads of multicultural inclusivity be strewn throughout outreach efforts, the counseling center's physical presence, and therapeutic approaches.

First, clinicians must be able to conduct thorough diagnostic interviews and assessment in order to individualize treatments and avoid lumping Black clients into one homogenous group. In particular, the study demonstrated that the influence of multiple social identities, such as gender, sexual orientation, and age can influence the experience of and response to racial stressors. Second, due to the ambiguous nature of microaggressions and cognitive expense, clinicians are in a unique position to provide support and help Black clients develop adaptive self-regulation techniques to navigate the stress of facing racial microaggressions and cultural incongruence. While, within group differences account for differing expressions and reactions to racial stressors, it remains clear that the majority of Black college encounter microaggressions within predominately White college settings. It is critical that mental health providers be prepared to address the diverse racial experience of Black college students and to clearly identify themselves as allies in the mission to promote cultural inclusivity.

Previous scholarship has noted that Black students are better equipped for educational demands and stressors when they are socially integrated within the scholastic environment

(Astin, 1984; Reynolds, Sneva, & Beehler, 2010). Developing on-campus allies can reinforce Black students' sense of acceptance and institutional attachment. Intergroup anxieties and tensions are reduced by increasing interracial contacts and effective facilitation of difficult dialogues of race and culture (Chang, 1999). While attempting to address the disparity in opportunities for students of color, government programs have offered financial initiatives for colleges and universities to increase the diversity of their student body and faculty; however, less attention has been paid to the internal individual mechanisms and systemic institutional factors that contribute to culturally-inclusive campus climates (Bourke, 2010).

This study contributes to the understudied scholarship on self-regulation strategies and race-based stressors. As the first study of its kind, the findings provide preliminary insight into the types of self-regulation that Black college students employ. The unexpected results indicate that future research is needed to continue to advance knowledge with this complex phenomenon. Although participants used all nine of the proposed self-regulation strategies, only three demonstrated a significant relationship with college student adjustment. None of the regulation strategies demonstrated a buffering effect between the relationship of racial microaggressions, college cultural congruence, and college student adjustment. The outcome of this study highlights a depth of information that remains unknown.

The goal of this investigation was to continue the advocacy articulated by Sue (2010) "to make the invisible visible" in order to empower Black students to confront racial and ethnic based, embedded beliefs and behaviors. A cultural evolution within academic milieus will result in more successful upward mobility for an increasingly diverse generation of students entering into the global workplace (Stanley, 2006; Watkins, LaBarrie, Appio, 2010). These findings add to the emerging literature on the promotion of culturally congruent college environments, in

tandem with the advancement of the movement to diversify U.S. college institutions. Extension of the current investigation is paramount to bolstering the understanding of mitigating factors that promote resilience among Black students in college institutions, and that expand the cultural landscape in higher education. Although a preliminary step, this study provides a lens into how some Black students may appear well-adjusted, despite the unique challenges of combating racial-cultural stressors. To gain further insight about factors that cultivate resiliency and buffer against negative outcomes, more empirical investigation and continual dialogue are essential.

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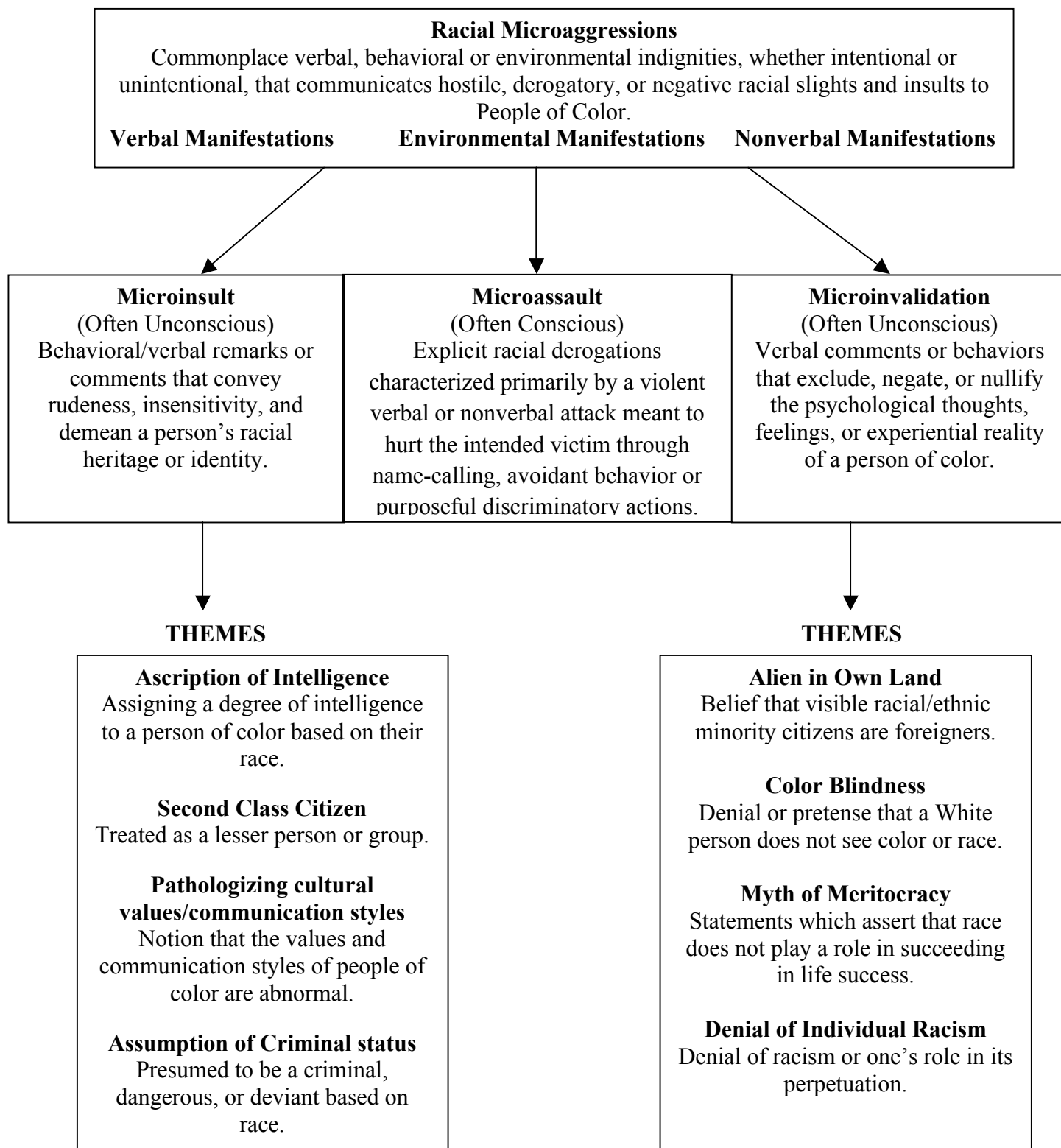
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Appendix A. Figure 2.1: Racial Microaggressions Taxonomy



Source: Sue (2010).

Appendix B. Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions:

1. Sex: _____ Female _____ Male

2. Age: _____

3. Race or Ethnicity (*please check all that apply*):

Race:

_____ Black
 _____ Asian
 _____ Hispanic or Latino/a
 _____ White
 _____ Native American

Ethnic Background (if Black):

_____ African
 _____ African American
 _____ West Indian/ Caribbean
 _____ Hispanic or Latino/a
 _____ Bi or Multi racial/Multiethnic
 _____ Other (please specify: _____)

4. Sexual Orientation:

_____ Bisexual
 _____ Heterosexual
 _____ Gay or Lesbian
 _____ Transgender
 _____ Other (please specify: _____)

5. A. Approximate annual family household income:

_____ Less than \$15,000	_____ \$51,000 – \$70,999
_____ \$15,000 – \$25,000	_____ \$ 71,000 – \$100,000
_____ \$26,000 – \$35,000	_____ more than \$100,000
_____ \$36,000 – \$50,999	

6. Religious/Spiritual Affiliation:

_____ No religious affiliation	_____ Methodist
_____ Christian	_____ Muslim
_____ Buddhist	_____ Non-denominational
_____ Catholic	_____ Presbyterian
_____ Episcopalian	_____ Other (please specify: _____)
_____ Jewish	
_____ Lutheran	

7. Academic Year:

_____ First Year Student
 _____ Sophomore
 _____ Junior
 _____ Senior
 _____ Graduate Student

**Appendix C. Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale
(REMS; Nadal, 2010)**

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**.

1 = I did not experience this event.

2 = I did experience this event.

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. A [*professor or classmate*] 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.
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 foods 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. A [*professor, advisor, or classmate*] treated me differently than White [*classmates*].
45. Someone assumed that I speak similar languages to other people in my race.

**Appendix D. Cultural Congruity Scale
(CCS; Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996)**

For each of the following items, indicate the extent to which you have experienced the feeling or situation at school. Use the following ratings:

Not at all				A Great Deal
1	2	3	4	5

- 1. I feel that I have to change myself to fit in at school.
- 2. I try not to show the parts of me that are “ethnically” based.
- 3. I often feel like a chameleon, having to change myself depending on the ethnicity of the person I am with at school.
- 4. I feel that my ethnicity is incompatible with other students.
- 5. I can talk to my friends at school about my family and culture.
- 6. I feel I am leaving my family values behind by going to college.
- 7. My ethnic values are in conflict with what is expected from school.
- 8. I can talk to my family about my friends from school.
- 9. I feel that my language and/or appearance make it hard for me to fit in with other students.
- 10. My family and school values often conflict.
- 11. I feel accepted at school as an ethnic minority.
- 12. As an ethnic minority, I feel as if I belong on this campus.
- 13. I can talk to my family about my struggles and concerns at school.

**Appendix E. The Cognitive Emotional Regulation Questionnaire – Short
(CERQ – Short; Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006)**

I usually don't do this at all

1

2

3

4

I usually do this a lot

1. I feel that I am the one who is responsible for what has happened.
2. I think that basically the cause must lie within myself.
3. I think that I have to accept that this has happened.
4. I think that I have to accept the situation.
5. I often think about how I feel about what I have experienced.
6. I am preoccupied with what I think and feel about what I have experienced.
7. I think of pleasant things that have nothing to do with it.
8. I think of something nice instead of what has happened.
9. I think about how to change the situation.
10. I think about a plan of what I can do best.
11. I think I can learn something from the situation.
12. I think that I can become a stronger person as a result of what has happened.
13. I think that it hasn't been too bad compared to other things.
14. I tell myself that there are worse things in life.
15. I keep thinking about how terrible it is what I have experienced.
16. I continually think how horrible the situation has been.
17. I feel that others are responsible for what has happened.
18. I feel that basically the cause lies with others.

**Appendix G. The Multi-Dimensional Support Scale
(MDSS; Winefield, Winefield, & Tiggemann, 1992)**

Below are some questions about the kind of help and support you have available to you in coping with your life at present. The questions refer to three different groups of people who might have been providing support to you IN THE LAST MONTH. For each item, please circle the alternative which shows your answer. (*Note: the response alternatives are only shown here for the first question*)

A. Firstly, think of your family and close friends, especially the 2 -3 who are most important to you.

1. How often did they really listen to you when you talked about your concerns or problems?
NEVER SOMETIMES OFTEN USUALLY OR ALWAYS
and would you have liked them to do this
MORE OFTEN LESS OFTEN IT WAS JUST RIGHT
2. How often did you feel that they were really trying to understand your problems?
3. How often did they really make you feel loved?
4. How often did they help you in practical ways, like doing things for you or lending you money?
5. How often did they answer your questions or give you advice about how to solve your problems?
6. How often could you use them as examples of how to deal with your problems?

B. Now, think of 2-3 of your college aged peers and classmates.

1. How often did they really listen to you when you talked about your concerns or problems?
2. How often did you feel that they were really trying to understand your problems?
3. How often did they help you in practical ways, like doing things for you or lending you money?
4. How often did they answer your questions or give you advice about how to solve your problems?
5. How often could you use them as examples of how to deal with your problems?

C. Lastly, think of the people in some sort of authority over you. As a *full-time student*, it means your professors, instructors, and teaching assistants. Depending on which ones are relevant for you, answer for the 2-3 that you see most.

1. How often did they really listen to you when you talked about your concerns or problems?
2. How often did you feel that they were really trying to understand your problems?
3. How often did they fulfill their responsibilities towards you in helpful practical ways?
4. How often did they answer your questions or give you advice about how to solve your problems?
5. How often could you use them as examples of how to deal with your problems?

Appendix H. Invitation to Participate in the Study

Dear Potential Participant:

My name is Nicole Watkins and I am a doctoral student in the counseling psychology program at Teachers College, Columbia University. I am recruiting college students who identify as **African American or Black** to participate in an online study that examines students' experiences of subtle racism in an academic environment and its impact on student adjustment. The survey should last approximately 30 minutes and will be accessible through a secure online website. Your participation is completely voluntary and any information you share will be anonymous and confidential.

If you are interested in participating please click on the following link or cut and paste it into your web browser [*survey monkey website link*]. The link will direct you to a description of the study and ask for your consent to participate.

Your answers will broaden our understanding of the experiences of African American/Black college students.

If you would like any more information please feel free to contact me anytime via e-mail (nlw2108@columbia.edu). Also, please forward this survey to any of your eligible friends or listservs.

Thank you!

Nicole L. Watkins, M.A., Primary Investigator
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Teachers College, Columbia University