

WE GON' BE ALRIGHT: RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS AND RESILIENCE IN
AFRICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS ATTENDING A PRIMARILY WHITE
INSTITUTION

By

Kristen J. Mills

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ABSTRACT

WE GON' BE ALRIGHT: RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS AND RESILIENCE IN AFRICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS ATTENDING A PRIMARILY WHITE INSTITUTION

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African American students face racial microaggressions in education, particularly on predominantly White campuses (Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007). Racial microaggressions are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273).” Limited literature on African American students’ experiences of racial microaggressions address students’ responses to these experiences and ensuing perceived impacts. Furthermore, to date there are limited studies examining students’ resilience in relation to their experiences with racial microaggressions at a predominantly white institution (PWI). Using a phenomenological design and resilience theory as a framework, this study investigates the phenomena of racial microaggressions, perceived impacts, and subsequent resilience in African American college students attending a PWI. Four focus group interviews were conducted with African American male and female sophomores, juniors, and seniors attending a large Midwestern PWI. Findings indicated that students experienced environmental and non-environmental racial microaggressions in various contexts at the university. Students responded in a number of ways and reported academic and personal perceived impacts. Several protective factors and adaptations were identified that contributed to their resilience. Implications for future theory, research, and practice related to the research findings are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Enrollment in post-secondary educational institutions has increased in recent years. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; 2011), in 2009, 62.3% of college students were White as compared to 14.3% Black, 12.5% Hispanic, 6.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 3.4% Nonresident alien. This mirrored the racial and ethnic composition in the United States in 2009, where 76.9% of the population aged 18 to 24 were White in comparison to 15.4% Black¹, 18.1% Hispanic origin (may be any race) and 4.4% Asian/Pacific Islander (Department of Commerce, 2011). While enrollment rates and population statistics are fairly close, there are racial/ethnic disparities in degree attainment. A total of 17% of Black students that enrolled in postsecondary education in 2003-2004, received degrees by June 2009 as compared to 46% Asian students, and 36% White students. Hispanic (17%) and American Indian/Alaskan Native (14%) students also had low degree attainment. This pattern of degree attainment among racial/ethnic groups was consistent for the attainment of any type of postsecondary degree (i.e., certificate, associate's, or bachelor's; NCES, 2012b). Education is human capital (Lange & Topel, 2006) and can serve as a gateway to social mobility (Haveman & Smeeding, 2006). Therefore, by promoting positive educational environments and academic achievement, one can potentially affect an array of outcomes such as occupational status, income, wealth, and health (Haveman & Smeeding, 2006; Ross & Wu, 1995).

Research has suggested that experiences of students of color at predominantly White institutions (PWI) are notably different from the experiences of White students (Reason, 2009). Students of color at PWIs have reported experiences of subtle and overt racism, including racial

¹ The terms "Black" and "African American" are used interchangeably and are inclusive of those who identify as Black, African American, or of African ancestry in the United States context.

microaggressions (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Rankin & Reason, 2005). Sue and colleagues (2007) defined microaggressions as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (p. 273). Examples of racial microaggressions include low expectations of intellect, avoidant behavior, colorblindness, and invalidations of one’s experiences (Sue et al., 2007). For students of color, racism (e.g., low expectations from faculty and a lack of support from faculty) has been shown to negatively impact academic performance by disrupting various academic opportunities (e.g., seeking help from professors, contributing to class discussions) and subsequently negatively affecting students’ later ability to achieve (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2010). Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) found that African American students experience racial microaggressions in the classroom such as feeling invisible, ongoing negative interactions with faculty, experiencing racial segregation in in-class study groups, and negative assumptions of others regarding how African Americans entered the university. These experiences of microaggressions affected African American students’ academic performance, and were associated with dropping classes, changing majors, or leaving the university. In contrast, internal factors such as self-concept, personal motivation, and aspiration for success may be protective factors, facilitating academic performance of African American college students at a PWI. Specifically, African American students reported high levels of self-concept, personal motivation, and aspiration as the primary factors associated with “surviving” at a PWI (Dorsey & Jackson, 1995).

Resilience is a personal factor that has been associated with academic achievement. Masten (2001) defines resilience as “phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development” (p. 228). Intrapersonal resilience factors as

measured by the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (e.g., tenacity, tolerance of stress and negative emotion, positive acceptance of change, control, and spirituality) have been found to predict cumulative grade point average, aptitude, and achievement in a sample of primarily Caucasian (92.7%) college students (Hartley, 2011). It has been noted that as a construct resilience is a multidimensional and developmental process where individual strategies for building resilience may vary (Fraser 2004; Newman, 2005). According to Masten (2007), “most developmental research has focused on resilience in individuals, although the concept can also be applied to the systems in which individual development is embedded” (p.923). To date, resilience literature regarding African American students has focused on younger populations (Cunningham & Swanson, 2010; Griffin & Allen, 2006; Miller & MacIntosh, 1999; Wadsworth & Decarlo Santiago, 2008; Williams & Bryan, 2013). There is a gap in the literature regarding how resilience affects academic achievement among African American college students. As African American college students attending a predominantly White institution are subject to varying degrees of risk or adversity (e.g., racial microaggressions), it is useful to identify protective factors (e.g., resilience) that may serve to buffer risk and promote academic achievement.

Statement of the Problem

Access to postsecondary education and degree attainment for students of color, particularly African Americans, remain low (Cohen & Nee, 2000). African American students are disproportionally represented in disadvantaged socio-economic groups (NCES, 2003) which hinder their opportunities for access to postsecondary institutions (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hurtado, Kurowski, Inkelas, Briggs, & Rhee, 1997). Further, African Americans have faced racial discrimination in education, particularly on predominantly White campuses (Feagin &

Sikes, 1995; Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007). Environmental factors such as negative campus racial climate have been shown to negatively affect African American students' academic performance and subsequent degree attainment (Sedlacek, 1999).

Resilience may act as a buffer against the negative effects of racial microaggressions for African American college students. Research on resilience has largely utilized child and adolescent populations (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker 2000). Overall, there are few studies that examine the use of resilience as a means of buffering the relationship between racial and ethnic microaggressions and academic achievement, particularly with African American college students attending a predominantly White institution. It is projected that persons of color will become the numerical majority of the total population by 2045 with African Americans accounting for 12.9% of that population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Given the increasing population of persons of color, exploring how contextual factors and protective factors are associated with academic performance in this population is increasingly important. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to examine experiences of racial microaggressions, resilience, and academic performance for African American college students attending a predominantly White institution (PWI). The research questions are: *1) How do African American college students attending a predominantly White institution experience racial microaggressions?; (2) How do African American college students attending a predominantly White institution perceive the impact of racial microaggressions on their academic performance?; and (3) How do African American college students attending a predominantly White institution adapt or overcome adversities stemming from racial microaggressions?* Findings may provide direction for education researchers, practitioners, and staff in higher education institutions regarding programs

and interventions to support the retention, academic performance, and degree attainment of this growing population of students.

The theoretical framework for the current study is resilience theory. This framework emphasizes the interaction of three main personal and/or environmental components - risk factors, protective factors, and positive adaptations - and its effect on a given outcome.

Resilience theory is applied to understand African American students' holistic experience of racial microaggressions at a PWI, including the perceived academic impact of these microaggressions and experiences overcoming adversities associated with these microaggressions. In this study, discussions of racial microaggressions are anticipated to reveal risk factors, discussions of perceived academic impact are anticipated to reveal both risk and protective factors, and discussions of experiences overcoming these microaggressions are anticipated to reveal protective factors and positive adaptations.

While many studies include both African American male and female college students in the examination of racial microaggressions, there is sparse literature that specifically examines both racial and gender microaggressions within this population. Gender microaggressions may have comparable effects to racial microaggressions on individuals (Sue et al., 2007). A single study conducted by McCabe (2009) examined racial and gender microaggressions in Black, Latino/a and White students and found that Black men reported more interactions with campus and local police and described being perceived as threatening, being ignored, and others ascribing criminal status to them whereas Black women experienced more frequent microaggressions in the classroom such as being treated as the representative of their race and gender, and being disregarded during discussions. Although the current study focuses on

primarily on racial microaggressions, it will also acknowledge and attend to possible gender microaggressions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

African Americans in Education

There has been a historical preoccupation with “othering” in the United States dating back to slavery. This concerted effort was used to enforce a social hierarchy placing minority groups beneath European Americans (Roediger, 2007; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Congruently, the education system has largely been concerned with othering. Education for African Americans was deemed unlawful in multiple states across the nation starting with the South Carolina Act of 1740 (Educational Broadcasting Corporation, 2004). It was not until 1865, following the Emancipation Proclamation, the passing of the Thirteenth Amendment, that the Freedmen’s Bureau was established to manage education for freed African Americans (Brown & Davis, 2001). These freedman’s schools served to maintain a servant class and continued to provide African American students with resources of lesser quality than those used by their White peers (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Efforts were made to educate African American students by maintaining small schools or building schools in churches (PBS & WGBH Educational Foundation, 2014). There were few Northern schools that admitted African American students (e.g., Oberlin College; Brown and Davis, 2001). Black colleges and universities were also established by missionaries, abolitionists, and educators. The Morrill Acts aided in providing higher education to African Americans. The first act in 1873 provided federal funding to state-level public education while the second (1890) mandated that federal funding was also provided to institutions that had separate but equal facilities for African American students (Brown, 2002). Here, separate but equal refers to a dual education system in which White Americans and African Americans were segregated. The education system operated under the premise that races were being offered equal

services or opportunities without needing to be integrated. However, there were discrepancies in the amount and quality of services and opportunities being offered to each race. The resultant institutions of the Morrill Acts that served African American students collectively became known as “the 1890 institutions” (Brown, 2002). The colleges and universities provided access to higher education, a culture-specific pedagogy, and a safer environment for students. Initially, Black colleges and universities were vested in providing students with skills to become domestic workers rather than providing advanced curricula (Fleming, 1984). However, this emphasis shifted to an industrial and liberal arts focus under the influence of leaders such as W.E.B. DuBois who proposed an elite group known as the talented tenth and Booker T. Washington who emphasized vocational training (Brown, Donahoo, & Bertrand, 2001).

The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case had major implications for the dual education system (Phillips, 2004). This case argued against separate but equal institutions that had previously been sanctioned constitutional by the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case. These separate but equal institutions reflected the racialized climate in the U.S. At that time, it was clear that African American students and teachers did not have access to the same resources as their White peers. The ruling of the *Brown v. Board of Education* case rendered separate but equal education unconstitutional and created policy for the desegregation of public schools. While this was viewed as a great accomplishment among Black political leaders (Phillips, 2004) the underlying motives of some White political leaders did not shift (Roberts and Andrews, 2013). As a result, a number of African American educators were unable to find employment in desegregated schools, further inhibiting African Americans (Roberts and Andrews, 2013). Later, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which protected constitutional rights in public education, and the Higher Education Act of 1965, which strengthened educational resources in colleges and

universities and provided financial assistance to students, aided in improving education for African American students.

White Americans, as the dominant group in the United States, ultimately influenced curricula development in education. Curricula are used by administrators and instructors to identify the content, level of rigor, and expectations for which students and instructors are held accountable. With regard to curricula, the dominant group (i.e., White males or White Americans more generally) is able control what is taught to others, whose histories are represented in educational contexts, and standards for assessment. This allows for the maintenance of the ideologies and consequently limits the autonomy and influence that minority groups (e.g., African Americans) have over curricula and assessments. Minority groups must master the exemplars of the dominant group in order to excel academically and perform well on scholastic assessments. Scholastic assessments are indicative of academic achievement for students and are utilized at the local (e.g., teacher-designed math test), state (e.g., Michigan Educational Assessment Program), and national (e.g., SAT Reasoning Test or ACT) levels. If minority groups do not master the knowledge informed by the dominant group their opportunities for academic success may be negatively affected. While historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and some primary and secondary schools are able to provide a more culturally-specific pedagogy, the curricula must also meet standards of other institutions.

In the U.S., it is now expected for students to attend primary and secondary school. Public schools remain the primary venue in which students gain access to education; however, some students attend other schools (e.g., charter, private, or home) (NCES, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). It is important to note that the quality of public schools as compared to others can differ greatly with regard to resources (e.g., supplies, space, personnel). To add, this quality can also

differ widely from other public schools based on location (e.g., urban versus suburban). Access to education may not be limited for those attending primary and secondary schools; however there may be multiple limitations to accessing other institutions such as alternative education programs, vocational and technical schools, and postsecondary schools (e.g., colleges and universities). Access to these institutions may be limited via factors such as admissions criteria (e.g., cut-off points for grade point average or standardized test scores) and/or cost of attendance that ultimately favor one group over others (Perna, 2006). Enrollment of minority groups in postsecondary institutions has increased and mirrors that of population statistics (NCES, 2012); however, racial and ethnic disparities exist in the completion of degree programs.

According to Smedley & Smedley (2005) "... social race remains a significant predictor of which groups have greater access to societal goods and resources and which groups face barriers – both historically and in the contemporary context – to full inclusion" (p. 22). African Americans have been constantly subjected to oppression stemming from the exercise of dominance and the assertion of difference and subsequent racism and classism. An evolving social context also contributes to this cycle. Consequently, there are large disparities between Whites and minority groups – specifically African Americans - in education. Expressions of racism and discrimination have shifted from blatant expression to more covert forms making it increasingly difficult to identify acts in educational contexts that contribute to the cycle of oppression. This may be especially relevant for African American students attending a PWI where racial microaggressions, or insults directed toward people of color, can be enacted by White peers who account for the majority of the student population and/or White faculty who account for the majority of the faculty population (NCES, 2012b, 2014).

Microaggressions

Researchers have provided multiple definitions of microaggressions. However, each working definition contains subtle oppression as a fundamental aspect. Originally, Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, and Willis (1978) defined microaggressions as “subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are ‘put downs’ of blacks by offenders” (pg. 66; as cited in Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000). Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso later defined microaggressions as “subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously” (p. 60). In sync with this definition, Sue et al (2007) defined microaggressions as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (p. 273). There are three forms of microaggressions: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. Each form of microaggressions can be impacted by macrolevel factors called environmental microaggressions (e.g., economy, policies, laws, community/cultural influences; Wong, Derthick, David, Saw, & Okazaki, 2014).

Microassaults

Microassaults are overt behaviors intended to harm or belittle an individual (Sue et al., 2007). Microassaults can be verbal or nonverbal in nature. They can be recognized as “old-fashioned” expressions of racism. These deliberate, explicit acts were commonplace in the United States, but are unacceptable in modern society. Examples include referring or speaking to an individual using racial slurs (e.g., coon or beaner), avoiding contact, or purposely discriminating (e.g., providing substandard service or following the individual around in a store). Because these behaviors are no longer deemed acceptable, this type of microaggression typically

occurs in settings that offer the offender some degree of anonymity. In other words, the offender has to feel safe committing the microassault.

Sue et al. (2007) assert that microassaults only occur publicly when the offender loses control or feels safe. Microassaults are less likely to occur compared to decades ago; however there have been recent public examples. For instance, in 2007 “no nigger’s please” was written on a student’s door, “nigger” was written on the wall of a freshman dormitory, and a black doll was found hanging by a noose in a chemistry laboratory at Michigan State University. A more recent example occurred in 2014 where Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling was recorded telling his partner who is Afro-Latina not to take pictures with minorities. He also told her that her association with Black people bothered him, that she can love Black people privately, and not to bring Black people to his games. These incidents demonstrate the conscious behavior intended to hurt the target using nonverbal and verbal attacks. While microassaults are easier to identify, other forms of microaggressions can be less clear.

Microinsults

Microinsults are “characterized by communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person’s racial heritage or identity” and can be verbal or nonverbal (Sue et al., 2007, p. 274). These communications are often unconscious to the offender. However, the demeaning message is clearly transmitted to the targeted person or group. The context of the microinsult is important as the message itself may not be an aggression per se. Unlike microassaults, microinsults are difficult to identify because they may occur consciously or unconsciously and harm caused to the target can be intentional or unintentional. Following the occurrence of a microinsult, the offender may be able to provide a seemingly rational explanation for their behavior. An example of a verbal microassault is when a student of color is

asked “Did you write this?” with regard to an essay assignment. The underlying message may suggest that the students of color are not able to produce high quality work. An example of a non-verbal microinsult is when the opinion of a person of color is overlooked during discussion by White peers. The underlying message here may suggest that the contribution of the person of color is not valued.

Microinvalidations

Microinvalidations are “characterized by communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of a person of color” and are often unconscious (Sue et al., 2007, p. 274). Examples include statements such as “I don’t see color,” “We are in a post-racial society,” or telling a person of color he or she is overreacting when discussing an experience with peers of another race that was perceived to have racial undertones. These statements may not be intended to cause harm; however, they negate the experience or racial reality of the person of color. Similar to microinsults, microinvalidations may be difficult to identify because the offender may provide a seemingly rational, nonbiased explanation for the communication.

Categories of microaggressions

Sue et al. (2007) identified nine categories of microaggressions with distinct themes (see Table 1). More recently, Nadal (2011) generated a 6-factor model of racial and ethnic microaggressions using Sue et al.’s (2007) taxonomy and subsequent research studies to generate items. The components are similar to the themes identified by Sue (2007); however, the components are not classified as microassaults, microinsults, or microinvalidations. Nadal’s (2011) components included: 1) assumptions of inferiority (e.g., assuming lesser intelligence), 2) second-class citizen and assumptions of criminality (e.g., avoiding eye contact or clutching purse

or wallet) , 3) microinvalidations (e.g., being told that people should not think about race anymore), 4) exoticization/assumptions of similarity (e.g., assuming one speaks a language other than English or being told that all people of a race look the same), 5) environmental microaggressions (e.g., not seeing people of a race in prominent positions), and 6) workplace and school microaggressions (e.g., being treated differently than White co-workers or assuming one's work would be inferior to people of other racial groups). Overall, microaggressions span several categories or themes which may broaden over time.

Table 1.

Categories of Microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007)

Type	Theme	Definition
Microassaults	Environmental	Assaults, insults, or invalidations that occur a systemic or environmental level
Microinsults	Environmental	Assaults, insults, or invalidations that occur a systemic or environmental level
	Ascription of intelligence	Assigning intelligence based on race
	Second class citizen	Being treated as a lesser person or group based on race
	Pathologizing cultural values/communication styles	Considering values and communications styles as abnormal
Microinvalidations	Assumption of criminal status	Assigning criminal status based on race
	Environmental	Are assaults, insults, or invalidations that occur a systemic or environmental level
	Alien in own land	Treating racial/ethnic minorities as foreigners
	Color-blindness	Stating that one does not see color or race
	Myth of meritocracy	Achievement is dependent solely upon ability
	Denial of racism	Claiming oneself is not a racist

Identifying Microaggressions

As stated above, microaggressions can be expressed consciously or unconsciously and may be verbal or nonverbal. In addition, the offender may be able to provide a seemingly rational, unbiased explanation for the microaggression. The expression of a microaggression in an indirect or rational way can make it difficult for the offender or the offended to acknowledge its occurrence. Sue et al. (2007) advanced four dilemmas in identifying or interpreting a behavior as microaggressive.

The first dilemma is clash of racial realities, which involves differential perceptions of race, its significance, and its manifestation in daily life among White Americans and people of color (POC). In other words, POC experience a different reality than the majority culture due to their race. POC may feel widely discriminated against while White Americans feel that racial equality has been achieved. For example, individuals of all races now have access to postsecondary institutions; however, access to these institutions may be influenced via factors such as admissions criteria (e.g., standardized test scores), and/or cost of attendance while retention may be influenced by financial aid/support and/or culturally biased courses that favor one group over others.

The second dilemma is invisibility of unintentional expressions of bias, which involves the offender's unconscious expression of bias that may not appear prejudiced. Here, the offender does not believe he or she has acted in a biased manner, especially intentionally, and therefore preserves their non-racist self-image. Failing to acknowledge behaviors as biased reinforces racist traditions. For example, law enforcement officers may be more likely to profile students of color, particularly males, in response to a call or incident on campus as compared to other students. In this case, students may feel singled out because of their race reflecting an

assumption of criminality while the officers may feel that they are simply trying to do the best job.

The next dilemma is perceived minimal harm of racial microaggressions. This implies that the victim is overreacting and the act is not damaging in any way. This discounts the psychological harm experienced by POC as a result of the microaggression. The final dilemma is the catch-22 of responding to microaggressions. This involves determining whether a microaggression occurred, determining how to react and why, and determining the implications of the reaction. Potential outcomes may influence the choice and manner in which to react while the actual result may be equally helpful or damaging. For example, a student may experience a microaggressive act from a professor. The student must first determine whether it occurred, then determine how to react. This may involve sorting out feelings and deciding which response is appropriate for the context (e.g., saying something in front of the class, waiting until after class, going to office hours, or reporting it to administration). The student may next sort through potential outcomes of such action (e.g., failing the course or being ignored) and whether a response would be helpful or damaging. This process can also occur for a classmate that witnesses the act. Overall, this process is full of uncertainty.

Racial Microaggressions toward African Americans in Education

Race has been a significant factor in U.S. history and education specifically. Therefore, racism is a valid concern for students of color. Research on experiences of African American students attending PWIs is growing. Several studies support the notion that racism and discrimination is common and occurs within the university context (Dorsey & Jackson, 1995; Douglas, 1998; Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Harwood, Browne Hunt, Mendenhall & Lewis, 2012; McCabe, 2009; Reynolds, Sneva, & Beehler, 2010). Students report an array of experiences

such as overall unequal treatment, racial slurs written in shared spaces (Harwood, Browne Hunt, Mendenhall & Lewis, 2012), discrimination, assaults, fear of safety (D'Augelli & Hersberger 1993), vandalism of personal property (Douglas, 1998), culture shock, hostility, being blamed for problems on campus (Feagin & Sikes, 1995) and general discomfort on campus (McCabe, 2009). Some experiences, however, are more common than others. For instance, students commonly report experiencing assumptions of criminality based on their race. In examining racial and gender microaggressions in Black, Latino/a and White students, McCabe (2009) found that Black men reported more interactions with campus and local police and described being perceived as threatening, being ignored, and others ascribing criminal status to them. In addition, Torres, Driscoll, and Burrow (2010) found that African American students reported assumptions of criminality/second-class citizen as a major theme of race-related barriers at a PWI.

Another frequent experience is social isolation in response to racism or discrimination on predominantly white campuses (Dorsey & Jackson, 1995; Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Harwood, Browne Hunt, Mendenhall & Lewis, 2012; McCabe, 2009; Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010). For example, in a sample of 86 African American juniors and seniors attending a PWI, Dorsey and Jackson (1995) found that students reported sociocultural isolation, with 62% of students feeling that the university did not sufficiently address racism and discrimination on campus. There is some indication that social isolation may be voluntary as a result of experiencing racial microaggressions. For instance, students have posited that voluntary social isolation may be due to the fact that racial separation is not enforced but encouraged by factors such as comfort with one's racial group, socializing by membership to organizations or programs, and being friends with members or other racial groups but having limited social interactions (Douglas, 1998). Nonetheless, this isolation is considered limiting (Douglas, 1998). Such isolation limits

opportunities for African American students to form connections with peers in other racial groups that account for the majority of the student population at PWIs.

Other microaggressive experiences among African American college students include being stared at, verbal insults, bad service and rude behaviors (e.g., being avoided or ignored; Douglas, 1998; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Byslma, 2003; Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010). For instance, Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, and Byslma (2003) examined experiences and responses of everyday racism in a sample of 51 African American sophomores, juniors, and seniors at a Northeastern PWI. Participants reported an average of 1.24 incidents labeled probably or definitely racist, .51 incidents on average labeled probably not prejudiced but perhaps interpreted that way, and .14 on average labeled uncertain over a two week period demonstrating the relative ambiguity in determining whether an act is racist or microaggressive. Participants identified four types of incidents that were described as subtle and overt. These included staring suspiciously or glaringly (36%), verbal (24%; e.g., racial slurs, culturally/interpersonally insensitive comments, racial stereotypes or generalizations), bad service (18%; e.g., differential treatment by addressing European Americans first regardless of time in line and rude service), and miscellaneous interpersonal offenses (15%; general rudeness, awkward or nervous behavior by European Americans, being mistaken for another Black person, and avoidance by European Americans). Incidents were directed at participants mostly by European Americans and occurred in public, institutional, and social-intimate spaces. To add, students rated the offenders as fairly aware and intentional in their actions and reported feeling angry and upset in response to 58% of these incidents. Torres, Driscoll, and Burrow (2010) echoed Swim and colleagues' (2003) findings in a sample of high achieving African American graduate students and doctoral program graduates. In this study, participants reported "being

treated rudely or disrespectfully (37.7%); having their ideas or opinions minimized, ignored, or devalued (30.2%), being ignored, overlooked or not given service (26.4%); not being taken seriously (24.8%); and being considered fancy or exotic by others (22.6%)” (p. 1089). Taken together, these findings show the complexity and prevalence of microaggressive acts experienced by African American college students.

With regard to academic performance, microaggressions that occur in the classroom or learning environment can be particularly important. Cultural bias in the classroom/curricula (e.g., minimal Afro-centered courses) is a concern amongst African American college students (Douglas, 1998; Feagin & Sikes 1995). African American college students report being seen as a representative of their race in the classroom setting (Douglas, 1998; McCabe, 2009). For instance, McCabe (2009) found that, when compared to White and Latino/a students, Black women experienced more frequent microaggressions in the classroom such as being treated as the representative of their race and gender, and being disregarded during discussions. Research shows that African American students report an underestimation of intellectual ability by professors and/or peers in the classroom (Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Torres Driscoll, & Burrow 2010; Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, & Rivera, 2009) as well as differential treatment by faculty (Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012). For example, Johnson-Ahorlu (2012) examined the impact of racism and stereotypes on education of 17 African American students attending California State University. Participants reported experiencing racial stereotypes from faculty, stereotype threat, low expectations from faculty, and lack of support from faculty.

Research has demonstrated that African American college students attending a PWI have differing experiences and outcomes as compared to their White peers. D’Augelli and Hershberger (1993) found that African American students were more likely to house with other

African American students, more likely to worry about losing a job, more likely to worry about financial aid, and more likely to get a grade that was lower than expected. African American students also reported a more negative appraisal of the university, as well as lower energy, life satisfaction, and well-being as compared to White students. Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, and Hagedorn (1999) also found that African American students differed in their social and academic outcomes as compared to their White peers. While results suggested that there were no differences in perceptions of prejudice and discrimination between groups, African American students were less likely to report positive experiences with peers, had lower academic performance, and were more committed to complete the degree program. Perceptions of prejudice and discrimination had a large negative effect on academic and social experiences of African American students. There was a small significant effect on the academic experience of White students and no effect was found on social experiences. Perceptions of discrimination also had an indirect effect on academic and intellectual development and persistence of African American students. These findings demonstrate that perceptions of prejudice and discrimination have a larger effect on African American students; perceptions of prejudice and discrimination can affect a plethora of factors impacting success in postsecondary institutions.

Additional research has compared the experiences of African Americans at PWIs and at HBCUs. For instance, Allen (1992) found that students at a PWI reported lower grades, lower social integration, and less favorable interactions with faculty than students at an HBCU. A study conducted by Caldwell and Obasi (2010) found that students attending an HBCU reported higher motivation to achieve, higher motivation to avoid failure, and a stronger value in education in a sample of 202 African Americans attending HBCUs and 52 African Americans attending a

Midwestern PWI. Interestingly, students attending a PWI had lower levels of cultural mistrust as compared to their peers at HBCUs.

Outcomes of Racial Microaggressions for African American Students Attending a PWI

Experiences of racism may be a significant risk factor for African American college students attending a PWI. This risk factor may hinder the psychological and academic development of students of color, particularly African Americans. However, findings related to microaggressive experiences and subsequent outcomes in African American college students attending a PWI are mixed. While some studies have found that students report positive outcomes despite microaggressive experiences such as preparedness for the future (Douglas, 1998) and comfort with asking faculty for assistance (Dorsey & Jackson, 1995), other findings highlight more negative experiences. Johnson-Ahorlu's (2012) findings suggested that experiences of racism and stereotypes negatively impacted students' academic performance by disrupting a number of academic opportunities (e.g., seeking help, contributing to class discussions) and consequently negatively affected students' later ability to achieve. Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) found that experiences of racial microaggressions in the classroom affected students' academic performance, and were associated with dropping classes, changing majors, or leaving the university in a sample of 34 African American students attending three elite White Research I universities.

Other studies have highlighted students' perceived psychological experiences as a result of racial microaggressions. Torres and colleagues (2010) found racial microaggressions experienced in graduate school were positively related to students' level of perceived stress and depression. In another study, Reynolds, Sneva, and Beehler (2010) examined the influence of racism related stress on academic motivation in a 151 Black and Latino/a students attending

multiple Northeastern PWIs. The authors did not find an association between individual (i.e., interpersonal) or cultural (e.g., racism resulting from belittling of one's cultural group) race-related stress and academic motivation. However, institutional (i.e., racism based on institutional policies and practices) race-related stress was negatively correlated with extrinsic motivation and positively correlated with amotivation (i.e., lack of internal locus of control or motivation) suggesting that students experiencing higher institutional race-related stress demonstrated lower academic extrinsic motivation and higher academic amotivation. To add, as compared to Latino/as, African American students experiencing high institutional race-related stress displayed higher academic amotivation scores.

Overall, African American students attending a PWI report less positive academic, psychological, and social experiences and outcomes than White peers at a PWI or Black peers at an HBCU. African American students also report experiencing racial microaggressions while attending PWIs. The experience of racial microaggressions in college can affect students' academic, social, and psychological development. The majority of African American college students matriculate at a predominantly White institution. Therefore, it is imperative that research examines these experiences in-depth to develop a better understanding of the factors that influence these experiences. Resilience may be one factor that leads to positive outcomes despite negative experiences. An exploration of resilience in this population may detail how African American college students develop and use strategies that buffer against perceived negative effects of racial microaggressions. Such an understanding may lead to programming, policies, or interventions that better address the needs of this population and support academic success of African American college students at a PWI.

Resilience

There has been debate around the definition of resilience. Some definitions emphasize the interaction between adversity, personal factors, and environmental factors (Garmezy, 1991; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994). For instance, as O'Connor (2002) quoted, resilience is “the response to a complex set of interactions involving person, social context, and opportunities” (Rigsby, 1994, p. 89). Other definitions emphasize adaptation and environmental threats. For example, according to Newman (2005), resilience is “the ability to adapt to tragedy, trauma, adversity, hardship, and ongoing significant life stressors” (p. 227). In sync with this definition, Masten (2001) defines resilience as “phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development” (p. 228). Further, Masten (2001) concludes that resilience is the result of normative resources in the individual and their interactions with families and communities in spite of threats to normal development.

Resilience is difficult to define in view of the fact that it is composed of related processes that must be identified and examined as distinct constructs (Gordon & Song, 1994). Although definitions may vary slightly, each definition contains three fundamental aspects: risk factors, protective factors, and positive adaptations. Cassen, Feinstein, and Graham (2008) define risk factors as variables that increase the probability of negative outcomes. Examples of risk factors may include: discrimination, socially or economically challenged school systems, or poverty. Greene and Conrad (2002) define protective factors as individual characteristics and environmental assets that buffer against, interrupt, or even prevent risk. Examples of protective factors may include: self-efficacy, mentorship, or social support. Protective factors have a cumulative effect. In other words, the more protective factors a person has, the more resilient they are likely to become (Brakenreed, 2010). Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000) describe

three specific types of protective factors. Protective-stabilizing factors are factors that stabilize by a given attribute despite increasing risk. Protective-engaging factors engage with stress resulting in increased competence with increased risk. The third type of protective factors is protective-reactive which is advantageous when stress is low rather than high. Risk and protective factors or processes are typically categorized as environmental or personal (Wayman, 2002). For example, in terms of risk factors, racial microaggressions are environmental whereas a negative attitude toward school is personal. A positive classroom climate can be categorized as an environmental protective factor whereas positive academic self-concept is personal.

Positive adaptations are the mechanisms and strategies that an individual uses to facilitate positive outcomes despite risk. According to Masten (2007), those individuals characterized as resilient must identify positive adaptations in relation to risk; therefore, resilience is inferential. For example, one may begin to acknowledge needs rather than seeing oneself as deficient in response to a present risk. Alternatively, one may engage in adaptive distancing (i.e., selectively distancing oneself from distressing environments to accomplish goals). Resilience is multidimensional and developmental where individual strategies for building resilience may vary by time, individual demographics, contexts, and life circumstances (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Fraser 2004; Newman, 2005). Therefore one can conclude that positive adaptations may vary widely and are most easily understood by asking resilient individuals about their experiences or strategies.

Resilience has been studied in community psychology by multiple researchers (Brodsky, 1999; Brodsky et al., 2011; Brodsky & Bennett Cattaneo, 2013; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008; Runswick-Cole & Goodley, 2013; Zimmerman et al., 2013). These studies often involved the three components outlined in

resilience theory (i.e., risk factors, protective factors, and positive adaptations). For example, Brodsky (1999) examined the components and processes of resilience in ten African American single mothers living in risky neighborhoods (e.g., high poverty, violence, crime, and drugs). In this study, Brodsky (1999) conceptualized resilience as “making it” which involved balancing risks and protective factors across eight domains and meeting goals. The method for balancing risks and protective factors varied for each participant. Brodsky (1999) further identified three skills participants used in the process of resilience: (1) appreciating resources and successes, and reframing stressors to elicit contentment; (2) reframing stressors to elicit motivation; and (3) identifying and using resources from supportive domains to deal with stressful domains, and setting and striving for new goals. These skills can be categorized as positive adaptations because they demonstrate mechanisms and strategies used to facilitate positive outcomes despite present risk.

Risk and protective factors are also present in Fergus and Zimmerman’s (2005) models of resilience theory. Although Fergus and Zimmerman (2005) discuss multiple models of resilience, the protective factor model fits best with the current study. In the protective factor model, protective factors moderate or reduce the effects of risk on an outcome. Subtypes of the protective factor model include protective-stabilizing (i.e., a protective factor helps stabilize negative effects of risk), protective-reactive (a protective factor reduces the negative effects of risk), and protective-protective (one protective factor enhances another in a population exposed to risk; Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005; Zimmerman et. al, 2013).

Educational Resilience

Educational resilience stemmed from the more general construct of resilience (Wayman, 2002). According to Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1994) educational resilience is defined as “the

heighted likelihood of success in school and in other aspects of life, despite environmental adversities, brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences” (p.46). More recently, Cabrera and Padilla (2004) assert that in an educational environment ‘resiliency refers to students who despite economic, cultural, and social barriers still succeed at high levels” (p. 152). In other words, educational resilience attends to success in school while considering an aggregate of risk factors. Both risk and protective factors are examined to determine their role in facilitating educational resilience (Cunningham & Swanson, 2010). Risk factors are examined to establish the presence of significant factors that increase the likelihood of negative educational outcomes whereas protective factors are examined to identify components that buffer, interrupt, or even prevent negative educational outcomes. Positive adaptations include the strategies an individual uses to facilitate positive educational outcomes despite the presence of risk factors. Most commonly, educational resilience is measured in terms of varying levels of academic achievement. This may be problematic as a majority of studies use standardized test scores or grade point averages collected from the National Assessment of Educational Progress to determine educational attainment. This method ignores students who excel (e.g., passing a course or graduating) without high academic achievement (e.g., GPA).

Educational research has largely focused on the failures of racial and ethnic minorities in the school setting (O’Connor, 2002; Payne 2005). The emphasis on school failure and underachievement reflects the deficit model. This perspective continuously places stigma on racial and ethnic minorities as being less competent, deficient, or resistant learners (O’Connor, 2002). The strength-based model places emphasis on the characteristics of individuals who are successful in school despite risk factors (Masten, 2001; Morrison, Brown, D’Incau, Larson O’Farrell, & Furlong, 2006; O’Connor, 2002). Further, the strength-based model has played a

primary role in identifying protective factors that lead to educational resilience such as teacher-student rapport, positive classroom climates, parent/family warmth and cohesion, racial socialization, high parental expectations, strong religious faith, and external support systems (Benard 1991; Brown, 2008; Downey, 2008; Garmezy, 1991; Halle, Kurtz-Costes, & Mahoney, 1997; Miller & MacIntosh, 1999). This strengths-based model exemplifies the approach of community psychology by examining the reciprocal relationships between individuals and social systems (Allen & Mohatt, 2014; Gregory and Huang, 2014; Kim, Schwartz, Cappella, & Seidman, 2014; Langhout, Collins, & Ellison, 2014; Neal & Christens, 2014; Ozer, Newlan, Douglas, & Hubbard, 2013; “Society for Community Research and Action,” n.d.; Weiler et al., 2013; Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2013). This model also attends to classic values of community psychology such as respect for diversity, identifying and mobilizing resources, and multiple levels of analysis (Kelly, 1971; Trickett, 1996). This model utilizes two main approaches, the person-focused approach and the variable-focused approach. The person-focused approach is designed to compare individuals within or across time to assess differentiating resilient behaviors (Masten, 2001). The variable focused approach is designed to test relationships between risk or adversity, outcome, and protective factors (Masten, 2001).

Resilience in African American Students

Few studies have examined resilience in African American college students attending a PWI; however, there are several studies relevant to this topic. For instance, interpersonal and intrapersonal resilience has been explored in college students across multiple outcomes. Hartley (2011) examined the relationships between resilience, mental health, and academic persistence in 605 undergraduate students (1.2% African American). Intrapersonal resilience was measured by the Connor-Davidson Resilience scale, which is made up of five factors (tenacity, tolerance of

stress and negative emotion, positive acceptance of change, control, and spirituality) designed to measure the ability to thrive despite adversity. Interpersonal resilience was measured by the Social Support Questionnaire, which is designed to measure satisfaction with social support. Results indicated that interpersonal resilience and intrapersonal resilience (particularly tenacity, tolerance of stress, and spirituality) contributed to explaining variance in cumulative GPA. These findings illustrate the importance of both interpersonal and intrapersonal resilience as it relates to academic achievement.

African Americans may be exposed to a multitude of risk factors such as stress and racial discrimination (Brown & Tylka, 2011; Wilks & Spivey, 2010). Positive adaptations and protective factors serve to buffer against such factors that increase the likelihood of negative educational outcomes. For instance, in examining the experiences of 50 resilient ethnic minority college students (21 African American) using open-ended interviews, Morales (2008a) found that students identified a number of causes of stress and subsequent adjustments necessary to thrive in academia. One cause was cultural discontinuity, which is described as being bicultural or having a dual-self. Cultural discontinuity would manifest in students' in speaking, writing, discussing life experiences, the adjusting to the academic culture, and being isolated from peer groups due to academic progress. A second cause was constant discontinuity where an individual would engage in cultural disidentification or adaptive distancing. Race and cultural inversion was another cause where students faced stereotype threat, had to act as a spokesperson for their race, and felt that their perspectives, successes, and failures represent their race as a whole. Race and cultural inversion was higher among African American students as compared to others. Positive adaptations or compensatory strategies such as creating and maintaining a positive self-image, needs acknowledgement, expressing habitus [i.e., "consciousness, creative problem

solving, emotional management, and steadfastness” (Morales, 2008a, p. 164)], and pride of resolve were apparent in students’ resiliency. In a separate study, Morales (2008b) sought to explore exceptional academic performance and the process of academic resiliency in sample of 50 ethnic minority college students (30 African American), and found that: a) women faced more opposition/resistance to schooling and had to overcome belittling or mocking comments from their peers, families, and/or male partners by “fulfilling womanly duties” and discounting the expectations of their families (e.g., fulfilling womanly duties and putting less effort into schoolwork; p. 204); b) women were more likely to have a future-orientation using concrete career goals as motivators; and c) women were more likely to choose mentors irrespective of their gender. Here, women developed positive adaptations in response to opposition or resistance to schooling such as discounting expectations of their loved ones and developing a future orientation as motivation to succeed academically.

As previously stated, resilience is composed of related processes that must be identified and examined as distinct constructs (Gordon & Song, 1994). Researchers have identified social support from a variety of sources as a protective factor for African American students. For example, Wilks and Spivey (2010) examined academic stress, resilience (as measured by the shortened version of the Resilience Scale), and social support in 145 undergraduate social work students (9% African American). Findings demonstrated that students with higher academic stress were more likely to report higher resilience. To add, students with higher overall social support (e.g., friend and family support) were more likely to report higher resilience. In a similar study, Leary and DeRosier (2012) investigated perceived stress and resilience in a sample of 120 first-year undergraduate students (12.5% African Americans). Resilience was measured by the 30-item My Resilience Factors questionnaire which includes four factors: social connections,

self-care, life skills, and cognitive style. Findings indicated that perceived stress was significantly negatively correlated with each resilience factor. However, the cumulative resilience score did not account for additional unique variance; social connections particularly contributed to lower perceived stress. Findings from Williams and Portman's (2014) study highlighted social support in the family, school, and larger community that could facilitate resilience. Williams and Portman (2014) examined academic success in 5 high-achieving African American high school graduates from a high-risk urban area. Results indicated that students described a shared responsibility of educational outcomes (e.g., home-school-community collaboration) as necessities for succeeding in school. Additionally, students asserted that families could provide a natural support system whereas school counselors could act as change agents and communities could collaborate to help facilitate academic success in students. Floyd's (1996) study echoed these findings in a sample of 20 African American high school seniors who attributed their academic success despite risk factors to a supportive family and home environment and interactions with committed concerned educators and other adults. Cunningham and Swanson (2010) also found that African American high school students associated resilience with support from school.

Other studies have identified more specific protective factors in the family. For instance, Cunningham and Swanson (2010) found that students associated resilience with parental monitoring. In Williams and Portman's (2014) study, students stated that families should provide parental involvement by any means. Brown and Tylka (2011) found that racial socialization may preserve resilience and serve as a moderator between racial discrimination and resilience in a sample of 209 African American college students. Specifically, when levels of discrimination were high, participants who reported higher racial socialization messages also reported higher

resilience scores. Further, results indicated a negative relationship between racial discrimination and resilience for participant who reported fewer racial socialization messages. It is evident that parents play a seminal role in facilitating resilience in African American students.

Thus far, studies have identified environmental protective factors that facilitate resilience. However, a number of studies have identified personal protective factors that contribute to resilience. Cunningham and Swanson (2010) examined educational resilience in 206 African American high school students from “working poor” households and found that students associated resilience with aspirations to attend graduate/professional school and high academic self-esteem. In Floyd’s (1996) study, 20 African American high school seniors attributed their academic success despite risk factors to the development of perseverance and optimism. Leary and DeRosier (2012) found that the resilience factor cognitive style (specifically an optimistic style as measured by the 30-item My Resilience Factors questionnaire) contributed to lower perceived stress. In another study, students described being a part of the solution (e.g., intrinsic motivation and overcoming personal barriers) as a necessity for succeeding in school (Williams & Portman 2014).

Many African American students are successful in school and persist despite negative conditions and events. It is important to explore the resilience of African American college students attending a PWI in order to lessen the impact of negative environmental risk factors such as racial microaggressions and/or promote protective factors that buffer the impact of such circumstances. Resilience theory is helpful in examining these phenomena in the context of a PWI and can provide a framework for a rich, in-depth understanding of the phenomena.

Resilience Theory in the Current Study

Resilience theory is applied to understand the experiences of racial microaggressions toward African American students at a PWI by examining the interactions, setting, internal response, and external response involved in microaggressive acts as well as the perceived academic impact and strategies to overcome risk in relation to racial microaggressions. As used in this study, resilience theory includes the components discussed in the broader literature as well as in Fergus and Zimmerman's (2005) protective factor model. Resilience is multidimensional and includes exposure to adversity or risk, protective factors, and positive adaptations to this exposure which may vary by time, individual demographics, contexts, and life circumstances (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Fraser 2004; Masten, 2001; Newman, 2005). This study focuses on transactions between the students and the respective ecological context (i.e., a PWI). In students, resilience occurs when students demonstrate academic success rather than succumbing to vulnerabilities of the exposure to adversities or risks that may lead to negative academic outcomes (Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994).

The presence of risk is necessary in exploring resilience. In other words, by excluding the presence of risk or adversity, resilience cannot occur (Garmezy, 1991; Masten, 2001; Newman, 2005; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994). Therefore, the first and second research questions focus on the presence and experience of risk (i.e., racial microaggressions and perceived academic impact). This framework is relevant to the first research question (*How do African American college students attending a predominantly White institution experience racial microaggressions?*; see Appendix A) as racial microaggressions in the context of a PWI are environmental risk factors that may increase the likelihood of negative outcomes (e.g., negative academic impact; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2010; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2010). Experiences of racial

microaggressions may manifest in multiple contexts (e.g., between student and peer group, between university employees and family members, and from university administration or media).

For research question two (*How do African American college students attending a predominantly White institution perceive the impact of racial microaggressions on their academic performance?*) the perceived academic impact may be an emergent risk factor that can potentially result in actions such as skipping class, dropping a class, or changing majors (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2010). The perceived academic impact can also be an emergent protective factor in that students may identify resources like peer support or university programs (e.g., TRIO) that buffered against the potential negative academic effects of racial microaggressions. Resilience theory can be used to address the final research question (*How do African American college students attending a predominantly White institution adapt or overcome adversities stemming from racial microaggressions?*) by exploring how racial microaggressions (a risk factor) relate to students' positive adaptations. Students' resilience may be the result of multiple bidirectional influences. A discussion of positive adaptations may reveal existing protective factors (e.g., social or university supports). For instance, a student may exercise biculturalism to manage stress from microaggressions where the student transitions between two selves. The student has a natural self and an "artificial self" necessary to navigate the demands of the academic milieu that is largely reflective of White middle-class culture (Morales, 2008a). A student may also demonstrate pride of resolve where students develop an increased sense of pride in accomplishments – a subsequently an improved self-image - as a result of overcoming adversities and succeeding academically (Morales, 2008a). Alternatively, a

student may join a multicultural student group to increase social support or attend tutoring to supplement class lecture.

There is currently little exploration of racial microaggressions, perceived academic impact, and resilience (specifically positive adaptations) in African American college students, particularly at a PWI. The current study fills a gap in the literature by providing information about how African American college students attending a PWI experience racial microaggressions including the contexts and students' internal (i.e., psychological) and external (i.e., behavioral) responses. This study also expands on the literature regarding perceived academic impact of racial microaggressions in this population and provide information on how this population demonstrates resilience in response to racial microaggressions at a PWI. Lastly, this study bolsters resilience theory by clarifying the role of positive adaptations in students' resilience.

METHODS

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the phenomena of racial microaggressions, their impact, and resilience in African American college students attending a PWI using qualitative methodology. Qualitative methods are more suitable than quantitative methods when topics are exploratory, when researchers desire a detailed understanding of the topic, and when the researchers want to empower participants (Creswell, 2013). This methodology is necessary to accentuate African American students' voices and to make meaning of their experiences through exploratory inquiry. Racial microaggressions may be difficult to identify by both the offender and offended (Sue et al, 2007). Qualitative methodology is particularly useful for this study as it assists in describing the complexity and multiplicity of factors involved in experiencing, responding to, and recovering from racial microaggressions. The exploratory nature of qualitative methodology is especially important given the lack of research examining experiences of racial microaggressions in this population. To add, qualitative methodology provides an examination of the nuances of students' perceived academic impact and positive adaptations that may not be apparent using the pre-established categories (e.g., GPA) typical of quantitative methodology.

Design

This study used a phenomenological design. Whereas grounded theory focuses on inductive generation of theory through comparative analyses, phenomenological research is a qualitative approach of inquiry where the researcher identifies the essence of lived experiences about a concept or phenomenon as described by participants in an attempt to make sense of the social world (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). A phenomenological research design allows for an

in-depth exploration of the “what” and “how” of participants’ collective experience (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology can be useful for challenging structural or normative assumptions by bringing forth the perception of individuals from their own experiences, including that of the researcher (Groenwald, 2004; Lester, 1999). African American students may face considerable stressors while attending a PWI. A phenomenological design was appropriate for the current study as it explores the lived experience of racial microaggressions, perceived academic impact, and resilience of African American students attending a PWI and gives an in-depth understanding of risk factors, protective factors, and positive adaptations. This exploration encompassed multiple perspectives with recurrent themes of specific microaggressions, perceived academic impacts, and positive adaptations that develop a larger picture or essence.

This study used focus group interviews to collect data. Previous literature emphasizes how focus groups can be used to explore student experiences of microaggressions (Harwood, Browne Hunt, Mendenhall & Lewis, 2012; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012; Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, & Hunt, 2013; Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000). Focus group interviews involve group discussion about a topic that produces rich information about participants’ experiences and/or beliefs (Morgan & Kreuger, 1998). Group interaction has the potential to provide insight about complex behaviors, motivations, feelings, and opinions in a friendly, respectful environment. In group interaction, participants can compare and contrast experiences, be explicit about their views, and consider questions from the facilitator that had not been considered (Morgan & Kreuger, 1998). This dialogue produces large amounts of information in a small period of time. However, the data is not representative of any given individual in depth but rather a range of experiences of a group (Morgan & Kreuger, 1998). Focus groups can also be useful for

approaching sensitive topics (e.g., racial microaggressions) by facilitating discussion among members and providing mutual support for feelings or experiences common across participants (Kitzinger, 1994, 1995). This can be especially important for marginalized or minority groups. According to Hughes and Dumont (1993), focus groups can be used to research social realities of cultural groups by providing access to language and concepts used to structure and think about experiences. Further, conducting focus groups with specific cultural groups increases homogeneity or similarity across participants and helps researchers develop a phenomenological understanding of cultural knowledge. Racial microaggressions can be difficult to identify (Sue et al., 2007), therefore this study used focus groups rather than individual interviews as focus group discussion creates a conversation around a given topic (Morgan & Kreuger, 1998) and could serve as a means of validating participants experiences.

Multiple resources were used to inform focus group facilitation. I completed qualitative methods coursework. I also had experience co-facilitating focus groups on a PhotoVoice project and facilitating a conference workshop concerned with building relationships. I have gathered literature to inform the facilitation process including “The Focus Group Kit” by David Morgan Richard Kreuger, “Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods” by Michael Quinn Patton, and Hughes and DuMont’s (1993) article on using focus groups to facilitate culturally anchored research. This literature provides guidelines on facilitation techniques including establishing rapport, managing types of participants (e.g., dominant, disruptive, rambling, quiet, shy and inattentive), remaining on topic, encouraging differing perspectives, tracking the discussion, controlling reactions, and bringing closure to the group. To add, I have completed two workshops centered on group discussion and dynamics titled “Facilitating Discussions that Work” and “Developing Communication and Conflict Management for Team Leaders.”

Setting and Sample

Michigan State University is a Research 1 land grant university and has over 47,000 students from across the United States and abroad. As of Fall 2014, the university employed 23.06% faculty of color and 2.15% international faculty in tenure system positions and 17.22% faculty of color and 7.76% international faculty in fixed term positions (MSU Office of Budgets and Planning, 2015). Of the more than 47,000 students that were enrolled as of Spring 2015, 15.1% were international students and 17.4% were domestic students of color (MSU Office of Registrar, 2014). In Spring 2015, the student body at Michigan State University was 66.2% White and therefore qualifies as a predominantly white institution. At that time, the population was 6.4% Black/African American, 3.8% Hispanic, 0.3% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 4.5% Asian, 2.4% two or more races, and 1.3% not reported.

The sampling frame included all self-identified Black or African American sophomores, juniors, and seniors enrolled at Michigan State University who were 18 years of age or above. These criteria were necessary because participants must identify as Black/African American to speak to the lived experiences of Black/African American college students and must be at least 18 years of age to provide consent. Participants were sophomores, juniors, or seniors currently enrolled at Michigan State University to ensure that they had attended the university long enough to speak to lived racial microaggressive experiences occurring at the university as students in this setting.

Purposive sampling procedures were used to recruit participants of interest for this study. Purposive sampling allows for the inclusion of participants who can purposely inform an understanding of the research topic (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). Participants were purposively sampled to reflect an equal balance of Black/African American male and female college students

attending a PWI. Homogenous grouping by background or demographics may increase compatibility of a focus group (Morgan & Kreuger, 1998). Homogeneity can focus, simplify, and facilitate group interviewing. Focus group composition was split by gender as research has shown that African American male and female students have different experiences with racial microaggressions on a predominantly white campus (McCabe, 2009). Specifically, Black men reported more interactions with campus and local police and described being perceived as threatening, being ignored, and others ascribing criminal status to them whereas Black women experienced more frequent microaggressions in the classroom such as being treated as the representative of their race and gender, and being disregarded during discussions (McCabe, 2009). To add, women outnumber men in postsecondary institutions (NCES, 2013d). This composition ensured that the voices and potential differential experiences of female and male students are equally represented.

Creswell (2013) posits that the sample in a phenomenological study can vary in size. Previous qualitative explorations of racism or racial microaggressions with African American college students via focus groups have used samples ranging from 17 (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012) to 34 (Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso, 2000). Typically, researchers conduct three to five focus groups (Morgan & Kreuger, 1998). A minimum of two focus groups must be conducted per population subset of any given study (Hughes & Dumont, 1993). According to Morgan and Kreuger (1998), there are typically six to eight participants in each focus group; however, project goals should guide the size of focus groups. Focus group size is a function of the number of participants, the number of questions, and how long the group lasts (Morgan & Kreuger, 1998). For instance, for a 90-minute session with eight questions, five participants would have approximately 2.25 minutes per question. Smaller groups (i.e., six or fewer members) should be used when the topic

is complex or controversial, the goal is to hear detailed stories, or if participants are emotionally involved with the topic (Morgan & Kreuger, 1998). Alternatively, larger groups should be used when participants have low involvement with the topic and/or the goal is to hear multiple brief suggestions. The utility of smaller groups are in sync with the design of the current study.

Measures

Focus Group Interview Protocol

The focus group protocol focused on components of resilience theory (see Appendix A and E) and was adapted from an interview guide used in Constantine and Sue's (2007) study on racial microaggressions among Black supervisees. A variety of transition questions and probes were added about the racial microaggressive experiences students encountered, including the context, internal and external response, their impact on students, and how students adapted or overcame them. Section one of the protocol is the introduction where students were asked why they chose to attend MSU and what it is like being a Black/African American student at a school like MSU. This section was used to get participants used to contributing and to establish rapport among the group. Section two addressed present and emergent risk related to first research question and focuses on the experiences of racial microaggressions and responses to such incidents. Examples of focus group questions include: describe a time where you felt like you were treated differently, unfairly, or made uncomfortable because of your race; what are some of the ways you responded to these experiences? The third section addressed emergent risk and protective factors and focuses on the perceived academic and personal impact of racial microaggressions (e.g., What, if any, effects have these experiences had on you academically? What do you think the overall impact has been on your lives?). The following section addressed protective factors and positive adaptations related to the final research question, and asked

students to describe the successful ways they have overcome such experiences and impacts (e.g., Describe the strategies or ways you dealt with these experiences). The final section was wrap-up and asked students how their experiences had changed over time, what feelings came up during the study, what should be done about microaggressions, if there was anything else they would like to share, and suggestions for improvement.

Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire was used to characterize the sample of the study. The demographic questionnaire was developed specifically for use in this study. The questions included in this questionnaire were used to assure that appropriate data was gathered for descriptive data. Specifically the questionnaire gathered information about: sex, age, current year in school, enrollment status, major, current overall grade point average (GPA), first year generational status, current housing status, overall high school GPA, overall ACT score, SAT scores, racial composition of high school, marital status, employment status, number of children, parent(s) education level, family's total annual income, and single/dual parent family of origin status.

Data Collection

Recruitment of participants for the study commenced after receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board at Michigan State University. Participants were recruited via posted flyers on public posting boards in housing/hospitality, academic/administration, and athletic buildings on the MSU campus (see Appendix B). Flyers were posted across the entire MSU campus in a variety of buildings to ensure recruitment of both male and female African American participants in various colleges or departments across the university. Participants were also recruited via email sent out by the university registrar's office. The flyers and email detailed

the name of the study, purpose, time commitment, eligibility criteria, compensation, and researchers' contact information.

Students interested in participating were instructed to email the researcher to provide contact information, availability, class standing (e.g., sophomore), and major. A total of 155 students expressed interest in the study and provided the aforementioned information. This included 30.32% sophomores, 28.39% juniors, 28.39% seniors, and 12.9% fifth (or more) year seniors. A subset of interested participants ($N = 60$) was selected for focus groups based upon their availability. This subset was fairly similar to the larger pool of participants and included 30% sophomores, 28.33% juniors, 31.67% seniors, and 10% fifth (or more) year seniors. The researcher communicated with participants to set up a time and location to conduct the study. Participants were instructed to respond to the email to confirm attendance. Two reminder emails were sent prior to the focus group session. Informed consent was provided prior to participation in the focus group interview (see Appendix D). The informed consent provided information about the purpose of the study, procedures, potential risks, potential benefits, privacy and confidentiality, right to participate, right to refuse or withdraw, costs and compensation, who to contact with questions, debriefing, and documentation of informed consent. The participants only participated in the focus group after accepting that he/she decided to participate voluntarily and had read and understood the information provided.

All information was kept confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law. Responses were not connected to participants' name or any other identifying information. Pseudonyms for student names, any faculty or peer names, courses, and campus landmarks were used. Only research members have access to responses. Participants received a \$20 Amazon gift card at completion of the focus group interview.

Focus groups were conducted on the university campus at a time that was convenient for participants. Focus group sessions lasted approximately 75 minutes and were conducted in English. The focus groups were audio-taped with two recorders. I facilitated the sessions. A research assistant was present to take notes (e.g., key points, brief summary, notable quotes, nonverbal cues, visual layout) during the focus groups. The research assistant was matched by sex with the composition of the focus group. The research assistant was informed about the purpose of the study and completed Institutional Review Board training. Upon completion the research assistant was trained in effective-note taking prior to the study. The research assistant was a student of color so as to maintain or increase students comfort in the focus group.

The focus group began with greetings, welcoming participants, and introductions of myself and the research assistant. Next, participants were given an informed consent and major points were reviewed aloud. Participants were then informed about the purpose of the study, procedure, and compensation. The location of restrooms and refreshments were noted. Participants introduced themselves and responded to an ice breaker question. Next, I went over some group rules for the focus group such as speaking one at a time and confidentiality. The group was given time to ask questions and get refreshments prior to beginning the focus group interview. I tested the audio recorders by placing them in a central location, asking each participant to speak, replaying the recording, and adjusting the audio recorders as needed. Once the audio recorders were in place I began the focus group interview. Immediately following the focus group interview, participants filled out a brief demographic survey designed specifically for this study. I then debriefed participants. Each participant was given a debriefing form and list of campus resources after the interview was complete (see Appendix F). Lastly, participants

received \$20 Amazon gift cards were informed of an opportunity to do member checking once transcription was complete.

All data were stored in a locked room in the psychology building. Only the primary and secondary investigator have access to the data. Once the focus group interviews were complete, audiotapes were downloaded to a network drive on a password protected computer. Audio files were password protected and emailed to a professional transcriptionist company to be transcribed. The transcription company signed a confidentiality contract before beginning the transcription process agreeing to maintain full confidentiality of individuals, not to disclose any information, not to make copies of data unless requested by the researcher, to store all study-related materials in a secure location, to return all study-related data to the researcher in a complete and timely manner, and to delete all files containing study-related data from his/her computer and any back-up devices. Transcripts were de-identified by using pseudonyms for all names and other identifying information. Files were only accessible via the password protected computer in this office. Files were encrypted and password protected. The original transcripts and notes taken during the focus group interview were stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked office. Informed consent were stored in a separate drawer in the locked file cabinet in this room. Data from the demographic questionnaire were stored in a separate locked file drawer.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the focus group data. Braun and Clarke (2006) posit that thematic analysis can be used to summarize key features of large data sets, provide thick description of data, highlight similarities and differences, generate unanticipated insights, and allow for psychological interpretations of data (Table 3; pg. 38). It was expected that focus group interviews would generate multiple perspectives amongst participants with recurrent

themes of specific microaggressions, perceived academic impacts, protective factors, and positive adaptations. Thematic analysis is well suited for the research questions as it can be used to capture these multiple perspectives by summarizing key features, highlighting similarities and differences, and providing a thick description of the types of microaggressions and perceived academic impacts participants experience (research questions 1 and 2), protective factors and positive adaptations that participants use (research questions 2 and 3), and relevant contexts in which these factors occur. Thematic analysis may be useful for analyzing data from focus group interviews as they generate large amounts of data and allow participants to compare and contrast experiences (Morgan & Kreuger, 1998).

Thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) involves six phases. First, in Phase 1 the researcher gets familiar with the data via transcription and active repeated readings of the transcripts. Next, in Phase 2 initial codes are generated from the entire data set (see Table 2 for examples). Codes should be generated widely and inclusively (including relevant context); extracts of data may receive multiple codes, if applicable. The researcher then searches for themes by organizing related codes into identified themes; this may result in main themes and/or subthemes (Phase 3). In this step, a theme is identified if there was agreement across focus groups. Following this step, the researcher reviews and refines themes by: 1) reviewing the cohesion amongst coded data extracts, and 2) considering the validity of themes in relation to the dataset by rereading the data to check for fit between generated themes and the dataset, and to check for any additional data to be coded from the data-set (Phase 4). Phase 5 involves defining and naming themes by “identifying the essence of what each theme is about and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures” (p. 23). A detailed analysis is written for each individual theme, and the researcher notes whether or not themes contain sub-themes. In

the final phase (Phase 6), the researcher produces a report that embeds data extracts into the analytic narrative in relation to the research question(s) and literature. During data analysis, specifically in phases 3-5, I reviewed the transcripts and codes for negative cases and discrepant data. This process involved searching for contradicting or variant data and provides a counterbalance to the researcher's first impressions (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2002).

Table 2.

Sample Coding Strategy

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Data Extract
<p>Students experience tensions on campus around race</p> <p><i>Participants frequently experienced a variety of microaggressions on the university's campus.</i></p>	n/a	Participants experienced multiple microassaults	<p>There are a lot of issues of discrimination here. I haven't heard the n-word yet but my friends have. I've been stared at, followed, ignored, avoided... You name it. Don't get me wrong, not all White people discriminate but a lot of them do. Some things you learn how to block out – you still notice it but it doesn't bother you as much. Its messed up</p>
<p>Black students are assumed to be intellectually inferior by faculty/staff</p> <p><i>Participants experienced microinsults regarding intellectual ability in the classroom by course instructors</i></p>	n/a	Professors had low expectations of participants based on race.	<p>I will never forget when I turned in my first paper in [course] so that the prof could edit it before the due date. He asked me did I write it. Like, he was surprised or thought I had cheated as if I'm not supposed to be able to write well because I'm Black. By the end of the class he was complimenting me. I know he didn't think I could or would do well so those compliments meant nothing.</p>
<p>University policies and practices communicate microinsults toward Black students and other students of color</p> <p><i>Participants faced isolation from other racial/ethnic groups in university housing.</i></p>	Segregation on campus by race	Participants were segregated in residence halls on campus	<p>All of the Black people either live in [residence hall 1, residence hall 2, and residence hall 3]. I live in [residence hall 2]. All those dorms are at the very edges of campus. We're still segregated.</p>

Table 2. cont'd

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Data Extract
Students experience tensions on campus around race <i>Participants frequently experienced a variety of microaggressions on the university's campus.</i>	n/a	Participants experienced multiple microassaults	There are a lot of issues of discrimination here. I haven't heard the n-word yet but my friends have. I've been stared at, followed, ignored, avoided... You name it. Don't get me wrong, not all White people discriminate but a lot of them do. Some things you learn how to block out – you still notice it but it doesn't bother you as much. Its messed up
Black students are assumed to be intellectually inferior by faculty/staff <i>Participants experienced microinsults regarding intellectual ability in the classroom by course instructors</i>	n/a	Professors had low expectations of participants based on race.	I will never forget when I turned in my first paper in [course] so that the prof could edit it before the due date. He asked me did I write it. Like, he was surprised or thought I had cheated as if I'm not supposed to be able to write well because I'm Black. By the end of the class he was complimenting me. I know he didn't think I could or would do well so those compliments meant nothing.
University policies and practices communicate microinsults toward Black students and other students of color <i>Participants faced isolation from other racial/ethnic groups in university housing.</i>	Segregation on campus by race	Participants were segregated in residence halls on campus	All of the Black people either live in [residence hall 1, residence hall 2, and residence hall 3]. I live in [residence hall 2]. All those dorms are at the very edges of campus. We're still segregated.

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness of the study, I bracketed in reference to my experiences with racial microaggressions as an African American college student attending a PWI and how experiences shape my interpretations of the data. Throughout the research process, an audit trail was maintained to illustrate a clear decision making process with documentation. Memos were written following each focus group to capture any significant events, reactions, and early interpretations of the data. To validate the data, member checks were implemented with four students to provide transparency and increase credibility by ensuring that the researcher is accurate in the representation of the data (Krefting, 1991). With member checks, participants were given the opportunity to check the transcripts for authenticity and request changes to the data. In addition, a peer debriefer (e.g., committee chairperson) was asked to review and provide an external check of the methods, meanings, and interpretations of the findings (Creswell, 2013). Peer debriefing may ensure that the researcher is honest and reflexive (Krefting, 1991).

Bracketing

Personal bracketing (also referred to as epoche) is used to to describe personal experiences with the phenomenon (i.e., racial microaggressions). Bracketing allows a better understanding, interpretation, and presentation of the data. Bracketing is presented in two parts: a discussion of experiences with the phenomenon and a discussion of how these experiences shape the researcher's interpretation of the phenomenon post- data collection. Presented below is detailed account of my experiences with the phenomenon, research interests, and positionality as a researcher.

Experience. I believe that racism currently exists and is deeply rooted in American society. Individual and structural racism is common and has adverse consequences for all

citizens, not just people of color. However, people of color most often have to confront oppression at multiple levels and in numerous contexts whereas White persons can ignore oppression and benefit from White privilege. Racism, specifically racial microaggressions, in its many forms is sometimes difficult to recognize. Discussions around racism can be uncomfortable or considered taboo resulting in poorly facilitated dialogue, backlash, or denial.

I attended predominantly African American public schools in a large urban city from kindergarten to high school. Moving from a large predominantly African American urban city, to attend a large Midwestern predominantly white university was not only a change in location, but an introduction to a new language and culture. This move also brought about a shift in my support networks. I felt like an outsider and inexperienced in most regards. I expected to feel some degree of culture shock; however, I was still surprised by the predominantly White culture on campus. I excelled academically taking upper-level courses and participating in multiple psychological research labs. As a result, I found myself largely socially isolated from my African American peers. I later transitioned to graduate school at the same university and it became increasingly evident that I belonged to the minority group. During my time at the university, I have consistently experienced racial microaggressions on campus and in the surrounding areas. These experiences include but are not limited to vandalism, expectations of lesser intelligence by peers and faculty, being the representative of the Black perspective in class, being shunned for “pulling the race card,” being the target of racial slurs or insensitive comments, and individuals explicitly stating that they were colorblind. I often felt upset, powerless, or annoyed following these incidents. For these reasons, I feel that I can relate to some degree to the experiences of current African American undergraduates attending a predominantly white institution.

Research Interests and Positionality. The obstacles I faced as an undergraduate at a predominantly white university paired with coursework, psychological research, and professional and service activities shaped my interests in education. In addition, several aspects of my identity inform my research interests and approach, including but not limited to being African American, female, Detroit-raised, from a low-income family of origin, heterosexual, Christian, and a community service volunteer. Community psychology utilizes emic techniques and is attentive to reciprocal relationships between individuals and social systems (“Society for Community Research and Action,” n.d.). As a community psychologist the acknowledgement of influences and biases is an essential tenet in investigating the reciprocal relationships between me and others, and the social systems that constitute the community context. My research interests are in risk, protective, and promotive factors impacting educational resilience in racial and ethnic minorities, particularly African Americans. I am interested in factors that are present at multiple levels in the school, family, and community contexts. I approach my research with a strengths-based perspective focusing on individuals who are successful despite risk. In identifying protective and promotive factors that facilitate educational resilience in racial and ethnic minorities, I hope that my work will aid in the development and assessment of educational interventions, inform educational policy, and/or transform urban education.

My experiences with the phenomena under study, research interests, and positionality as a researcher serve as an asset in that I may be able to relate to and/or empower participants, create a friendly, supportive focus group environment, identify additional areas to probe for detailed descriptions, and interpret data in a way that is authentic to participant experiences. However, my experiences, interests, and positionality may bring about potential liabilities or biases in specific probes and interpretations of the data. In order to address biases, I: a) had a

research assistant taking notes regarding group dynamics, key points, notable quotes, and things that should be done differently during the focus group; b) asked participants about suggestions for improvement at the close of the focus group; c) maintained an audit trail to note changes in the study; d) wrote memos following each focus group to record information about significant events, statements, or initial interpretations of the data; e) used member checks to allow participants to check transcripts of the data for authenticity; f) identified discrepant data; g) used peer debriefing to provide an external check of my methods, coding, and interpretations of the data; and h) bracketed post-data analyses with regard to how my experiences with the phenomena shaped my interpretations of the data.

RESULTS

Four focus groups were conducted. In this study, two groups were male and two were female. There were 3-7 persons in each group resulting in a total of 7 male participants and 10 female participants. The students were between 18 and 23 years of age ($M = 20.65$; $SD=1.37$). All participants were full time and had an average GPA of 2.90 ($SD = .87$). Of the 17 participants, nine (52.94%) were first-generation college students. Additionally, seven participants were sophomores (41.18%), two were juniors (11.76%), and eight were seniors (47.06%). The students sampled from the study came from a variety of majors and a majority of students worked part-time ($N=13$). Two students described their high schools as predominantly white (11.76%), nine as predominantly Black or African American (52.94%), two as predominantly Black and Latino (11.76%), and four as multiracial (23.53%). Eleven participants (64.71%) were raised in two parent households while five were from single parent (mother) homes (29.41%), and one student did not live with parents (5.88%).

Research Question 1: How do African American college students attending a predominantly White institution experience racial microaggressions?

Research question one sought to address the experience of racial microaggressions for African American college students attending a predominantly white institution. This research question focused on the types of racial microaggressions experienced as well as responses to racial microaggressions (see Appendix G and Appendix H, respectively). The types of racial microaggressions participants experienced will be presented first followed by participants' accounts of responses to racial microaggressions.

Types of Racial Microaggressions

Focus group participants experienced a number of environmental and individual-level racial microaggressions on campus. As expected, participants described differential experiences of racial microaggressions across focus groups. Some noted that they did not experience any microaggressions or microaggressions were very infrequent whereas others described differences in the occurrence and type of microaggressions based upon colleges or specific majors within the university. Some male participants, in particular, described expecting to face microaggressions on campus. Concurrently, these participants mentioned utilizing strategies to combat microaggressions such as “sticking together” with other persons of color or speaking out against a microaggression when it occurred. This topic (i.e. strategies to combat microaggressions) will be further explored in research question 3.

Participants described a number of environmental microaggressions. The first theme is perceived **undervaluing by the university**. This theme occurred in two focus groups (1 female and 1 male). In detail, participants felt undervalued by the university and asserted that the university exploited Black students for the appearance of a more racially diverse campus. One student stated:

“I can say that I don't throw a ball and my face has been used and I think exploited to the point on campus....to say look at these Black faces, these brown faces, these yellow faces. But we really don't give a shit about these kids. Um, I do love [university], um, I just think it needs to do better. Because we have the money and we have the people to do better (F²).”

Another student echoed this statement: *“I feel like honestly, that's [diversity] the reason why [university] wants us here. I feel like they don't want us because of our SAT scores, or our ACT*

² (F) and (M) are used to indicate a quote stated by a female or male participant, respectively.

scores...they want us so that the school can...appear to be diverse (M).” Aside from the appearance of racial diversity, participants felt that only Black student athletes were truly valued. For example, one student stated: *“If you don't run, if you don't catch ball, if you don't do these things for [university], then you as a Black student, you mean nothing to them (F).”* Participants also observed a hierarchy in the valuing of student groups with Black student organizations at the bottom of the hierarchy. A female participant described:

“The way we report... the way advocacy works, how moneys are allocated, how respect is handled...[student organizations targeting gender and sexual minorities and other racial/ethnic groups] are respected more on campus than your BSA (Black Student Alliance) and Black Caucuses... Or how moneys are funded, or how rooms are given or respect about these safe places. You know, I just feel like there's a hierarchy (F).”

Relatedly, a second theme is **conformity**. Students felt pressured to conform to a standard of Whiteness or to display less association with African or African American culture in order to be perceived as successful or achieve academic and personal success. Students described conformity as occurring at the university-level. Sometimes this pressure was described as generalized at the university-level whereas at other times it was described as linked directly to organizations on campus. This theme occurred in two focus groups (1 female and 1 male). When asked what it is like being a Black student at a school like Michigan State University one participant stated:

“I, um, noticed like at random org meetings and stuff or just like African-American-led meetings and kind of focus groups, I noticed that it's a lot of trying to get African American students to somehow conform or like change who we are like wipe away our African-ness, our culture in order to succeed in life. And I don't believe in that but I see it so much, just telling us how to talk, walk, dress, everything, and ... I'm not for that. I believe we should be able to do whatever ... We should be able to keep everything, you know, about ourselves, without having to change, but I just noticed that at all of these

events they're always telling us how to make it...and I just don't believe in that... I should be able to be myself and still thrive (F)."

A third theme that emerged is **university microinsults** where university policies and practices communicate microinsults toward Black students and other students of color. Specifically, participants in each focus group described numerous university policies and practices that communicate microinsults to Black students and other students of color such as perceived segregation in campus housing and promotion of predominately white residence halls to prospective students. One participant stated *"This campus so like segregated. It's like Black people in the south neighborhood, Asians are east neighborhood, all the White people in north neighborhood where I live right now. We need to mix everything up (F)."* In another focus group one student shared:

Interviewer: *Okay. Um, so you just mentioned that, um, in that story that the African Americans and persons of color live in specific halls or in neighborhoods. Do you feel that that is on purpose or self-selected to live in those neighborhoods?*

Participant: *I believe it is purpose. I believe it is the purpose, um. [Residence hall is] far, probably the furthest east you can go on campus. [Second residence Hall], very strategically put in the northwest corner to where it's not in the center of campus, south very far in, you know, south of campus, and I don't know why it is, but that's just what I feel. I feel that, you know, if they wanted us, African-Americans would be in the north neighborhood where they do show the tours and Shaw, and just the center of campus where most things are happening. This north neighborhood as we're in now is known for being primarily Caucasian... White. I always see school tours going throughout this area. Never have I seen one school tour that goes through [Residence hall] or [third residence hall] or on the outskirts back in [second residence hall] where a lot more African-Americans are moving to, and I feel like we're here because they want to fit a quota and not to really, you know, project us to the next level (M).*

Other policies and practices that illustrate university microinsults include: movie selections played at campus cinema, discriminatory hiring practices in campus employment, publicizing inaccurate information and limited commemoration about holidays celebrating Black history/culture, and serving food in campus cafeterias that have been ascribed to African Americans on Martin Luther King Jr. Day or during Black History Month.

The fourth theme is a **lack of representation**, which refers to limited numbers of persons of color, particularly Black students, in class. This theme occurred in each focus group. This lack of representation was especially true in more advanced courses. In this context, students were often treated as a representative of their race and expected to speak on the “Black perspective” or specifically called on to offer an opinion. One participant asserted: *“It just feels like they want you to be the spokesperson for African Americans and it’s just kind of like, I’m not.... I don’t ask you guys [white classmates] a question and ask you to pretty much speak for the entire race (F).”* Similarly, another participant stated:

“I was, like first off one of the only guys in the class and of course the only black person in the class. And there were a lot of topics about race. And every time it came to something about that, everyone kind of became kind of like hushed. Everyone's looking in my direction and stuff like that (M).”

In addition, participants described a lack of representation in other contexts such as registered student organizations (with the exception of those specifically serving students of color such as Black Caucus), student government, and in leadership positions within campus employment. Interestingly, only male participants spoke explicitly about the lack of representation of persons of color in leadership positions within campus employment. Of equal importance was the lack of representation of faculty and instructors of color, particularly Black/African Americans, which

seemed to contribute to student's experience of being perceived as a representative of their race in spaces on campus.

The next theme is **cultural bias in course content**. Here, explorations of race and related topics were limited in frequency and/or depth. Female participants in both focus groups explicitly spoke about this theme. Students disclosed that discussions of race and submission of assignments highlighting race (e.g., cultural appropriation) were not well-received by classmates or faculty. One participant simply stated *"When we talk about race, class or anything, uh, that polarizes people (F)."* In addition, students described a majority of courses as Eurocentric; these courses failed to incorporate contributions and narratives of African Americans in course curricula or even in examples provided in class. To illustrate, a participant stated:

"Everything we learn at the university level is so Europeanized ...like we don't learn about African scientist and African mathematicians or anything like it is all completely wiped away and everything we learn literally is based on Europeans, and European culture, and European everything as if they are the only ones that exist, and that's a little frustrating (F)."

Further, White peers were perceived to have a non-existent to generic understanding of issues relating to Black/African American persons including Black history. It was suggested that this non-existent to generic understanding contributed to the misunderstanding of sociopolitical movements such as Black Lives Matter (see page 69). For example, a participant asserted:

"I remember I was sitting in a class, it's a small class probably like 30 people and it's about language and women, African-American women specifically and we have a Black teacher...And she talked about Emmett Till...and one-third of people in that class knew who that was. Do you know how that hurt my spirit? I was like, if you know who Emmet Till was maybe you would understand the anger of Black people when our Black men get murdered and nothing happens... so maybe that's what you should do first before you

look at all these present issues and you're confused and you're wondering why we are still mad (F)."

The sixth theme, **criminal status**, refers to students experience of an assumption of criminal status by the university polices/practices, campus police, peers, and the greater university community. This theme includes both environmental (university-level) and individual-level microaggressions (campus police, peers, and members of the greater university community) and occurred in two focus groups (1 female and 1 male). At the institutional level (university) students described a number of actions that communicated an assumption of criminality. First, the university was perceived as condoning hate speech based upon remarks emailed to the student-body by university administration in response to a serious of race-related events. In conjunction, students described campus reporting of racial intimidation as inadequate. For example, one student explained: *"The way I3 happened...I shouldn't have to be called a nigger bitch four times before, somebody should get written up. If it happens once, that should be enough for racial intimidation. We can call it that (F)."* Another concern was that in the university's crime alert system, descriptions of suspects would be written so as to phenotypically describe a vast majority of the African American student body (e.g. a wide range of height, skin complexion fair to dark-brown, and wearing university apparel). Students also described a limited coverage of crime committed by White suspects, and curtailed coverage of the attacks and deaths of Black students as compared to other racial and ethnic groups. One student said:

"It just bothers me when these huge rapes happen at these frat houses that are White...Or when people are attacked, because I was attacked my freshman year, violently and I reported it to the police. Like, I felt like that never goes out. And the description if the person is White, [it] never goes out. Or when [it is] Black students, silence... the young man that was shot in [local student apartment complex], that was never talked about. But when White kids, and that's not to say that like all lives don't matter, but when White kids OD then we can, like, do public vigils for them. Because a girl in [university

college] died from drugs and they were just like, "Oh, let's mourn Jessica." But we couldn't even speak his name. That often just, I guess you can say it bothers me (F)."

The aforementioned quote speaks to an assumption of criminality in addition to a failure in acknowledging Black student victims of crimes on or near campus. An assumption of criminality was perceived by white peers in that students would be falsely accused of crimes (e.g. intimidation) that fit with the stereotypical narrative in the United States that perpetuates the idea of Black persons as deviant, aggressive, and violent. University police also displayed this assumption of criminality in a number of ways. Students described being sought out by police when there was a crime reported in the area, even if there was no description of a suspect provided. A participant stated:

"Um, last year, I don't know if you guys heard about it, but there were, like, um, suspicious sounds, they thought, like, shots were fired on [street] So I lived in my house and I had actually just gone out to CVS, I think, or something like that and I was walking back. And there's a group of people walking back, there are a bunch of [people], there's a frat house down the street... bunch of White boys walking back to their house and White girls walking back across the street. And you know, they have cops going around. The cops, I think about four cop cars, they only stopped me. I was walking back to my house and they only stopped me.... They only stopped me and they started questioning me. "Where are you going? It's late at night. Why are you outside by yourself?" Like, questioning me and at first I was like, "Oh, maybe they're actually, like, concerned for my safety." And then they asked me, "Where do you live? What are you carrying?" And stuff like that. And I was like, "I live right here and I'm going home. And I'm not opening anything for you because I don't have to and I don't like the way that I'm being treated." And they were like, something about, "Don't be so sensitive." And then they just got back in their cars and left. And I was like, "That did not just happen." And one of my sorority sisters actually had walked out on the porch and she was like, "Why are you talking to her? She's coming back to her house where she lives with her sisters and if you're suspicious there's a group of kids right there. There's another group of kids right there. Why aren't you talking to them?" And they, they just left (F)."

To add, campus police behaved differently when searching rooms and arresting students based upon the racial composition of residence halls such that they were more persistent in residence halls that housed more students of color. Students reported that resident assistants in residence halls recognized discrimination and some were encouraged by police to discriminate against students of color. The following quote was said by a female student who disclosed that she was a resident assistant.

“As far as kids getting arrested, um, if it's like in a White community like [residence hall] like over here, they would smell it [marijuana] and walk through, "Oh, we don't, we can't identify it." If it's [residence halls], anywhere that's Black or Asian or Hispanic they were talking about, "Hold it." They will wait hours. Keep banging on that door to coerce kids and open up their doors (F).”

Female and male students equally described being unjustifiably stopped by police when walking or biking. Women described being stopped and questioned on multiple occasions. Questions would be in relation to where they were coming from, where they were headed to, and whether or not they were involved in a crime. For example, one female student stated: *“We talk about Black men always being identified on campus. I ride a bike. I don't have a car. I walk or I ride, like, a '82 Schwinn around campus, with a basket. And I've been stopped on campus seven times [by police] (F).”* Men also experienced this. However, men were more likely to be accused of committing a crime, having their identification run by police, or being arrested and detained. Men, in particular, describe “fitting the profile” and being perceived as a threat particularly to police because they were young Black males, regardless of context. A male student stated:

“I was on my way back home riding my bike and I was pulled over on the bike by the [university] police and the first question they asked me, um, “Where'd you get the bike?”

I'm telling the officer "I'm on my way home, officer, I've done nothing wrong. I have to do what I got to do," and he insisted that I wasn't an [university] student, so I mean, that's a time, um, things happened, so I was on probation for about two years...And I know that was strictly because I'm a black male, dreaded hair, dark skin, I understand that (M)."

Another male student described an incident with campus police:

"I was walking up the street. It was ice on the sidewalk, so me and it was three black people....and the police had pulled us over well they had pulled up on us and they asked why I was walking beside the street....We told them, "Because of the ice." Then they ran our I.D.'s. Why? I have no idea, but obviously it was racial profiling... but they looked it up and, um, two of us were okay, but one of us had a warrant that was from Flint, and it's like, forgot if he got a ticket for it or anything... But I, as the officer talked to us, I figured out how racially profiled it was because I told them, uh, like it's like two or three other white people over there walking, the same curb that we're walking on, but yet you choose to stop us. I was like "Why?" And he was like, I mean, "We just going around doing our job," so I said, "Okay, if you all are doing your job, call him over here and do the same thing that you're doing to us," so he, he called them over here (thumps desk), he called them over just to prove a point, but he never ran his I.D. or any of the other stuff he did for us, and I knew that that was being racially profiled (M)."

Focus group participants also experienced a number of other individual-level racial microaggressions on campus. The following themes highlight these individual-level racial microaggressions: rude treatment, offensive jokes and remarks, criticism and no acceptance in Black community, assumption of inferiority, and avoided or unacknowledged.

In **rude treatment**, participants described being treated rudely and treated as outsiders. In two focus groups (one female and one male), students mentioned being treated as outsiders by multiple groups including peers, staff, and campus and local police. Students received messages that they did not belong by way of questioning their status as students. One male student said: *"I always feel like you've got to wear name tags saying "I'm an [university] student." ...They*

assume that you're one of these [city] locals and, if you don't show them that student I.D., you might just fall through the cracks (M)." Similarly, a female participant stated:

"On the bike or walking [the police asked] "Oh what are you doing miss? What's happening? What's going on? And as a visitor to campus you need to...not be around so late." [I respond] "A visitor?...I'm in the Honor's college. Like, I've gone here ..." [The police are] Like, "What are you doing walking around campus?" "Shit, I live here. (F)"

Offensive jokes and remarks were made by peers, colleagues, faculty, and staff. Jokes and remarks were perceived as intentional, unintentional, and ambiguous. This theme was described in each focus group. Jokes were directed at students by peers regarding eating or enjoying foods ascribed to or associated with race. For instance, one student shared:

"I think we've all heard the fried chicken joke about a hundred times... You hear, you that stuff or any time you see it in the Cafe, and then, you know, your white friends saying something, "Oh, like, of course you do." So, I mean I'm pretty sure we've all heard that by now. Seen it. Or, the grape Koolaid joke...(M)"

Other examples include: invalidating, offensive, and/or insensitive remarks regarding Black history, holidays, and the existence and operation of Black student organizations. The following quotes illustrate examples of these offensive jokes and remarks:

"I remember [student] told me, you know, "Slavery was just a systematic trade of people. If things don't exist it never happened." (F)"

"I heard this white girl and she said, "Um, I don't know if they takeMartin Luther King like Christmas or like I don't know like what they do on that day. I just know it's a day off for me." I was listening to her talk to, um, one of her friends. (F)"

“Um, people say well like, “Why do you need like a black caucus for? Like why can't we have like, a white caucus?” (M)”

Racial slurs, avoidance, and rude behavior by Black peers of a different social class or those who wanted to dissociate with Black persons also occurred. One student shared:

“Me navigating this, this collegiate space make me you know, I, I run into more black people that, um, who, who aim to dissociate themselves with other black people, so they was the people that ended up being more rude to me than, um, anything. I mean, of course you’ve got the white boys, but still, I run into black people who just want nothing to do with black people and, um, they, they’re the ones who quickly call me a nigger instead of the white boy (M).”

Inappropriate race-related jokes and critiques of student work by instructors in class were also made:

“I have a TA... he just makes us feel really uncomfortable because he always like says things like, “Well, I was in France, you know, it’s not like I was in Africa where I could have been kidnapped ...” When he does use examples of African-Americans he has to comment about like make fun of them for some sort of reason and, like anything like “Michelle Obama, she’s buff, she looks like a man. (F)”

In addition, discriminatory remarks made by colleagues were made. One participant said:

“I work at [coffee shop] on campus... but he goes, “You know, no offense, but like, if I saw three Black guys walking across, or walking on the street, I would cross the street.” And I was like, “I’m sorry. Like, how, how is that not supposed to be offensive to me?” And then he like tried to explain away way it wasn’t racist and why it wasn’t, it shouldn’t have been offensive. And I said, “No. I’m very offended. Like, that is something that deeply offends me. Especially, like not only am I a Black woman, but I have five brothers. Like, you just said that if you saw my brothers walking, just because of the fact that they are Black, you would, you would walk across the street.” And he goes, “No, I’m not

saying it's cause their Black, because if I saw White guys dressed like Black guys, I would walk across the street, too (F)."

Racial jokes and slurs also occurred in areas on campus that allow for the offender to maintain some degree of anonymity such as at football games and in the cafeteria. For example one student described:

"During freshman year, I'm sitting down in the cafe and then like these two white guys talking about they want to put up uh perform like an African play and they say, "Dude, we need black people for this. We can't find no black people." Then he talkin' about doing black face. And what they ... And I told him like really, I'm like, I thought we left that shit in the past because that's why I told them like, he's like "Whoa, whoa, what you getting mad for (F)?"

While many of the remarks were offensive to participants, there were other instances where participants were not offended. For example, one student described being expected to know other students of color within their college. This was attributed to the small number of students of color in the major/college.

Assumption of inferiority, theme nine, occurred in each focus group and details participants' experience of the negation of intellectual aptitude, speech, and/or financial standing. Students discussed witnessing the aforementioned negation of other Black students. Specifically, students described instances of White classmates and some parent(s) of White peers being surprised that the African American student could speak well. In addition, students experienced an assumption of lesser intellect or academic familiarity with course material by classmates. One participant stated:

“Like you have to constantly be hyper-aware of the fact that everything you do and everything you put into your work is going to be, it's going to be mulled over a lot. Like people are gonna keep looking it and making sure that every fine detail is right and, if it is right and if you do do well it's gonna be negated. ...Everything is gonna be negated and it's gonna be because you're Black (F).”

Further, classmates suggested external advantages (e.g. favoritism, diversity recruitment quota) rather than intellect or qualifications when Black students performed well or pursued graduate-level opportunities. For instance, a participant stated: *“I'll be applying to medical school in a little bit, and a lot of my friends again, white people, ...they kind of say like, "Oh, [student's name] has a better shot because he's black (M).”* Another student shared:

“In my years at [university] I've had two Black professors... there were two, two Black kids. And we had an assignment that we had to do.... this girl goes, "Well, [professor] said that sometimes he like prefers Black kids so he gives them higher grades." And I was like, "Okay, so you're negating all the hard work that I put into this assignment. Everything that I've done. Like I went to the library and I worked hours for this, because you're upset that you got a lower grade? Or you think that I'm being preferred over you because of the fact that you're White and I'm not (F)?”

Faculty and staff engaged in these actions by way of low expectations, assumption of low academic achievement, and assumption of lesser financial resources. A male participant shared his experience:

“Seeing the whole day-to-day battle, you know, ...you almost have to prove that you have somewhat of an intelligence, that you can talk the same talk, read the same books they [white peers and faculty] read, because if you don't open your mouth they already assume that they have to further explain things to you (M).”

“I spent last summer in Paris and London to study abroad, uh, but in order to do that, I had to go through an eligibility process and the contact person who did that, he automatically assumed that I would need financial assistance. I mean, he didn't ask

nobody else, we were in a room just like this, he pointed to me, “[student name], do you need, you know, some financial assistance?” Now I’m not saying that was solely because of my race. It could be conflated with class, but my race did play a big factor in that. I mean, the only black male there...(M)”

Theme ten, **avoided and unacknowledged**, participants across each focus group described being avoided and discounted/overlooked. Students reported being avoided or excluded from group interaction and group work inside and outside of the classroom. For instance, one student described suggesting a study group and later being excluded from the group:

“It was a group of maybe like five. We usually do all our projects together because we all sit next to each other. It came down... final project. We had a take-home final so it was my idea to like... everybody get together and we can do the final together,... But there’s another black girl who conformed to like...the white standards, and they invited her but they didn’t invite me... so when I saw the black girl, I had asked her, “So are you all meeting up for the group?” And she told me where they was meeting up and stuff. So I go to the meeting...in the library, I knock on her door, and they was looking at me strange.... they was like, “Oh, we didn’t know you were coming.” So I’m like, “Oh, so you all were just going to have this whole meeting or this thing? It was my idea, and you’re not inviting me?” They was like, “Oh, uh, okay,” so I had to walk in, I stayed for like five minutes and then I just made up an excuse to leave because I’m like, “If I’m not, if I’m not wanted around here, I’m not going to stay. I don’t need you all for this final and I’m getting a 4.0 in the class anyways, so (M).”

Others described instances where they were not chosen for group activity: *“You go to a small class and you have group activities. You’re not going to be the first one chosen, you know, ...and that’s, is definitely an uphill battle, but it’s kind of how it is (M) .”*

Participants’ also mentioned that their qualifications and contributions were questioned, overlooked and/or ignored by classmates, faculty, and staff in a number of contexts. Participants experienced this by way of classmates in discussions and assignments, faculty in class

discussions, and staff in the selection of qualified students for extra-academic opportunities. One participant said:

“Working like, in a group sense, either like a class or even at work, um, there are times I’ll make a comment or make maybe a suggestion, or I’ll give an answer sometimes, and either maybe I’m the only individual that’s black in the group, and there have been like occasions where someone may kind of overlook what I said, or maybe not take it like as the answer, they have to research it to see if it’s right, or they’ll ask others, and then once they confirm that the answer’s correct, and I was like right all along, it just seems kind of weird like, “Well I was like, right all along, why did you have to go through all of the work.” But then if someone else gives an answer they take it like (snaps fingers), you know, like first-basis, like no need to do the research or the investigation. So I think that’s kind of interesting, I guess (M).”

Another participant stated:

“He [instructor] asked us why we were taking French, like just generally. And I’m like, “Because unfortunately, everyone along the west coast of Africa speaks French so I have to learn French to speak to my people or whatever.” And he was just like really blown away, he had this like a huge pause, and he just like, “Okay, well we’ll get to the next line.” I felt really awkward about that but ... and then not to mention he comes along later with these African jokes, so. I contribute I tried but...(F)”

Black Lives Matter

In addition to the ten themes described above, students also experienced a number of racial microaggressions related to the social movement, #BlackLivesMatter. #BlackLivesMatter was created by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi in 2012 following the death of Trayvon Martin and subsequent acquittal of George Zimmerman. This movement intensified after the death of Eric Garner and the fatal shootings of two unarmed young Black males, Michael Brown (18) and Tamir Rice (12) in 2014. #BlackLivesMatter focuses on the extrajudicial demise of Black American citizens at the hands of police and vigilantes as well as

broad institutional racism, oppression, and state violence against Black Americans (“Black Lives Matter,” n.d.). Recent events related to the Black Lives Matter movement (such as the shooting death of Michael Brown of Ferguson, Missouri and the subsequent non-indictment of Officer Wilson) incited increased racial tensions on campus.

In the two female focus groups, students described polarization of the campus community, and an increase in isolation, offensive or insensitive remarks, and awareness of racial tensions:

“Especially like when all like the race related issues were going on, on campus, and we were marginalized that’s probably when I ... That’s when I knew, that’s when I really felt like the hatred on campus because before that I didn’t know. Like freshman year I was blessed to come in and have a whole floor full of all these great white people. They were all nice, everybody on the floor was so accepting and like I didn’t even know how bad it was until I left that floor. And then like my sophomore year I was, I’m pretty secluded because I lived off campus, and then like when I got involved like with the marches and all that stuff and the things that people would say to us that’s when I started like realizing like y’all to talk about this as progressive, do you really think so (F)”

When protesting in support of the social movement Black Lives Matter, students in one female focus group experienced microaggressions that were atypical in terms of frequency and type relative to their day-to-day experience on campus such as: intimidation, increased aggression, physical assaults (e.g. pushing, hitting, and kicking), and verbal assaults (e.g. being referred to as monkeys). One student shared:

“I saw, uh, the racism and like aggression toward us real heavily when we were standing out, when we were doing a die-in outside of the [sports arena] and so there was a basketball game and so here we all have of these [university] fans coming into this basketball game and we have like older white men, like they’re not students but they’re supporting us, so you know. And so like it makes me feel like you’re probably one of the student’s parents but here you are, well, pushing through us, hitting us like there are people kicking us like on all the [sports arena] ground and it’s just kind of like these are

the same exact people that are spending their money here. That's scary like we're not doing anything, we're just laying here. You guys are getting physical with us. That was really, that was then eye opening. That was really scary for me (F)."

Another student echoed:

"Just because that she said that, that just made me really think about what made me the most mad... It was like there was a whole other way that they could have gotten into that door but they just felt like they had to push through us. That's what made me so angry. I was like, so you can't be inconvenienced by this group of Black people. You can't walk around. It's like a thing in the middle, we were on this side, you could have went around and went that way, but you just feel the need to come and push through us then they wouldn't be mad that we're standing here, but you could have walked the other way (F)."

One student shared:

"Like people sit out there, and was making comments on the internet talking about 'Binder park zoo, we got your monkeys over here,' and stuff like that. I remember we were doing a die-in and somebody say that, 'Oh, they..' she was walking her dog and they were like, 'Oh, let's take our dogs to go pee on them' (F)."

Female participants in one focus group also discussed losing friends as a result of offensive and insensitive remarks or viewpoints about the non-indictment of Officer Wilson for the murder of Michael Brown. Male students, in particular, feared for their lives and were hesitant to respond to microaggressions by campus and local police officers especially given the multiple recent extrajudicial deaths of Black Americans at the hands of police and vigilantes. One participant shared:

"What our civilization is now and our economy, we can get shot for walking away [from police] and it can be justified. Mike Brown, Treyvon Martin, all these different cases, and it's like, I don't want to say it scares us, but it makes us think twice before we do anything because like we still got to conform to stuff that's just being racially profiled (M)."

Another student echoed:

“I’m just like, I know it’s probably racially profiled, and I’m not going to say or do anything, I’m just going to conform because I don’t want to get shot, uh, other than what [previous student is] saying, I am scared of getting shot. I do have things to live for and I’m not about to say or do anything that can hurt myself (M).”

Collectively, these findings show the multitude of racially microaggressive acts experienced by participants. In each of the twelve main racial microaggression themes, participants describe the complexities and prevalence of respective racial microaggressions whether perceived as intentional, unintentional, or ambiguous. Aside from the university setting as a predominantly white institution, Black Lives Matter is a relevant contextual factor affecting students’ experiences with racial microaggressions. This sociopolitical movement impacted factors such as the perceived racial climate, students’ social support groups, and behavior intentions for interactions with authority figures. Participants who explicitly described being involved in protests described an increase in the frequency and type of racial microaggressions they experienced. While Black Lives Matter does not focus exclusively on education, it most certainly impacted participants in their academic lives.

Responses to Racial Microaggressions

Participants had varied responses to microaggressions. As with most responses to stimuli, participants’ responses varied contextually. However, some participants’ (female participants from one focus group in particular) did note that responding to microaggressions was atypical. Participants’ responses to racial microaggressions can be categorized into behavioral and emotional responses. Behavioral responses included five major themes: self-reliant, dissociation,

hesitancy in responding, sought advice from colleagues, and confront offender. Emotional responses included three main themes: callous, negative feelings, and difficulty avoiding prejudiced behavior. Behavioral responses are presented first followed by emotional responses.

Some participants were **self-reliant** and described a preference for dealing with the aftermath of racial microaggressions alone: *“I just like, you know, do it and just keep it moving..(M).”* This was described in two focus groups (one female and one male). While this was described as normative, one participant emphasized cultural and religious influences that encouraged this behavior such as the expectation to handle problems alone and persist or to pray and persist:

“I think for me it's more of a cultural thing, too. Because, um, my family's all, my family's West Indian and, um, one of the things that's really big, I think it's really big in Black culture, but more so, it's more in West Indian culture, is that, you know, if you're having problems you go through it and you put your head down and you keep going. Like you just keep going. And so I feel like when I'm really stressed out I don't feel like I should go talk to people. I feel like I should handle it on my own or just pray about it. And I think even more so because my older siblings, like, they all went through the same things... And they, they were stressed out, too. But I feel like they didn't go to anyone, so I feel, I feel like I shouldn't have to go to anyone (F).”

Students in three focus groups (one female and two male) **dissociated** with offenders by staying away from the offender and similar people: *“I guess like my initial like response is to kind of like, you know, stay away from those kinds of people, or um, I just like maybe like keep them on like you know close watch I guess in a way (M).”* A majority number of participants described (or agreed that they displayed) a lack or **hesitancy in response** for fear of confirming **stereotypes** of Black persons such as Black persons as loud, aggressive, angry, violent, defensive, or late. This occurred in three focus groups (two female and one male). For instance,

one participant shared: *'Cause usually I'm just like, you know what, if I get worked up over it I'm just an angry Black woman. That is literally what I am. I'm just being what they want me to be (F).'* Another shared:

"I always say to my friends like, "I'm trying not to be that angry black person like ... and I always say that because as soon as like you get like the least bit of like defensive people look at you crazy like something is wrong with you but no, you're not realizing what you're doing to make me react in the way that I'm reacting and that's like a big issue for me (F)."

Similarly, a student shared:

"I do think twice, um, while in class if anyone says anything to me that seems kind of racist or just off-putting, I stay calm, and either respond to them in a respectful manner or just don't say anything to them, because whatever I do or say, it can be held against me, such as if I just say it in a response, just like a calm response, they may take it as like a defensive mechanism and like try to seem like I'm asserting myself and I'm not trying to give off the, the, how can I say this, the energy that I'm trying to, you know, raise conflict. I'm just trying to calmly, you know, I tell them off, and that's the same thing with the police officers (M)."

Participants in three focus groups (two female and one male) also **sought advice from colleagues** in the workplace. Colleagues were an outlet for students to discuss microaggressions that occurred in the workplace. Students chose to talk to their superior or other persons of color in the workplace with regard to addressing microaggressions. One participant stated:

"What I would do is I would speak to individuals, like the few minorities that do work in our office, and discuss those things to figure out what's the best way to address it in a way that not only doesn't make me feel uncomfortable but it doesn't make them feel uncomfortable as well, because, um, you have to understand, when you tackle someone, I mean they're not really being racist but, when you're, you know, addressing them for a remark they made, sometimes that really challenges their thinking as well, like, "Oh well

I never knew that that really made someone feel that type of way." So I just think it's a really sensitive way to handle life situations like that, and so I just usually like consult with others and then you know try to address it that way (M)."

In other cases, participants from each focus group would **confront the offender** by questioning or confronting the offender's actions or refuting remarks. Specifically, this occurred by seeking clarification, bringing the offense to the attention of the offender, detailing why they were offended and their displeasure with the offense, and/or responding with satire. In an extreme case, one student resigned from work. When the offender is a police officer, the students typically respond by questioning the offender's intents and explaining why the event is offensive. One student detailed her belief in confronting offenders:

"You don't have to be rude but it's always better to just stand up for yourself, ... they'll be confused, they will be taken aback... And if teachers or anybody else have any problem with that then you just politely talk to them as an adult because we're all adults but I just feel like you just have to say what you need to say (F)."

In discussing emotional responses to racial microaggressions, some students failed to respond to microaggressions because they had become **callous** to these experiences. This occurred in two focus groups (one female and one male). While some students expressed that they noticed the microaggressions and were not affected by them, other students discussed being so callous that they failed to notice microaggressions. For instance, a male participant said: *"I've become callous to it, so I'm just like I don't, I don't care (laughs). I'm going to do what I have to do and again I've put in the work so whatever happens (M)."*

Students also described having **negative feelings** following a racially microaggressive experience. Feeling **upset** in response to microaggressions was a common theme (i.e., occurred

in each focus group). In many instances, students did not express these feelings to the offender. Students were upset by microaggressions specifically describing being hurt, sad, angry, or uncomfortable. These feelings were more profound when microaggressions were committed by someone close to the student. One student shared: *“I have the same feelings, uh, hatred, uh, confusion, um, and just, I had a willingness to learn about these other cultures (M).”* Another participant described feelings of anger and discomfort:

“And so, it makes me angry. It makes me uncomfortable. It makes me really uncomfortable. Especially when like, if it's a situation that happens and everyone else around you is White and you're the, you're the only Black person there. You're the only person of color there. It makes me so uncomfortable because it's like how do I react and not show all of these people that I am this person (F)?”

Female participants from both female focus groups described crying at home in response to a racial microaggression:

“I did cry at home but I didn't want to cry in front of her because I didn't want her to see me, you know, weak and stuff like that, so it took me like about two weeks like to get over it because I can't believe that she said it in front of everybody but, you know (F).”

Lastly, participants in two focus groups (one female and one male) reported **difficulty in not stereotyping all White peers** as racially insensitive following racial microaggressions: *“It's hard not to become jaded by those experiences, uh, not, you know, generalize all white faces as a threat, somebody who wants to impose some type of harm towards you (M).”* Overall, students' responses to microaggressions appeared to be related to both personal preference and the context in which the microaggression occurred.

Research Question 2: How do African American college students attending a predominantly White institution perceive the impact of racial microaggressions on their academic performance?

Research question two sought to explore the perceived impact of racial microaggressions on academic performance for African American college students attending a predominantly white institution. While this research question focused on perceived academic impacts, participants were also asked about personal impacts. In this section, perceived academic impacts will be presented first followed by perceived personal impacts.

Perceived Academic Impacts

Participants described two main academic impacts (see Appendix I). Increasing academic effort was described as one impact. Participants increased **academic efforts** in a number of ways. This occurred in each focus group. For example, participants used the expectation of failure by peers, faculty, and staff as motivation to succeed. Students also sought out academic support such as tutoring and instructor office hours. To add, participants described working harder in part to prove that race did not dictate intelligence. One student states: *“I feel like we have to go above, beyond to get the same respect (M).”* Another student describes her experience here:

“That extra push of knowing that people think that I’m not good enough to be here, or knowing that people think that, “Oh, you just got in ‘cause you’re Black.” Or, “Oh”, I don’t know, like, “You got your grades because the professor was Black.” Stuff like that. Like, it pushes me to do better because not only am I trying to prove you wrong by getting good grades, but I’m trying to prove you wrong by being successful in general, and not just academically (F).”

The second academic impact was feeling **hesitant to contribute** in class as a result of experiencing microaggressions on campus. Participants in two female focus group described being hesitant to contribute openly in discussion for fear of additional ascription of lesser intelligence by classmates. . One student shared:

“I was going to say it is hard for me to like speak up in class, like my ... When they, it was like an open question like in he’s [instructor] looking for feedback from ... all the students it’s like I don’t know, I always hesitate for some reason because like I’m the only one, the only black person in the class and it’s like I don’t want to say something. I don’t know, I feel like when I say something, even a little bit wrong they’re like automatically, “Oh, my god, she’s dumb, she’s blah blah blah...” any, anything, like, so I don’t know, I’m like automatically hesitant (F).”

Another student shared:

“I think in most of those situations I don’t want to talk unless I have to talk so I kind of like, sometimes I’ll sit in the front, sometimes I’ll sit in the back, but there are a lot of classes where I’m like the only black person. And it bothers me sometimes but I don’t even talk unless I have to (F).”

Perceived Personal Impacts

Students also described two main personal impacts (see Appendix I). Male participants in both focus groups perceived stress experienced by way of racial microaggressions as **purposeful**. While students felt the need to work harder (i.e. increasing academic efforts described earlier), this often translated to feeling like they were overextending themselves. This was met with overwhelming **stress and anxiety** across all focus group that would manifest in multiple ways such as general stress, insomnia, fatigue, hair loss, mental break-downs. One student stated:

“I feel like a lot of the, a lot of the Black students that I know that are like, you know, that are doing well they, we over-extend ourselves. Because we feel like we have to be a part of this, we have to be a leader, we have to be in this, we have to be in that and it's all like, yes, it's for us and, yes, it's for our resume and it's for our success, but in the back of our minds it's always to prove people wrong. And I feel like we let that get to us and we let it stress us out (F).”

Another student shared a similar sentiment:

“I feel like at a point of time, every black person or everybody who goes through the struggle, they have a breakdown time where they feel like they just tired of it, like why do we have to constantly conform, but it's like we have, we come this far, so it's like who are we to say it's time to start working hard? We've just got to keep going to the end of, to the, till this is over ... I just wondered if like, ... do we really have some stuff to smile about sometimes when we think about it? Like we always got the weight in our back.... they can [mess] up in school, and they're still going to be straight because their parents always got a way for them (M).”

Participants also described altering appearance and behavior (female), questioning social supports (male), and sacrificing their social life (male) although these did not arise as themes across focus groups.

To summarize, students' accounts of academic impacts stemming from experiences of racial microaggressions were *perceived* as both positive and negative. While the research question focused on academic impacts, personal impacts were similarly prevalent and meaningful to participants. These personal impacts were also perceived as both positive and negative. Perceived positive impacts were situated around harnessing or promoting skillsets and intellect, whereas perceived negative impacts involved being overwhelmingly stressed. One should take caution in oversimplifying this finding. It is important to note that the perception of academic and personal impacts as positive may serve as a coping mechanism that aids in goal

pursuit, which has been identified as a key psychological resource (Hobfall, 2002). In the current study, experiences of racial microaggressions were related to perceived positive academic and personal impacts; however, there were costs associated with said impacts. For example, as described above, increasing academic efforts (i.e., perceived positive impact) was often met with stress and anxiety (perceived negative impact).

Research Question 3: How do African American college students attending a predominantly White institution adapt or overcome adversities stemming from racial microaggressions?

Research question three sought to explore how African American college students attending a predominantly white institution adapted or overcame adversities stemming from racial microaggressions. This research question focused on resilience, specifically protective factors and positive adaptations, participants used to overcome racial microaggressions. In this section, protective factors will be presented first, followed by adaptations.

Pre-existing Protective Factors

A number of participants spoke about involvement in college-preparatory programs, parents' or siblings' post-secondary experiences, and diversity (e.g. racial and socioeconomic) in high school student body; however, only one male participant explicitly noted these as pre-existing protective factors that aided in adapting to the university setting by exposing the participant to strategies for success. The participant stated: *“I came through, uh, the program before I got to Michigan State that really set the foundation for what you need to do in order to be successful (M).”*

Current Protective Factors

At present, participants described six main protective factors (see Appendix J):

motivation, being vocal about racial microaggressions, university diversity, physical activity, social supports, and Black student organizations.

In the theme, **motivation**, participants in both male focus groups described being motivated by personal, academic, environmental, and familial factors to continue striving for success. In detail, personal motivators included things such as life experiences generally, previous failures, future responsibilities, and career aspirations. One student said:

“I just pretty much like, remember like, you know like, where I came from and like, how everything was like before coming to State.... And then I look ahead at like, to my future, which I know in the future I want to work with like, African-Americans or actually just minorities at a predominately white institution, because I feel that there is a lack, a lack of support there, and I feel that that should, that, that needs to be addressed. Um, I think there's great research in that area, and I want to be a part of like that movement (M).”

These sources of motivation influenced participants to continue striving for success despite negative experiences. Academically, conditions of scholarships were motivating. The current conditions in students' hometowns was noted as an environmental motivator where students were motivated to continue with studies so as to be in a position where they did not have to return home and/or were able to change the conditions for citizens in their respective hometowns. Familial motivators included students' parents' experiences raising a family and/or pursuing postsecondary degrees, and parental expectations. For instance, one student described:

“Um, my parents, or my whole family I guess were from Ghana, West Africa, um, I moved here when I was 2 or something. And my parents, like they're brilliant people but like when we came to the U.S., like not all of their degrees were recognized. They had to

go back to school to get their degrees. Um, so it was like while I was growing up they were still in school, and I could see it had a really negative effect, like they were just tired. But they were still balancing a great family life. Um. But I just didn't, I knew I didn't want something like that for me. I wanted to get everything done as fast as possible, I wanted to be able to support my family without having the extra stress of school. And that's something they always told me. You can't like be balancing like school and other stuff. So like their dedication to their education was a huge inspiration to me. Um, so I think that it really spurred me on as I was going. I knew what they went through; I didn't want myself to go through that. I didn't want my kids in the future to have to go through something like that, so. Yeah (M)."

Students **vocalized experiences** with racial microaggressions for two main reasons: to generate awareness and to maintain emotional well-being. This occurred in female focus groups. When vocalizing experiences to generate awareness, audiences were both academic and non-academic and may have included white classmates and allies. In an effort to maintain emotional well-being, participants primarily described vocalizing experiences with racial microaggression to personal contacts. For example, one student said: *"I'm very vocal about how I feel about, because I feel like if I didn't express it, it would consume me and I just don't want to be a bitter person or be angry, or be hateful (F)."*

Separately, participants in one female and one male focus group described **valuing diversity in the university** student body (e.g. racial, cultural, nationality, gender). Specifically participants emphasized that rather than focusing on the university as a predominantly white setting, students instead focused on diversity in the student body that provided opportunities to interact and learn from others of differing backgrounds. One student plainly stated: *"I'm grateful for the chance to meet different kinds of people here (M)."* Some participants in one male and one female focus group engaged in in **physical activity** such as working out and skateboarding as an outlet for stress. One student shared:

“I internalize a lot of things but I also have like a pretty decent outlet. Like, I box five to seven times a week, so it's like, I know that sounds stupid but that physical outlet.. Of the anger is like very, it's very helpful (F).”

Another described:

“I started skateboarding and I knew the type of people I'm hanging out around and it was mainly, uh, well in California there's a mixture of your, uh, Hispanics and, uh, white students, I mean, white people, and I basically hung out around them, so I got that cultural identification and I understood that skateboarding is something that me and someone else can relate to of a different race, and so at that point, I just kept skateboarding. It kept me out of trouble, it kept me on the right path, and a lot of people don't see that, but I tell them and they possibly still don't see it, but like they see that if I wasn't on a skateboard, I think I would have been somewhere else, probably in jail or probably selling dope or just stuff like that, so that's how I, you know, get by, skateboarding, because I understand (M).”

Participants in each focus group described relying on personal and professional **supports**. These supports provided encouragement, validation, advice or guidance, academic support, and stress management. Support systems included religious faith and leaders, friends, parents, family members, faculty/staff (specifically professors and advisors), high school administrators, counseling psychologist, physical trainers. Interestingly, women reported relying on relationships with mothers more often than relationships with fathers whereas men reported the opposite. **Black Student Organizations** can, in part, be viewed as another form of social support. This theme occurred in one female and one male focus group. Here, students created connections within the Black community on campus by joining Black student organizations and seeking out companionship and/or acceptance with its members. One student stated: *“I've been a part of Black Caucus since like day one (M).”*

Adaptations

Participants described a number of adaptations (see Appendix K). For instance, participants discussed being **self-reliant** or not speaking to anyone about the impacts of microaggressions and other stressors. This theme occurred in one female and one male focus group. Some students disclosed that they avoided discussing experiences with social supports as a means of protecting these supports from additional stressors. One participant stated: *“I don't want to vent to my mom and I feel like I'm stressing her out. Or I don't want to vent to, like, my friends cause I feel like they're dealing with their own thing (F).”*

Students began practicing **self-care** by attending to mental health. This theme occurred in one female and one male focus group. Students emphasize the importance of mental health and maintenance of good mental health. Students also are persistent in not allowing racism to greatly affect them personally and academically. One participant stated:

“I mean, Michigan State produces the same type of people year in and year out. We're going to have (sniffs) Spartan babies and they going to be in these classrooms one day soon. As I understand, it's just a cycle, the same type people are going to be here forever. Michigan State ain't going to change, but, you know, I can, I know I don't have to let that affect me, so that's what changed for me (M).”

Participants started to be more **assertive** in class and other spaces by demanding respect and assuring that their voices are heard. This theme occurred in one female and one male focus group. For instance, one participant said: *“You've got to demand your respect. You've got to make your space and let them know that...you know, it is what it is (M).”* Similarly another student shared: *“...make sure that you have some type of voice in any situation whether it's uncomfortable for you or you feel like you're the minority in this situation (F).”* Participants in one female and one male focus group also began to become more **selective in friend and work**

groups by primarily associating with other students of color. Associating primarily with students of color helped some students remain motivated and steadfast. For example, one student shared:

“...just becoming more, um, I guess reclusive, or just like I'm only gonna have friends that are like really, really down (F).”

Educating oneself and others on issues related to microaggressions is another adaptation. This theme occurred in one female and one male focus group and was done in a number of ways such as keeping facts (e.g. crime statistics) nearby to combat rude comments or becoming more knowledgeable about probable cause to be prepared for encounters with police. One student detailed:

“I keep facts in my pocket, just cause, ... people don't know or people say asinine things and I check them every single time. And not so much that I care about education or educating people in their ignorance, it's just like, what you're not gonna do is disrespect me like that and think that you're right. So whether you leave disliking me or feeling enlightened, you can't do that. And people of privilege are very patronizing and they say really rude things (F).”

In two female focus groups, participants **resisted cultural discontinuity** (being bicultural or having a dual-self) and learned to embrace and express the self and culture. This was described as owning one's Blackness, being true to oneself, and identifying when personal time was needed. One student stated: *“They're [white peers and staff] going to always think there's nothing that we can do as a group, as a school, to change their perceptions on us... So it was like just being true to yourself because that's what's going to ... they're not going to change (F).”*

Another stated:

“And I think the more comfortable I became in my Blackness or what people would say or think about me, I just started owning it. ...I really became happy and I let go a lot of the things that I was feeling once I just became me. So, you know, um, kinda how I'm talking now, talking with my hands. Um, making references to, like, a Drizzy Drake song (laughter) when I'm talking about Plato or Aristotle and yes, it happens all the time. Talking about Voltaire or even Trotsky or we're talking about Che now in my senior seminar on radical political thought or whatever. Um, just, just being, owning my Blackness, But I also would say that I did that after the point that I had established that I was smart....at that point I had a reputation of being smart, being very vocal. Um, a little aggressive, too. So I guess I had the privilege of being myself because...I had already proved my point, like I was smart, too, but, yeah, so I, I stopped code-switching (F).”

Students in two focus groups (one female and one male) tried to make sense of microaggressions by **discounting offenders' behavior** and unpacking the offenders' motives. This was done by asserting that offenders are unaware of when they are being offensive, or that they were reared differently and thus behave differently. For example, a participant stated:

“...realizing that that even if they do handle it in a disrespectful way but if you are constantly thinking, well, this is new to them and even though what they might have said may have been really disrespectful or something like that, it's, I don't know, like that's helped me in the past like thinking that okay, you might not know now to act. You might not, you might now know how to act like, or you might not know that that was disrespectful to me like, in how that came across (F)”

The act of discounting offender's behaviors seems parallel to the empathic fallacy described by Delgado and Stefancic (2001). The empathetic fallacy is “the belief that one can change a narrative by merely offering another, better one – that the reader's or listeners empathy will quickly and reliably take over” (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001, p. 28). The empathic fallacy offers a counter-narrative that gives the benefit of the doubt, with hopes that this new counter-narrative will become the masternarrative. Here, students offer a counter-narrative to racial

microaggressions by discounted offenders' behavior stating, for example, that the context of interacting with African American people is new to the offender and although their actions were disrespectful, the offender may not know how to act or know that their actions were disrespectful. Participants described discounting offenders' behavior as helpful in dealing with racial microaggressions. When coping with an isolated incident of prejudice, discounting negative treatment from others may serve to protect an individual's self-esteem (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999).

Not all adaptations described by participants were perceived as effective. Participants described four adaptations that they found to be ineffective: biculturalism (female), educating others (female), gaining social supports from the Black community (female, and beliefs about changing racism (male); however, these were not prevalent across focus groups.

Post-Data Analysis Bracketing

My experiences with the phenomena of interest, research interests, positionality as a researcher, and my identity served as an asset in this study. During data collection, I was able to build rapport with participants, maintain a supportive environment, and probe effectively. Although I had ideas of what the data might look like prior to data collection, I was at times surprised at the themes that emerged from the data. Given the timing of data collection, participants discussed racial microaggressions that were "normal" in addition to those that were atypical as related to Black Lives Matter. As a supporter of Black Lives Matter and a community psychologist attentive to the relationships between individuals and social systems, I thought it was important to highlight experiences related to this movement separately from "typical or normal" racial microaggressions. I was impressed at how participants were able to articulate both positive and negative responses to racial microaggressions, perceived impacts, and adaptations.

This study utilized a strengths-based perspective, yet was able to explore students' strengths and shortcomings (e.g., ineffective adaptations). While causal inferences cannot be made from this study, the narrative represented in this study sheds light on my primary research interests in risk and protective factors impacting educational resilience in racial and ethnic minority students. Participants did not conduct member checks of my interpretations of the data as data was analyzed during the summer semester and participants were unavailable or uninterested in member checking. However, I employed a number of methods that allowed me to interpret the data in a way that was authentic to participants' experiences and revealed the true essence of the phenomena under study: referring to notes from the research assistants and memos immediately following each focus group, highlighting discrepant data, attending to gender differences, and peer debriefing (i.e. primary investigator/committee chair).

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the phenomena of racial microaggressions against African American college students attending a predominantly white institution using resilience theory as the theoretical framework. Specifically, this study sought to explore students' experiences of racial microaggressions, their perceived impacts, and subsequent resilience. The study's findings support prior literature in that African American college students at a predominantly white institution experienced an array of racial microaggressions, and described perceived academic impacts as well as resilience processes (i.e. use of protective factors and adaptations) in relation to racial microaggressions (Dorsey & Jackson, 1995; Douglas, 1998; Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harwood, Browne Hunt, Mendenhall & Lewis, 2011; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012; Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, & Hunt, 2013; McCabe, 2009; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Reynolds, Sneva, & Beehler, 2010; Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000).

Racial Microaggressions & Responses to Racial Microaggressions

The students interviewed described racial microaggressions that were both environmental and individual-level. A total of ten themes were identified and differed across focus groups. An additional four themes were identified specifically related to Black Lives Matter. The findings expand on the racial microaggressions literature. Three themes were unique to this study and were not previously identified in the literature: perceived undervaluing by the university, conformity, and loss of social supports. The theme loss of social supports was related to Black Lives Matter; thus, this theme is especially unique to the setting and timing of data collection. Institutional microinsults, lack of representation, offensive jokes and remarks, intellectual and financial inferiority, and avoided and unacknowledged were the most common racial microaggressions reported in this study. However, assumptions of criminality (McCabe, 2009;

Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010), and social isolation (Dorsey & Jackson, 1995; Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Harwood, Browne Hunt, Mendenhall & Lewis, 2012; McCabe, 2009; Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010) are most commonly reported in the literature.

In the current study, the university setting as a PWI is significant. This study purposefully examined students lived experiences at a PWI. At the time of data collection (spring 2015), the student body at Michigan State University was 66.2% White. In fall 2014, the university employed 74.8% White tenure-system and 75.02% White fixed-term faculty. In the introductory section of the focus group, students were asked describe their experiences as a Black or African American student at a school like MSU. Here, students' experience in relation to the university setting was emphasized prior to their interpersonal experiences on campus. For these reasons, participants may have been more inclined to recount environmental microaggressions (e.g. perceived undervaluing, conformity, institutional microinsults, and lack of representation). Factors such as the size of the university, faculty composition, and student composition may have influenced the frequency with which offensive jokes and remarks, assumptions of intellectual and financial inferiority, and being avoided and unacknowledged. Social support was a protective factor described across each focus group which may explain why social isolation is less common.

Participants' experience of racial microaggressions at the environmental level suggests that these messages actually macroaggressive and are systematically perpetuated within the university. Following Sue and colleagues (2007) microaggression taxonomy, Donovan, Galban, Grace, Bennett and Felicie (2012) conceptualized microassaults (i.e. environmental microaggressions) as macroaggressions. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the macrosystem includes culture or subculture beliefs that influence the system such as

media or the economy (e.g, seeing students of color on university brochures or websites). Specifically, the macrosystem “consists of the overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristics of a given culture or subculture with particular reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, life-styles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options that are embedded in each of these broader systems” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). The environmental messages discussed in this study (i.e., perceived undervaluing by the university, conformity, lack of representation, university microinsults, cultural bias in course curricula, and assumption of criminal status) fit within the larger macrosystem.

The remaining racial microaggression themes (inclusive of Black Lives Matters themes) were supported by prior literature including: institutional microinsults such as segregation in residence halls and inequitable university policies (Harwood, Browne Hunt, Mendenhall & Lewis, 2012), lack of representation (Douglas, 1998; McCabe, 2009), cultural bias in course content (Douglas, 1998; Feagin & Sikes, 1995), assumption of criminality (McCabe, 2009; Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010), rude treatment, offensive jokes and remarks (Douglas, 1998; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bysma, 2003; Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010), assumptions of intellectual and financial inferiority (Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Torres Driscoll, & Burrow 2010; Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, & Rivera 2009), avoided and unacknowledged (Dorsey & Jackson, 1995; Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Harwood, Browne Hunt, Mendenhall & Lewis, 2012; McCabe, 2009; Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010), racial tension (Douglas, 1998; Feagin & Sikes, 1995), atypical microaggressions such as assaults, and hesitancy in responding to microaggressions for fear for safety (D’Augelli & Hershberger, 1993). Overall, the literature on the types of racial microaggressions that African American college students experience is

comprehensive. Contextual factors (e.g. sociopolitical factors and settings) can impact the types and frequency of racial microaggressions and macroaggressions students experience; therefore, it may be useful to continue research on this topic. Research using resilience theory must examine risk (e.g. racial microaggressions and macroaggressions) as protective factors and positive adaptations are best understood in relation to risk (Masten, 2007).

In exploring how students experience racial microaggressions, students were asked to share their responses (i.e. behavioral and emotional) to racial microaggressions. The nature of racial microaggressions as generally covert may limit victims' ability to respond. Further, the catch-22 of responding to microaggressions involves determining whether a microaggression occurred, how to react and why, and the implications of the reaction. Because responding may be helpful or damaging, potential outcomes can influence the choice and manner in which one reacts (Sue et al., 2007). Thus, it was not surprising that behavioral and emotional responses varied across focus groups.

McCabe (2009) examined racial and gender microaggressions in Black, Latino/a and White students and found that students experienced social isolation, differential treatment by professors, and discrimination. Students responded to racial microaggressions by bonding with other students based on similar experiences, expressing a humorous demeanor when discussing experiences, embracing being a representative of their race, confronting the offender, and giving the offender the benefit of the doubt. The findings of the present study correspond with the McCabe (2009) such that participants demonstrated similar behavioral responses (e.g., confronting the offender). In this study, resilience theory was applied using a strengths-based lens to draw on positive factors (i.e. protective factors and positive adaptations) that arise despite risk (i.e. racial microaggressions). Some behavioral responses described in McCabe's (2009)

study were conceptualized as components of resilience theory in the present study. For example, using social supports or being vocal about racial microaggressions were conceptualized as protective factors whereas giving the offender the benefit of the doubt was conceptualized as an adaptation. These differences may be due to the fact that McCabe (2009) used critical race theory as a framework rather than resilience theory. Nonetheless, understanding students' responses may shed light on strategies utilized to cope with these events.

In addition, participants described a number of emotional responses such as being callous, negative feelings (i.e. upset, cried, anxious), and difficulty avoiding prejudiced behavior toward White peers. The most common emotional response was feeling upset (negative feelings). Only female participants described crying and feeling anxious in response to racial microaggressions (negative feelings). There is limited literature explicitly examining African American college students' emotional responses to racial microaggressions; however, studies have explored emotional responses implicitly (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012; McCabe, 2009). In some studies, racial microaggressions were related to perceived stress and depression (Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010). Therefore, it is important to examine students' behavior and emotional responses to racial microaggressions and related stressors. Future research can further explore emotional responses to racial microaggressions in order to establish a more direct link between these responses and related outcomes (e.g. academic stress).

There is sparse literature that concurrently examines racial and gendered microaggressions within this population. This study did not focus on gendered microaggressions; however, gender differences did emerge. Gender differences were present in reported racial microaggressions such that only female participants explicitly described experiencing cultural bias in course content (i.e. Eurocentrism). Regarding racial microaggressions related to Black

Lives Matter, male participants described hesitancy in responding to police because they feared for their lives whereas female participants discussed experiencing increased racial tensions, atypical microaggressions, and a loss of social supports. Gender differences in responses to racial microaggressions also emerged. Female participants described negative feelings such as crying at home. Future research should attend to both racial and gender microaggressions, or racialized gendered microaggressions as experiences of racial microaggressions and subsequent responses can differ by sex or gender (McCabe, 2009) and gender microaggressions may have comparable effects to racial microaggressions on individuals (Sue et al., 2007)..

Perceived Academic and Personal Impacts

Perceived Academic Impacts

The findings of this study build upon the literature regarding perceived academic impacts of racial microaggressions. In the current study, a perceived negative academic impact described by female participants was a hesitancy to contribute openly in class. Previous literature highlights the negative impacts of racial microaggressions on academic performance such as stereotype threat, failing to seek help or contribute to class discussion, dropping classes, changing majors, leaving the university (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012; Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000).

Increased academic effort was described by participants as a perceived positive academic impact. Although participants described this as a perceived positive academic impact, there were costs associated with this behavior such as overwhelming stress and anxiety (perceived negative personal impact). As mentioned earlier, increasing academic effort may have acted as a coping mechanism to aid in goal pursuit. Rather than allowing racial microaggressions to discourage or deter participants' positive academic performance (i.e., goal), participants instead increased

academic efforts. These findings are supported by Brodsky's (1999) finding in which participants set and strived for new goals in the process of resilience. The findings partially counter results by Reynolds, Sneva, and Beehler's (2010) study which concluded institutional race-related stress (i.e., based on institutional policies/practices) was positively correlated with academic amotivation (i.e., lack of internal locus of control or motivation) suggesting that students experiencing higher levels institutional race-related stress demonstrated higher academic amotivation. The current study did not focus on the relationship between institutional race related stress and motivation; however, participants from each focus group described experiencing institutional microinsults. The sample, measures, and analysis used in Reynolds and colleagues (2010) study may account for the contradictory findings in the current study. Reynolds and colleagues (2010) study used hierarchical multiple regression analyses to assess the influence of racism related stress on academic motivation in a 151 Black and Latino/a students attending multiple Northeastern PWIs. Moreover, Reynolds and colleagues (2010) study examined race-related stress rather than racial microaggressions explicitly. In addition, the sample was more diverse than that of the current study and was drawn from a different setting. Further, the study used quantitative methodology rather than qualitative.

Perceived Personal Impacts

Aside from perceived academic impacts, participants in the current study described personal impacts. One such impact was perceiving stress as purposeful (male participants). The perception of stress as purposeful mirrors Brodsky's (1999) finding in which participants reframed stressors to elicit contentment in the process of resilience. Another personal impact described in this study was stress and anxiety and altering appearance and behavior. Stress and anxiety was described by participants in each focus group. An excess amount of stress, anxiety,

and pressure to succeed may have negative implications for mental health and academic performance if not managed properly (Greer, 2009, 2011). These findings counter the notion of perceived minimal harm of racial microaggressions which implies that the victim is overreacting and the racial microaggression is not damaging, and discounts psychological harm as a result of the racially microaggressive experience (Sue et al. (2007). Future research should attend to perceived academic and personal impacts of racial microaggressions so as to clarify the relationship between racial microaggressions, perceived impacts, and academic and personal outcomes (e.g. GPA and psychological distress). Further, research can be used by university departments (e.g. Student Life, Office of Inclusion, and Counseling Center) that assist students and to improve the overall campus climate.

Resilience

Protective factors

This study explores how students demonstrate resilience by attending to protective factors and adaptations students' utilize in response to current and prior experiences of racial microaggressions. Protective factors are individual characteristics and environmental assets that buffer against, interrupt, or even prevent risk (Greene & Conrad, 2002). Students used motivation, being vocal about racial microaggressions, university diversity, black student organization, social support, and physical activity as protective factors. A theme that was unique to male participants was motivation whereas female participants were vocal about racial microaggressions.

These protective factors demonstrate elements that Walsh (2006) describes as key beliefs in family resilience: belief systems, structural/organizational patterns, and communication.

Walsh's (2006) key beliefs can be applied to individual resilience. For example, a major process

of belief systems is making meaning of adversity. In making meaning of adversity, one perceives adversity as manageable. Students made meaning of the adversity by being vocal about racial microaggressions and using personal, academic, environmental, and familial factors as motivations to continue striving for success. Three major processes of structural/organizational patterns are flexibility (i.e. reorganizing and maintaining stability), connectedness (i.e. building trust and respect), and social and economic resources (mobilizing micro and macro system resources; Walsh, 2006). Students demonstrated connectedness and mobilizing social resources by joining Black student organizations and valuing university diversity which led to seeking out opportunities to learn from others of differing backgrounds. Lastly, major processes of communication are: clarity, open emotional sharing, and collaborative problem solving. Students demonstrated each of these by way of social supports.

Social support was the most common protective factor; supports were used to provide encouragement, validation, advice or guidance, academic support, and stress management. Prior literature highlights social support as a protective factor (Cunningham & Swanson, 2010; Floyd, 1996; Leary & DeRosier 2012; Walsh, 2006; Wilks & Spivey, 2010; Williams & Portman, 2014); however, a majority of literature focuses on children and adolescents. There is limited literature that explores protective factors relevant to African American college students. Example protective factors for children and adolescents include the presence of a supportive, caring, and responsive adult, peer groups, low conflict or discord in the home, and religious faith (Carolan, 2015b; Kelly & Emery 2003; Walsh, 2006). On the other hand, protective factors for adults may include identifying supports, reliance on family and friends, meaning making, normalizing stressors, having a positive outlook, celebrating small wins, learning coping mechanisms, collaborative problem solving, and service/resource coordination (Bayat, 2007; Walsh 2006).

Traditional college students (ages 18-24) are uniquely situated in the family context in that they are legal adults but are likely to remain dependent on their family of origin. Therefore, protective factors for adolescence and adults may apply concurrently.

Adaptations

Adaptations are mechanisms and strategies that an individual uses to manage stress. Adaptations can be positive (i.e., bonadaptation) or negative (i.e., maladaptation). In total, participants described seven themes of adaptations. Only female participants described resisting cultural discontinuity (displaying a dual-self). Prior literature supports a number of adaptations described in this study such as such as discounting offender's behavior (McCabe, 2009), being selective in social supports, self-care, and being assertive and resisting cultural discontinuity (Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, & Hunt, 2013).

Being assertive and resisting cultural discontinuity were conceptualized as resistance coping strategies by Lewis and colleagues (2013). From this perspective, in the current study the themes discontinuation of excusing or understanding microaggressions, and educating self may also be conceptualized as resistance strategies rather than resilience strategies. Lewis and colleagues (2013) study focused on Black women; however, the strategies identified in this study also applied to Black males. As cited in Carter Andrews (2012), Ward (1999) defines resistance as "the ways in which African Americans respond to race-related pressures and stressful experiences of racial prejudice and discrimination" (p. 6). Ward further notes that resistance fosters resilience. According to Carter Andrews (2012), resistance behavior is opposing a stressor rather than only managing the stressor. Example resistance behavioral strategies for experiencing racial microaggressions include: silence as survival, challenging (i.e. verbally confronting perpetrator), positive reappraisal/logical analysis, distancing (i.e. separating oneself

from the occurrence by diminishing its significance), seeking guidance and support, self-reliance/problem solving (i.e. asserting oneself into conversation for visibility), and problem solving. Future studies could integrate resilience and resistance theory as a theoretical framework when examining African American college students' responses and adaptations to racial microaggressions. Applying both resilience and resistance theory may help identify and differentiate protective factors, positive adaptations or compensatory strategies, and resistance behavioral strategies. Further exploring resilience of African American college students using qualitative and quantitative methodologies may yield results that identify the types and frequencies of racial microaggressions experienced, the impact of racial microaggressions on academic and personal outcomes (e.g. GPA, and personal, emotional, and psychological stress), and a typology of protective factors and adaptations that most effectively buffer the impact of racial microaggressions.

Study Limitations

One limitation of the study is that it was restricted to one university setting. The current setting is a Research 1 land grant institution serving over 47,000 students; at the time of the study the faculty was 20.4% faculty of color, 1.4% international faculty (MSU Office of Budgets and Planning, 2014), and 17.4% were domestic students of color (MSU Office of Registrar, 2014). Expanding the sampling frame to participants at multiple PWIs of various sizes, regions, and racial compositions of faculty and students may strengthen the study. To add, a comparison of students attending a PWI to students attending an HBCU could aid in highlighting racial microaggressions specific to or especially common in PWIs. This could also strengthen the trustworthiness of the study by way of triangulation, which requires multiple methods, data sources, analytical perspectives, and/or theoretical perspectives (Patton, 2002). This sample was

selected based upon age, race, and enrollment status. As some participants noted differential experiences across colleges or majors, it may prove useful to increase homogeneity of focus groups by attending to enrollment status and major and assess differences across majors or colleges. Homogeneity helps researchers develop a phenomenological understanding of cultural knowledge (Hughes & Dumont 1993).

The facilitator of all focus groups was an African American female. While the research assistant was matched by race and sex to each focus group, the facilitator was not. Focus group discussion in the African American male focus groups may have differed had the facilitator been male. The timing of data collection is another limitation. This study was conducted in February 2015 in the midst of Black History Month and the sociopolitical movement Black Lives Matter. Due to the timing of data collection, participants may have had a heightened awareness to racial microaggressions. Findings did suggest that female students in particular experienced racial microaggressions that were atypical to their daily experiences (e.g., increased racial tensions and physical assaults) due to their participation in events related to Black Lives Matter. However, these racial microaggressions were supported by prior literature (D'Augelli & Hersberger, 1993; Douglas, 1998; Feagin & Sikes, 1995). Lastly, a subset of participants elected to check transcripts for accuracy; however, participants did not conduct a member check on the analysis of the data. Conclusions of the study are not unfavorable toward participants; however, member checking allows participants to validate conclusions (Richards, 2009).

Implications

Implications for Research

Resilience theory was used in this study to understand African American students' holistic experience of racial microaggressions at a PWI, including the perceived academic impact

of these microaggressions and experiences overcoming adversities associated with these microaggressions. As used in this study, resilience theory includes the components discussed in the broader literature as well as in Fergus and Zimmerman's (2005) protective factor model: exposure to adversity or risk, protective factors, and positive adaptations. The current study bolsters resilience theory by clarifying the role of positive adaptations, which is narrowly explored in resilience literature. In some areas (e.g. sociology), positive adaptations have been referred to as compensatory strategies (Morales, 2008a) and can vary widely.

We can borrow from Patterson (2002) Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response Model, which integrates family resilience and stress theory to understand the role of positive adaptations. In this model, families move from displaying adjustment to an adaptation response when a crisis occurs (i.e. a significant imbalance of risks to protective factors). Both family adjustment and adaptation response have three main components: family demands (i.e. risks or stressors, strains, and daily hassles), family capabilities (i.e. protective factors or coping strategies) and family meaning (i.e. appraisals, identity, and worldview). In the current study, experiences of racial microaggressions and subsequent negative perceived academic and personal impacts represent risk whereas positive adaptations represent capabilities. Two types of adaptation can occur: bonadaptation and maladaptation. Bonadaptation is the process of restoring balance between demands and capabilities and parallels positive adaptations in resilience theory as used in this study.

According to the aforementioned model, an adaptation response occurs when there is a significant imbalance of risk to protective factors. Adaptations have a temporal element and can vary by time, contexts, and life circumstances. Therefore, longitudinal studies can be useful in identifying the positive adaptations (i.e. strategies) of African American students attending a

PWI in response to racial microaggressions over time, and clarifying the relationship between positive adaptations and protective factors (i.e. individual characteristics or environmental assets). As resilience is developmental and multidimensional, future research can incorporate Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which emphasizes human development and reciprocal interactions between individuals and their social environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 1997). Specifically, research can examine positive adaptations and resilience more broadly within the chronosystem which "encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40).

The findings of this study also have implications for future social action research. For example, findings from this study suggest that Black students experienced an assumption of criminal status by campus and local police, and were frequently stopped and questioned. Future research could survey students about how many times black male and female students are stopped and/or questioned by police on and near campus, and when these stops are most frequent; this could also be done via observation with confederates. The current study explored African American college students' experiences at a PWI via focus groups but there are other, perhaps more visual ways to explore this topic. Reminiscent of the #BBMSU (Being Black at MSU) twitter conversation that took place in November 2013 (Jones, 2013) following a similar movement at the University of Michigan, future research could use photovoice to highlight students perception of what it is like being Black at respective colleges and universities, highlighting their trials, triumphs, use of supports, and ideas for change.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study can be used by universities to improve the experience of Black students on predominantly white campuses (e.g. reduce racial microaggressions and support students). Universities could take a number of steps to accomplish this to accomplish this. A number of the suggestions detailed below were offered by students in the context of the focus group discussions. For example, students noted a lack of representation or limited number of persons of color in classes, student organizations, faculty and leadership positions within the university. To increase representation, universities can increase current efforts to recruit, retain and support staff, students, faculty, and administrators of color. Perceived undervaluing, conformity, rude treatment, offensive jokes and remarks, and racial tensions were identified as themes of racial microaggressions. To address these microaggressions and more generally improve campus racial climate, university diversity course requirements may be altered to include more intentional interpersonal interactions between persons of differing backgrounds such as roundtable discussions, mandatory lectures on racial intimidation and bias incident reporting, and university events emphasizing cultural diversity. Desegregating campus housing may also serve to encourage these interactions and address an institutional microinsult described in this study. An assumption of criminal status was described as a racial microaggression. University administration can conduct an investigation of racial discrimination by the police department, improve the infrastructure for reporting hate speech, racial intimidation, and bias incident reporting, and reprimand offenders in order to attend to the hyper-criminalization of Black students and curtailed attention given to crimes committed against Black students.

To address cultural bias (i.e., eurocentrism) in courses, instructors can create courses and integrate material about African and African American studies. Advising offices should be made

aware of these courses and their availability in order to inform and promote them to all students. In addition, instructors can be offered workshops and written materials on topics such as creating an effective learning climate, classroom management, inclusive teaching methods, and teaching for diverse populations. Separately, stakeholders across the university (e.g., Department of Student Life and Office of Inclusion) can organize to increase opportunities for students to have discussions about their experiences and create actionable plans. Black student organizations were described as a protective factor. Black student organizations and programs serving Black students can better promote inclusion, improve reach, and strengthen support of students. Finally, other departments within the university such as counseling centers can use these findings to be better attuned to the stressors affecting this population, and garner support for group therapies.

Conclusion

This study illustrates that African American college students attending a predominantly white institution experience racial microaggressions, have behavioral and negative emotional responses, and have both perceived academic and personal impacts to these events. While this study did not focus on gendered microaggressions, a number of differences between male and female groups emerged. Racial and gendered microaggressions can be examined in the future, helping researchers further understand the impact of intersecting identities on students' experiences. Further, instances of negative emotional responses and personal impacts are narrowly explored in the literature. Future research can examine these phenomena to better understand relationships between racial microaggressions and students' academic motivation and performance, and psychological distress.

Protective factors and adaptations identified in this study served to buffer the perceived impacts of racial microaggressions. Resilience research can examine protective factors and

adaptations unique to African American college students rather than adolescents. Some adaptations may be conceptualized as resistance strategies; thus, resistance theory may be useful in exploring African American college students' adaptations in response to racial microaggressions and related stressors. Protective factors and adaptations can be promoted as tips, strategies, or competencies in university student organizations (e.g. Black Caucus) or programs that serve this population of students. Concurrently, universities can work to improve campus racial climate and the experiences of African American college students more broadly such that students are able to be less reliant on these protective factors or adaptations.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Table of Theory

Table 3. *Table of Theory*

Resilience Theory	Research Question	Focus Group Question
<p>Risk Factor: (present and emergent)</p> <p>A variable that increases the probability of negative outcomes.</p>	<p>1. How do African American college students attending a predominantly White institution experience racial microaggressions?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think of experiences on campus such as in class, libraries, workshops, sporting events, parties, residence halls, cafeterias, on campus work, or with administration such as financial aid or advising. Describe a time where you or someone you know felt like you were treated differently, unfairly, or made uncomfortable because of your race? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How (why), if at all, do you all feel like this experience was related to your race? ○ Would you describe this as a common experience or something that happened once? ○ How do experiences like these make you all feel? ○ In what ways, if at all, have you all responded to experiences like these? ○ Do you know of anyone who has had similar or different experiences? Have you had similar or different experiences? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ [Repeat a-d] • You described [Briefly describe shared experiences]. Can anyone share other experiences where you or someone you know were/was treated differently, unfairly, or made uncomfortable for example [Types of microaggressions not mentioned] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ being overlooked or excluded in a group discussion, or being treated unfriendly ○ someone assuming you wouldn't be

Table 3. cont'd

Resilience Theory	Research Question	Focus Group Question
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ intelligent ○ someone saying they are color-blind or saying you should not complain about race) ○ someone avoiding sitting next to you or getting substandard service compared to others ○ someone assuming you eat foods associated with your race/culture every day or wanting to date you only because of your race), and lastly <p>not seeing people of your race in prominent positions at school)</p>
	<p>2. How do African American college students attending a predominantly White institution perceive the impact of racial microaggressions on their academic performance?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What, if any, effects have these experiences had on you all or persons you talked about academically? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attending class? ○ Attending office hours? ○ Seeking tutoring? ○ Participating in class? ○ Studying? ○ Examinations or writing papers? ○ Overall grades? ○ Establishing and maintaining relationships with professors and/or peers? ○ Seeking academic advising or mentoring? ○ Getting involved in student organizations and activities?

Table 3. cont'd

Resilience Theory	Research Question	Focus Group Question
<p>Protective Factors: (present and emergent)</p> <p>Individual characteristics and environmental assets that buffer against, interrupt, or even prevent risk.</p>	<p>3. How do African American college students attending a predominantly White institution adapt or overcome adversities stemming from racial microaggressions?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who, if anyone, did you or the persons you talked about speak to about these impacts? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Peers? ○ Family Members? ○ Faculty? ○ Administration? ○ Community members? • What, if any, positive factors were already in place that helped you adapt or overcome these discriminatory acts? Examples could be a mentor or programs.
<p>Positive Adaptation:</p> <p>Adaptations used to facilitate positive outcomes despite the presence of risk</p>	<p>3. How do African American college students attending a predominantly White institution adapt or overcome adversities stemming from racial microaggressions?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the ways you or the persons you talked about dealt with these experiences, if at all. [<u>How, if at all, were you able to overcome these discriminatory acts you just described?</u>] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What helped or was most effective? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How did it feel to do this? ▪ What positive consequences did this have? ▪ What negative consequences did this have ○ What didn't help or was least effective? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How did it feel to do this? ▪ What positive consequences did this have? ▪ What negative consequences did this have ○ How, if at all, has this changed over time?

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Flyers

Figure 1. *Recruitment Flyer 1*

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

Are You a Black College Student?

We're Looking For YOU!



Join us in a focus group interview to share experiences about being a student at a predominantly White university and how it affects academic successes.

Date & Time:
To Be Determined

Location: On the campus of Michigan State University

You will receive a **\$20 Amazon gift card** for participating! Refreshments will be served. The session will take about 90 minutes. Confirmation of attendance is required.

If you would like to participate please contact mhrastudy@gmail.com. Any questions can be directed to Kristen J. Mills or Dr. Jennifer Neal.

Eligibility

- At least 18 years old
- Black/African American
- Currently enrolled at Michigan State University
- Sophomore, Junior, or Senior

Successful African American College Students Project Kristen J. Mills Dr. J Neal mhrastudy@gmail.com	Successful African American College Students Project Kristen J. Mills Dr. J Neal mhrastudy@gmail.com	Successful African American College Students Project Kristen J. Mills Dr. J Neal mhrastudy@gmail.com	Successful African American College Students Project Kristen J. Mills Dr. J Neal mhrastudy@gmail.com	Successful African American College Students Project Kristen J. Mills Dr. J Neal mhrastudy@gmail.com	Successful African American College Students Project Kristen J. Mills Dr. J Neal mhrastudy@gmail.com
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Figure 2. *Recruitment Flyer 2*



APPENDIX C

Transcription Service Confidentiality Agreement

Figure 3. *Transcription Service Confidentiality Agreement*

<p style="text-align: center;">CLIENT NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT</p> <p>This CLIENT NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT, effective as of the date last set forth below (this "Agreement"), between the undersigned actual or potential client ("Client") and Rev.com, Inc. ("Rev.com") is made to confirm the understanding and agreement of the parties hereto with respect to certain proprietary information being provided to Rev.com for the purpose of performing translation, transcription, video captions and other document related services (the "Rev.com Services"). In consideration for the mutual agreements contained herein and the other provisions of this Agreement, the parties hereto agree as follows:</p> <p>1. Scope of Confidential Information</p> <p>1.1. "Confidential Information" means, subject to the exceptions set forth in Section 1.2 hereof, any documents or other text supplied by Client to Rev.com for the purpose of performing the Rev.com Services.</p> <p>1.2. Confidential Information does not include information that: (i) was available to Rev.com prior to disclosure of such information by Client and free of any confidentiality obligation in favor of Client known to Rev.com at the time of disclosure; (ii) is made available to Rev.com from a third party not known by Rev.com at the time of such availability to be subject to a confidentiality obligation in favor of Client; (iii) is made available to third parties by Client without restriction on the disclosure of such information; (iv) is or becomes available to the public other than as a result of disclosure by Rev.com prohibited by this Agreement; or (v) is developed independently by Rev.com or Rev.com's directors, officers, members, partners, employees, consultants, contractors, agents, representatives or affiliated entities (collectively, "Associated Persons").</p> <p>2. Use and Disclosure of Confidential Information</p> <p>2.1. Rev.com will keep secret and will not disclose to anyone any of the Confidential Information, other than furnishing the Confidential Information to Associated Persons; provided that such Associated Persons are bound by agreements respecting confidential information. Rev.com will not use any of the Confidential Information for any purpose other than performing the Rev.com Services on Client's behalf. Rev.com will use reasonable care and adequate measures to protect the security of the Confidential Information and to attempt to prevent any Confidential Information from being disclosed or otherwise made available to unauthorized persons or used in violation of the foregoing.</p> <p>2.2. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary herein, Rev.com is free to make, and this Agreement does not restrict, disclosure of any Confidential Information in a judicial, legislative or administrative investigation or proceeding or to a government or other regulatory agency; provided that, if permitted by law, Rev.com provides to Client prior notice of the intended disclosure and permits Client to intervene</p>	<p>therein to protect its interests in the Confidential Information, and cooperate and assist Client in seeking to obtain such protection.</p> <p>3. Certain Rights and Limitations</p> <p>3.1. All Confidential Information will remain the property of Client.</p> <p>3.2. This Agreement imposes no obligations on either party to purchase, sell, license, transfer or otherwise transact in any products, services or technology.</p> <p>4. Termination</p> <p>4.1. Upon Client's written request, Rev.com agrees to use good faith efforts to return promptly to Client any Confidential Information that is in writing and in the possession of Rev.com and to certify the return or destruction of all Confidential Information; provided that Rev.com may retain a summary description of Confidential Information for archival purposes.</p> <p>4.2. The rights and obligations of the parties hereto contained in Sections 2 (Use and Disclosure of Confidential Information) (subject to Section 2.1), 3 (Certain Rights and Limitations), 4 (Termination), and 5 (Miscellaneous) will survive the return of any tangible embodiments of Confidential Information and any termination of this Agreement.</p> <p>5. Miscellaneous</p> <p>5.1. Client and Rev.com are independent contractors and will so represent themselves in all regards. Nothing in this Agreement will be construed to make either party the agent or legal representative of the other or to make the parties partners or joint venturers, and neither party may bind the other in any way. This Agreement will be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of California governing such agreements, without regard to conflicts-of-law principles. The sole and exclusive jurisdiction and venue for any litigation arising out of this Agreement shall be an appropriate federal or state court located in the State of California, and the parties agree not to raise, and waive, any objections or defenses based upon venue or forum non conveniens. This Agreement (together with any</p>
<p>agreement for the Rev.com Services) contains the complete and exclusive agreement of the parties with respect to the subject matter hereof and supersedes all prior agreements and understandings with respect thereto, whether written or oral, express or implied. If any provision of this Agreement is held invalid, illegal or unenforceable by a court of competent jurisdiction, such will not affect any other provision of this Agreement, which will remain in full force and effect. No amendment or alteration of the terms of this Agreement will be effective unless made in writing and</p>	
<p>executed by both parties hereto. A failure or delay in exercising any right in respect to this Agreement will not be presumed to operate as a waiver, and a single or partial exercise of any right will not be presumed to preclude any subsequent or further exercise of that right or the exercise of any other right. Any modification or waiver of any provision of this Agreement will not be effective unless made in writing. Any such waiver will be effective only in the specific instance and for the purpose given.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have caused this Agreement to be executed below by their duly authorized signatories.</p>	
<p>CLIENT</p> <p>Print Name: <u>Kristen J. Mills</u></p> <p>By: <u>Kristen J. Mills</u> Name: <u>Kristen J. Mills</u> Title: <u>Graduate Assistant, Michigan State University</u> Date: <u>February 13th, 2015</u></p> <p>Address for notices to Client: <u>Michigan State University</u> <u>Department of Psychology</u> <u>316 Physics Road, Room 242</u> <u>East Lansing, MI 48812</u></p>	<p>REV.COM, INC.</p> <p>By: <u>Cheryl Brown</u> Name: <u>Cheryl Brown</u> Title: <u>Account Manager</u> Date: <u>November 10, 2014</u></p> <p>Address for notices to Rev.com, Inc.: <u>251 Kearny St. Suite 800</u> <u>San Francisco, CA 94108</u></p>
<p>Page 1</p> <p>LIBC4524740.1</p>	<p>Page 2</p> <p>LIBC4524740.1</p>

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent and Privacy Statement

Michigan State University | Department of Psychology
Successful African American College Students

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Student,

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the research study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have. Please carefully review the following items of the informed consent prior to giving your consent to participate in the study.

Purpose of Study: You are being asked to participate in a research study of Black/African American students' race-related experiences on campus, and individual strengths that allow students to be successful in college. You have been selected as a possible participant in this study because you are at least 18 years of age, self-identified Black/African American, and currently enrolled at Michigan State University. From this study, the researchers hope to understand the race-related experiences, the academic impact of such experiences, and adaptations or processes of overcoming those experiences. Your participation in this study will take about 60-90 minutes.

What you will do: Should you decide to participate, you will be asked to share your race-related experiences on campus and the academic impact of these experiences in a focus group interview. You will also fill out a demographic questionnaire.

Potential Benefits: You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation may assist in providing direction for education researchers, practitioners, and staff in higher education institutions regarding programs and interventions that support the retention, academic performance, and degree attainment in Black/African American college students.

Potential Risks: There is a chance that some of the questions asked may make uncomfortable; you may choose not to answer these questions. Please respond as honestly as possible. Remember, that you are free to skip questions that make you uncomfortable. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Privacy and Confidentiality: This focus group and demographic data will be kept confidential. Your responses will not be connected to your name or any other identifying information. Only research members will have access to your responses.

All information will be kept confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law. Once the focus group interview is complete, audiotapes will be downloaded on a password protected computer and emailed to an outside company to be transcribed. The transcriber will sign a confidentiality contract before beginning the transcription process. Audio recording from the interviews will be destroyed once data analysis is complete. Transcripts will be de-identified of all names and other identifying information. The original transcripts will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked room for at least five years after the project closes and then will be destroyed. Notes taken during the focus group interview will also be stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked office. The data will be accessible to the researchers and the MSU HRPP.

The results of the study will be used for a master's thesis and may be used for publication or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain anonymous. The name of the university may be provided but the names of colleges, departments, courses, faculty, peers, or campus

landmarks will be confidential. Results of the study will be presented in aggregate form and individual results will not be shared.

Your Right to Participate, Say No, or Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate there will not be any negative consequences. Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your grade(s) or evaluation(s).

Costs/Compensation: After completing the study, you will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card for your participation.

Who to contact with questions: You have the right to ask questions about this study and to have those questions answered by the study investigator before, during or after the research. If you have any questions about the study, please contact me, Kristen J. Mills, at millskr1@msu.edu or (313) 682-9322 or Dr. Jennifer Watling Neal in the Psychology Department at (517)-974-0166 or jneal@msu.edu or 127 Psychology Building, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 408 W. Circle Drive, Room 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Debriefing: At the conclusion of the interview you will be provided with a list of on campus should you choose to discuss your experiences further. You will also be given the opportunity to volunteer to check completed transcriptions of the interview.

Documentation of Informed Consent: Your signature below indicates that you have decided to participate voluntarily in this study and that you have read and you agree with the information provided above.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> At Least 18 years of age | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-identified Black/African American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enrolled at Michigan State University | <input type="checkbox"/> Attended Michigan State University one or more years |

(Please check all that apply)

☐ I give permission for this interview to be recorded

☐ I give permission for the interviewer to take notes during this interview

Signature of Participant

Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

You will be given a copy of this form to keep

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT PRIVACY STATEMENT

I understand that because of this study, there could be violations of my privacy. To prevent violation of my own or others' privacy, I have been ask not to talk about any of my own or others private experiences that I would consider too personal or revealing.

I also understand that I have an obligation to respect the privacy of the other members of the group by not disclosing any personal information that they share during our discussion.

Signature of Participant

Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

APPENDIX E

Focus Group Protocol and Demographic Questionnaire

STUDY INTRODUCTION AND CONSENT SCRIPT:

[Greetings and instruct participants to make a name tag]

Welcome and thank you for coming to the focus group. Let me introduce myself and the members of the study who are present. I'm Kristen Mills, a graduate student in Community Psychology and an MSU graduate. I will be primarily facilitating the discussion. (Recorder) will also be supporting that process and is here to assist and take notes.

Before we begin, there are a few things I would like to go over with you. First, this is a consent form to confirm your voluntary participation in this focus group. Please read over the consent form and provide your signature if you choose to participate in the focus group. **[Review the major points]**

I am working with Dr. Jennifer Watling Neal here at MSU on a study of African American college students' at a predominantly White university. We are interested in understanding these experiences, their impact on well-being and academic performance, and student's resilience. This session will help us understand both positive and negative experiences among students like you. We believe that you may benefit from the discussion and from the shared atmosphere. This can be particularly important for students of color on campuses like this. Please remember that my desire to hear your story is not as important as your own comfort. If you feel at all uncomfortable or stressed you can take a break or leave the group.

We are extremely grateful for your willingness to participate and your time. Each person will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card at the end of the session. Today we expect the session to last from 60 to 90 minutes. As stated in the consent form, we will be taking notes and audio recording to make sure that we are accurate in our interpretations of what you choose to share. There is a very brief demographic questionnaire we will give to you at the end, just before we give you your gift card.

There are some snacks on the table. Please feel free to serve yourselves at any time. The bathrooms are **(indicate where depending on location)**.

It is important that we feel comfortable with each other and can get a feel for who we are interacting with. Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. Please say your name, your major, year and something interesting about yourself.

Before we get started I want to go over some ground rules that will help the discussion flow smoothly:

1. Please speak one at a time so that we will be able to take accurate notes and so that we understand you when we review the recording.

2. To help keep track of who says what, please say your name first each time you speak. (For example, this is Kristen). Please use first names only.
 - a. This may be tricky at first but I will try to remind you to state your name if you forget. Your names will be replaced with a confidential ID number and a fake name when I make a transcript of this conversation.
3. Please keep everything that is said confidential. I will not share what you specifically say. Establishing confidentiality among us makes it easier and safer to share our experiences. We hope that you will all respect each other's rights to privacy by not repeating any portion of this discussion outside of the focus group.
4. Be respectful

Can everyone agree to these rules? Are there any more rules you think we should add? Does anyone want to get snacks now before we get started?

[Test Audio Recorders]

Section 1: Introduction

1. What made you decide to come to MSU?
2. Tell me what it is like being a Black or African American student at a school like MSU

Section 2: Experience of Racial Microaggressions and Response

Now I would like to talk with you about your experiences on campus.

3. Think of experiences on campus such as in class, libraries, workshops, sporting events, parties, residence halls, cafeterias, on campus work, or with administration such as financial aid or advising. Describe a time where you or someone you know felt like you were treated differently, unfairly, or made uncomfortable because of your race.
 - a. How (why), if at all, do you all feel like this experience was related to your race?
 - b. Would you describe this as a common experience or something that happened once?
 - c. How do experiences like these make you all feel?
 - d. In what ways, if at all, have you all responded to experiences like these?
 - e. Do you know anyone who has had similar or different experiences? Have you had similar or different experiences?
 - i. **[Repeat a-d]**
4. You described **[Briefly describe shared experiences]**. Can anyone share other experiences where you or someone you know were/was treated differently, unfairly, or made to be uncomfortable for example **[Types of microaggressions not mentioned]**
 - a. being overlooked or excluded in a group discussion, or being treated unfriendly

- b. someone assuming you wouldn't be intelligent
- c. someone saying they are color-blind or saying you should not complain about race)
- d. someone avoiding sitting next to you or getting substandard service compared to others
- e. someone assuming you eat foods associated with your race/culture every day or wanting to date you only because of your race), and lastly
- f. not seeing people of your race in prominent positions at school)

Section 3: Academic and Personal Impact

5. What, if any, effects have these experiences had on you all or the persons you talked about academically?
 - a. Attending class?
 - b. Attending office hours?
 - c. Seeking tutoring?
 - d. Participating in class?
 - e. Studying?
 - f. Examinations or writing papers?
 - g. Overall grades?
 - h. Establishing and maintaining relationships with professors and/or peers?
 - i. Seeking academic advising or mentoring?
 - j. Getting involved in student organizations and activities?
6. What do you think the overall impact has been on your lives or the persons you talked about?
 - a. Emotionally?
 - b. Psychologically?
 - c. Physically?
7. Who, if anyone, did you or the persons you talked about speak to about these impacts?
 - a. Peers?
 - b. Family Members?
 - c. Faculty?
 - d. Administration?
 - e. Community members?

Section 4: Resiliency and Resilience

Despite having negative experiences like the ones you have described, lots of people have good outcomes. I'd like to talk with you about some of the ways you have adapted to deal with and overcome these experiences.

8. Describe the ways you or the persons you talked about dealt with these experiences, if at all. [How, if at all, were you able to overcome your exposure to these discriminatory acts you just described?]
 - a. What helped or was most effective?
 - i. How did it feel to do this?
 - ii. What positive consequences did this have?
 - iii. What negative consequences did this have?
 - b. What didn't help or was least effective?
 - i. How did it feel to do this?
 - ii. What positive consequences did this have
 - iii. What negative consequences did this have?
 - c. How, if at all, has this changed over time?
9. What, if any, positive factors were already in place that helped you adapt or overcome these discriminatory acts? Examples could be a mentor or programs.

Section 5: Wrap-Up

10. How, if at all, have your experiences with racism improved or worsened during your time here?
11. What should be done to address these discriminatory acts?
 - a. How?
12. What kinds of feelings came up in responding to these questions and discussing your experiences openly?
13. Is there anything else you all would like to add that I did not specifically touch on?
14. Do you all have any suggestions for improvement?

Thank you very much for sharing your experiences with me. This has been incredibly enlightening and helpful. Please fill out the demographic questionnaire and get your Amazon gift card. If you have any questions or want to add anything to this interview, please feel free to contact me. I would like to offer you the opportunity to look over the transcript once it is complete to check and make sure it is true to what you have shared. If anyone is interested please let me know before leaving. **[Pass out business card]**

DATE: _____
GROUP #: _____

Successful African American College Students

Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions. For questions that require a written answer, please respond in the box provided.

1. What is your gender?

<input type="radio"/>	Male
<input type="radio"/>	Female
<input type="radio"/>	Transgender
<input type="radio"/>	Other (Please Specify):

2. What is your age in years?

<input type="radio"/>	Prefer not to answer

3. How many years have you been at MSU?

<input type="radio"/>	Prefer not to answer

4. What is your enrollment status

<input type="radio"/>	Part time (1-11 credits)
<input type="radio"/>	Full time (12+ credits)

5. What is your major?

--

6. What is your current overall grade point average?

--

7. Are you a first generation college student*?

**A first generation college student is a student whose parents/legal guardians have not completed a bachelor's degree.*

<input type="radio"/>	No
<input type="radio"/>	Yes

8. What kind of place best describes where you currently live?

<input type="radio"/>	Residence Hall/Dorm
<input type="radio"/>	House/Apartment
<input type="radio"/>	Fraternity or Sorority
<input type="radio"/>	Other (please specify): _____

9. What was your overall high school grade point average?

<input type="radio"/>	Do Not Remember
-----------------------	-----------------

10. How would you describe the racial composition of your high school?

<input type="radio"/>	Predominantly White
<input type="radio"/>	Predominantly Black/African American
<input type="radio"/>	Predominantly Black and Latino
<input type="radio"/>	Predominantly Latino
<input type="radio"/>	Predominantly Asian/Asian American
<input type="radio"/>	Multiracial
<input type="radio"/>	Other: (please specify) _____

11. What is your employment status?

<input type="radio"/>	Unable to work
<input type="radio"/>	Out of work but not currently looking for work
<input type="radio"/>	Out of work and looking for work
<input type="radio"/>	Employed Part-time
<input type="radio"/>	Employed Full-Time
<input type="radio"/>	Self employed
<input type="radio"/>	Retired

12. What is the highest level of schooling completed by your mother?

<input type="radio"/>	Grade school (1-8)
<input type="radio"/>	Some high school
<input type="radio"/>	High School Graduate or Equivalent (GED)
<input type="radio"/>	Some College
<input type="radio"/>	Associate degree
<input type="radio"/>	Bachelor's Degree
<input type="radio"/>	Some Graduate School
<input type="radio"/>	Master's Degree
<input type="radio"/>	Professional Degree
<input type="radio"/>	Doctoral Degree
<input type="radio"/>	Other: _____
<input type="radio"/>	Not Applicable/ Don't Know
<input type="radio"/>	Prefer not to answer/ Refuse to answer

13. What is the highest level of schooling completed by your father?

<input type="radio"/>	Grade school (1-8)
<input type="radio"/>	Some high school
<input type="radio"/>	High School Graduate or Equivalent (GED)
<input type="radio"/>	Some College
<input type="radio"/>	Associate degree
<input type="radio"/>	Bachelor's Degree
<input type="radio"/>	Some Graduate School
<input type="radio"/>	Master's Degree
<input type="radio"/>	Professional Degree
<input type="radio"/>	Doctoral Degree
<input type="radio"/>	Other: _____
<input type="radio"/>	Not Applicable/ Don't Know
<input type="radio"/>	Prefer not to answer/ Refuse to answer

14. What is your family's total annual income?

<input type="radio"/>	Under \$10,000
<input type="radio"/>	\$10,000 to \$19,999
<input type="radio"/>	\$20,000 to \$29,999
<input type="radio"/>	\$30,000 to \$39,999
<input type="radio"/>	\$40,000 to \$49,999
<input type="radio"/>	\$50,000 to \$59,999
<input type="radio"/>	\$60,000 to \$69,999
<input type="radio"/>	\$70,000 to \$79,999
<input type="radio"/>	\$80,000 to \$89,999
<input type="radio"/>	\$90,000 or more

15. What best describes the family you grew up in?

<input type="radio"/>	Two Parent Household
<input type="radio"/>	Single Parent – Mother
<input type="radio"/>	Single Parent – Father
<input type="radio"/>	Other: (please specify) _____

APPENDIX F

Campus Resources and Debriefing Form

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your participation in this research focus group! Your willingness to take part in this survey means a lot to us. However, the focus group you took part in today asked you about your experiences with subtle racism. We understand that some of the questions may have caused you to become upset or feelings of discomfort. Below is a list of resources available here at Michigan State University that can provide you support and counseling services. We hope that this study did not bring up unpleasant feelings, but urge you to seek help if it did.

Helpful Resources

Counseling Center

The counseling center has licensed professional counselors that can help you deal with stress management, time management, personal relationships, anxiety, depression, personal loss, grief, eating disorder, substance abuse, addiction, career decisions, and more.

Address: 556 E. Circle Dr. Room 207, East Lansing, MI. 48824

Website: <http://www.counseling.msu.edu/>

Phone: 517. 355. 8270

Regular walk-in hours are:

- 10am - Noon, 1pm - 6pm Monday & Tuesday. 10am - Noon, 1pm - 4pm Wednesday - Friday
- Crisis walk-ins are seen throughout our open office hours: 8am - 7pm Monday & Tuesday and 8am - 5pm Wednesday - Friday

MSU Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives

The Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives serves as an institutional focal point for promoting inclusion and diversity at Michigan State University. In addition to providing leadership and support for university-wide initiatives on inclusive excellence, a staff of experts works diligently to facilitate and support a campus environment that provides students, faculty, and staff with opportunities for excellence.

Website: <http://www.inclusion.msu.edu/>

Email: inclusion@msu.edu

Phone: 517-353-3922

Center for Gender in Global Context

Working in conjunction with the academic colleges, the center promotes outstanding undergraduate and graduate education, facilitates research and scholarship of the highest caliber, and undertakes innovative outreach and active learning initiatives. In teaching and active learning, the center also works with colleges and departments to provide students with academic and active learning opportunities focused on gender and global change through gender-related degrees, specializations, and minors.

Address: International Center, 427 N. Shaw Lane, Room 206, East Lansing, MI 48824

Phone: 517-353-5040

Email: gencen@msu.edu

Office of Cultural and Academic Transitions

“Connecting Diverse Peoples, Programs, and Ideas to Enhance Student Success”

The Office of Cultural and Academic Transitions (OCAT) constructs supportive cultural, social and educational communities that actively involve students in learning. OCAT supports individual students in their navigation of cross-cultural encounters, and in their own understanding, exploration and development of cultural identity

Website: <http://ocat.msu.edu/>

Address: Student Services Building, 556 E. Circle Drive, Rm #339, East Lansing, MI 48824

Phone: (517) 353-7745

Multicultural Center (MCC) of MSU

The Center hosts a variety of different programs throughout the school year, from academically-oriented presentations to student group meetings to informal social receptions to which everyone is welcome to attend. Currently, the Center has:

1. SPACE available for student group meetings and programs
2. Four COMPUTERS for general student use, where students can do their homework, write papers, check their e-mail, and surf the web.
3. Small collection of RESOURCE MATERIALS such as videos of racially/ethnically-themed films, books, and publications (magazines, journals).

Website: <http://ocat.msu.edu/multicultural-center-mcc>

Address: MSU Union Building, East Lansing, MI 48824

Phone: (517) 432-7153

Hours of Operation: Mon-Thurs. (9am-11pm), Fri (9am-7pm), Sat. (12noon-6pm), Sun. (12noon-11pm)

[Note: The Multicultural Center is located on the lower level of the MSU Union by the study area.]

Black Student Alliance

The Black Student Alliance main objective is to provide the needed tools to our fellow Black students so that they may reach the ultimate goal of GRADUATION! Through collective efforts BAS brings bi-weekly meetings, programs, rallies, speakers, and other educational venues to build a large collective of students armed with the knowledge of self and the world, so that they may grow and flourish in the world as self-determined critical-thinkers.

Website: <https://www.msu.edu/~bsaemail/>

MSU Counseling and Mental Health Resources

This web page provides a single source for accessing information about the Mental Health services available on the Michigan State University (MSU) campus.

<http://www.mentalhealthresources.msu.edu/>

MSU Safe Place (Relationship Violence and Stalking Program)

MSU Safe Place is a program that addresses relationship violence and stalking. Safe Place provides advocacy, emergency shelter, counseling, support groups, safety planning, information and referrals to survivors of violence and their minor children. All support services are free and confidential.

Phone: 517. 355. 1100

Address: 219 Wilson Road, Room G-60, East Lansing, Michigan 48825
Phone: 517.355.1100
Email: noabuse@msu.edu

MSU Women's Resource Center

The WRC works toward leadership development, social justice and addressing gender related issues/concerns for people of all genders through educational programs, conferences, newsletters and other resources.

Website: <http://wrc.msu.edu/>

Address: 332 Union Building, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1029

E-mail: wrc@msu.edu

Phone: 517.353.1635

Fax: 517.432.3846

DEBRIEFING FORM

In the study you just participated in, we were interested in understanding how certain experiences in college, especially those related to race, might affect academic performance. We were particularly interested in the experiences of subtle, unconscious racism, responses to such experiences, and the academic impact of such experiences among African American college students attending a predominantly White institution like MSU.

African American college students attending a predominantly White institution exposed to different types of adversity (e.g., racial microaggressions) as you can tell from our discussion. At this time, there is little research focusing on this topic. We think it is important to identify factors (e.g., resilience) that may buffer risk and promote academic achievement.

The results of this study may assist in providing direction for interventions that support the retention, academic performance, and degree attainment in Black/African American college students

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Kristen J. Mills, at millskr1@msu.edu or (313) 682-9322 or Dr. Jennifer Watling-Neal in the Psychology Department at jneal@msu.edu.

APPENDIX G

Racial Microaggression Themes

Table 4. *Racial Microaggression Themes*

Theme	Subtheme (if applicable)	Description	Quote	Commonness (of 4 focus groups)
Perceived Undervaluing		Students and Black student organizations are perceived as undervalued by the university.	If you don't run. if you don't catch balls. If you don't do these things for [university], then you as a Black student, you mean nothing to them... And that's literally how I can sum up my experience at [university] for the past three and a half years. (F)	2 (1 female; 1 male)
Conformity		Students feel pressured to conform to a standard of Whiteness or to display less association with African or African American culture.	I feel like we do have to change ourselves or try to fit into like what a white, typical white man is in order to get the same things that they get as far as like job opportunities and things of that nature....(M)	2 (1 female; 1 male)
Institutional microinsults		University policies and practices communicate microinsults toward Black students and other students of color	This north neighborhood as we're in now is known for being primarily Caucasian... White. I always see school tours going throughout this area. Never have I seen one school tour that goes through [Residence hall] or [third residence hall] or on the outskirts back in [second residence hall] where a lot more African-Americans are moving to, and I feel like we're here because they want to fit a quota and not to really, you know, project us to the next level (M)	4

Table 4. cont'd

Theme	Subtheme (if applicable)	Description	Quote	Commonness (of 4 focus groups)
Lack of representation		There is a lack of representation (or limited number of) of persons of color, particularly Black students, in class, student organizations, and leadership positions within university employment.	It just feels like they want you to be the spokesperson for African-American and it's just kind of like, I'm not... I don't make you. I don't ask you guys [white classmates], you know, a question and ask you to pretty much speak for the entire race (F)	4
Cultural bias in course content		Explorations of race and related topics are limited in frequency and/or depth.	Everything we learn at the university level is so Europeanized ...like we don't learn about African scientist and African mathematicians or anything like it is all completely wiped away and everything we learn literally is based on Europeans, and European culture, and European everything as if they are the only ones that exist, and that's a little frustrating (F)	2 (female)
Criminal status		Students experience an assumption of criminal status by the university, campus police, peers, and the greater university community.	I was on my way back home riding my bike and I was pulled over on the bike by the [university] police and the first question they asked me, um, "Where'd you get the bike?"	2 (1 female; 1 male)
Rude treatment		Students report being treated rudely or in a condescending manner by peers, faculty, and staff and receive messages that they did not belong.	I always feel like you've got to wear name tags saying "I'm an [university] student." ...They assume that you're one of these [city] locals and, if you don't show them that student I.D., you might just fall through the cracks (M)	2 (1 female; 1 male)

Table 4. cont'd

Theme	Subtheme (if applicable)	Description	Quote	Commonness (of 4 focus groups)
Offensive Jokes and Remarks		Offensive jokes and remarks are made by peers, colleagues, faculty, and staff. Jokes and remarks were perceived as both intentional and unintentional.	Everything we learn at the university level is so Europeanized ...like we don't learn about African scientist and African mathematicians or anything like it is all completely wiped away and everything we learn literally is based on Europeans, and European culture, and European everything as if they are the only ones that exist, and that's a little frustrating (F)	4
Assumption of intellectual and financial inferiority		Students experience (and witness) the negation of intellectual aptitude, speech, and/or financial standing.	Seeing the whole day-to-day battle, you know, ..you almost have to prove that you have somewhat of an intelligence, that you can talk the same talk, read the same books they [white peers and faculty] read, because if you don't open your mouth they already assume that they have to further explain things to you. (M)	4
Avoided and Unacknowledged		Students are avoided or excluded from group interaction or group work, their qualifications and contributions are questioned, overlooked and/or ignored.	You go to a small class and you have group activities. You're not going to be the first one chosen, you know...and that's, is definitely an uphill battle, but it's kind of how it is. (M)	4

Table 4. cont'd

Theme	Subtheme (if applicable)	Description	Quote	Commonness (of 4 focus groups)
Black Lives Matter				
Racial Tension		Increased racial tensions on campus and awareness of racial tensions.	...Especially with, like, the whole Mike Brown thing and it's, like, it's also, like, polarized us as a community (F)	2 (female)
Atypical Microaggressions		Students experience microaggressions that were atypical in frequency and type relative to their day-to-day experience on campus	The racism and like aggression toward us real heavily when we were standing out, when we were doing a die-in outside of the [sports arena] (F)	1 (female)
Loss of social supports		Students lost friends as a result of contrasting viewpoints and/or offensive or insensitive remarks.	And the thing is, too, like you lose friends. I lost, I lost quite a few friends because of the Fergu-, like the whole non-indictment in Ferguson, because I didn't realize how truly racist and ignorant some people were (F)	1 (female)
Hesitant response to police		Male students, in particular, fear for their lives and are hesitant to respond to racial microaggressions by campus and local police officers	What our civilization is now and our economy, we can get shot for walking away [from police] and it can be justified. Mike Brown, Treyvon Martin, all these different cases, and it's like, I don't want to say it scares us, but it makes us think twice before we do anything because like we still got to conform to stuff that's just being racially profiled (M)	1 (male)

APPENDIX H

Responses to Racial Microaggressions

Table 5. *Responses to Racial Microaggressions*

Theme	Subtheme (if applicable)	Description	Quote	Commonness (of 4 focus groups)
Self-Reliance		Students describe a preference for dealing with the aftermath of racial microaggressions alone.	I just like, you know, do it and just keep it moving (M)	2 (1 female; 1 male)
Dissociation		Students dissociate with offender(s) and similar others.	I guess like my initial like response is to kind of like, you know, stay away from those kinds of people, or um, I just like maybe like keep them on like you know close watch I guess in a way (M)	3 (1 female; 2 male)
Hesitancy		Students are hesitant to respond or do not respond for fear of confirming stereotypes of Black persons.	Our race will be stereotyped just from simple interactions like you meet one person and then you tend to think that's everybody, you know, that's not fair, so I just try to keep calm (F)	3 (2 female; 1 male)
Sought Advice from Colleagues		Colleagues are an outlet for students to discuss microaggressions that occurred in the workplace.	What I would do is like I would speak to individuals, like the few minorities that do work in our office, and like discuss those things to figure out what's the best way to like address it in a way that not only doesn't make me feel uncomfortable but it doesn't make them feel uncomfortable as well (M)	3 (2 female; 1 male)

Table 5. cont'd

Theme	Subtheme (if applicable)	Description	Quote	Commonness (of 4 focus groups)
Confront Offender		Students respond to the offender(s) by questioning/ confronting offender's actions or refuting remarks.	I believe in checking privilege every time... They say it in a voice, not to sound rude or mean, but, "Oh, not to be racist but blah, blah, blah, blah blah." And then when you call them on it, they want to cry. But I'm gonna call them on it [rude or racist comments] every single time. (F)	4
Callous		Students fail to respond to microaggressions because they have become callous to these experiences.	I've become callous to it, so I'm just like I don't, I don't care (laughs). I'm going to do what I have to do and again I've put in the work so whatever happens. (M)	2 (1 female; 1 male)
Negative Feelings	Upset	Students feel angry, uncomfortable, hurt, sad, and/or generally upset, in response to microaggressions.	It's between anger, sadness and sometimes I just really don't care. It depends on how ignorant the person is (F)	4
	Cried	Students cry at home in response to microaggressions	I did cry at home but I didn't want to cry in front of her (F)	2 (female)
Avoid prejudiced behavior		Students report difficulty in not stereotyping White peers as racially insensitive	It's hard not to become jaded by those experiences, uh, not, you know, generalize all white faces as a threat, somebody who wants to impose some type of harm towards you (M)	2 (1 male; 1 female)

APPENDIX I

Perceived Impacts

Table 6. *Perceived Impacts*

Theme	Description	Quote	Commonness (of 4 focus groups)
ACADEMIC			
Academic effort	Students work harder and seek out resources for academic support	...having to overcompensate just to be equal to them like you have to do so much more to be qualified (F)	4
Hesitant to contribute	Students are hesitant to contribute openly in class	I was going to say it is hard for me to like speak up in class, like my ... When they, it was like an open question like in he's [instructor] looking for feedback from ... all the students it's like I don't know, I always hesitate for some reason because like I'm the only one, the only black person in the class and it's like I don't want to say something. I don't know, I feel like when I say something, even a little bit wrong they're like automatically, "Oh, my god, she's dumb, she's blah blah blah..." any, anything, like, so I don't know, I'm like automatically hesitant.	1 (female)
PERSONAL			
Purpose	Stress is perceived as purposeful	I feel like this stress is temporary and it's for a greater goal, so I feel like it's worth it (M)	2 (male)
Stress and anxiety	Students experience overwhelming stress and anxiety by overextending themselves	I think we work harder, but there's a lot of anxiety (F)	4

APPENDIX J

Current Protective Factors

Table 7. *Current Protective Factors*

Theme	Subtheme (if applicable)	Description	Quote	Commonness (of 4 focus groups)
Motivation		Students are motivated by personal, academic, environmental, and familial factors to continue striving for success.	So like their [parents'] dedication to their education was a huge inspiration to me. Um, so I think that it really spurred me on as I was going. I knew what they went through; I didn't want myself to go through that. (M)	2 (male)
Vocal about racial microaggressions	Awareness	Students vocalize experiences to audiences to generate awareness and maintain emotional well-being	I talk to everybody about this, I mean maybe not in academic setting like in a classroom and I speak out but anyone I know personally, this is a topic of discussion because I feel like it's important to, you know, tell somebody your struggle or like, you know, relate sometimes (F)	2 (female)
University Diversity		Students value diversity in the student body and therefore actively seek out opportunities to learn from others of differing backgrounds.	I'm grateful for the chance to meet different kinds of people here (M).	2 (1 female; 1 male)
Physical Activity		Students engage in physical activity as an outlet for stress	I internalize a lot of things but I also have like a pretty decent outlet. Like, I box five to seven times a week, so it's like, I know that sounds stupid but that physical outlet.. Of the anger is like very, it's very helpful (F).	2 (1 female; 1 male)

Table 7. cont'd

Theme	Subtheme (if applicable)	Description	Quote	Commonness (of 4 focus groups)
Social Supports		Students rely on personal and professional supports. These supports may provide encouragement, validation, advice or guidance, academic support, and stress management.	So like God, my mom, professors and faculty. I have mentors that I talk to and I have a really good group of friends (F).	4
Black Student Organizations		Students created connections with the Black community on campus	I've been a part of Black Caucus since like day one (M).	2 (1 female; 1 male)

APPENDIX K

Adaptations

Table 8. Adaptations

Theme	Description	Quote	Commonness (of 4 focus groups)
Self-reliance	Students do not speak to anyone about the impacts of microaggressions and other stressors.	don't want to vent to my mom and I feel like I'm stressing her out. Or I don't want to vent to, like, my friends cause I feel like they're dealing with their own thing (F)	2 (1 female; 1 male)
Self-care	Students practice self-care by attending to mental health.	I mean, Michigan State produces the same type of people year in and year out. We're going to have (sniffs) Spartan babies and they going to be in these classrooms one day soon. As I understand, it's just a cycle, the same type people are going to be here forever. Michigan State ain't going to change, but, you know, I can, I know I don't have to let that affect me, so that's what changed for me (M).	2 (1 female; 1 male)
Assertive	Students are more assertive in class and other spaces by demanding respect and assuring that their voices are heard.	... to always make sure that you have some type of voice in any situation whether it's uncomfortable for you or you feel like you're the minority in this situation (F)	2 (1 female; 1 male)
Selective social supports	Student began to become more selective in friend and work groups by primarily associating with other students of color.	And a way of coping with that for me was like, most of my friends are either Black or people of color, the whitest being Jewish (F)	2 (1 female; 1 male)
Educate self	Students began to educate themselves and others on issues related to microaggressions.	I keep facts in my pocket, just cause,... people don't know or people say asinine things and I check them every single time (F)	2 (1 female; 1 male)

Table 8. cont'd

Theme	Description	Quote	Commonness (of 4 focus groups)
Resist cultural discontinuity	Student resist cultural discontinuity (being bicultural or having a dual-self) and learned to embrace and express the self and culture.	So, like, I don't change the way I talk, or the way I dress or the way I act. It's just like, "This is me. I'm smarter than you anyway so I'm just gonna be me." (F)	2 (female)
Discount offenders' behavior	Students try to make sense of microaggressions by unpacking the offenders' motives.	I try to look at it from where their background is and see, say "Okay, well, they may have been raised this way or..." they, try to see why they would think it's okay...(M)	2 (1 female; 1 male)

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