RACIALIZED MICROAGGRESSIONS, INTERNALIZED AND INTERSECTING
OPPRESSIONS, AND IDENTITY NEGOTIATIONS AMONG STUDENT OF COLOR
AT A PREDOMINATELY WHITE UNIVERSITY IN THE US SOUTHEAST

by

Abigail Reiter
A Dissertation
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Racialized Microaggressions, Internalized and Intersecting Oppressions, and Identity Negotiations Among Students of Color at a Predominately White University in the US Southeast

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at George Mason University

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my family. In particular, this is dedicated to Miranda. Her undying support, encouragement, and friendship mean the world to me, and were instrumental through every stage of this project. She listened to my ideas and my frustrations, and calmed and encouraged me every step of the way. Everyone needs someone like her in life. This is also dedicated to my mom, who helped inspire, and who I hope would be proud of, the mission of this project. I am thankful for her critical perspective of the social world, and for being a role model who did not tolerate social injustices. I miss her every day. Thanks, also, to Harry and Heidi (and Stella and Gracie), who made writing and revising more fun. And, thanks to Vicki Hoverman, who has been there for me as a great friend and supporter.

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ABSTRACT

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Race, as Delgado and Stefancic (2001) stress, is a structuring agent that greatly affects the experiences and even the well-being of individuals in US society. While American education has been considered a driver for equality, racism and race-based inequities are significant components of this institution, creating qualitatively different daily and cumulative experiences and outcomes for students based on race. Not only is it important to uncover how race and racism are manifested in educational institutions, but it is also necessary to better understand the intersecting oppressions that work alongside race to create particular experiences for brown and black students.

Using Critical Race Theory Methodology and relying on the counter-narratives of 31 students of color collected during 9 focus group meetings in the spring of 2014 at a predominately white university in the US Southeast, this study finds that these students are emotionally, academically, and socially affected by microaggressions, namely subtle

and overlooked forms of racism and other intersecting oppressions in various campus settings. Sue et al (2007) defines microaggressions as "*brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group.*" Through such verbal and behavioral cues, brown and black students continually encounter white normativity and "otherness" throughout campus. Respondents also experience stereotype threat and reveal a social and cognitive burden of reconciling and juggling a complicated identity as *students* and *persons of color*, while also internalizing the oppressions they encounter daily. Findings indicate a need for effective training of professors in recognizing their cultural biases and stereotypes they are reinforced through their interactions and curriculum. Sincere and effective awareness efforts need to be implemented on campus for students and faculty, and should replace superficial attempts at diversity awareness that often reinforce racial and other inequities and differences.

CHAPTER ONE | DEFINING AND EXPLORING MODERN RACISM AND AMERICAN EDUCATION

Introduction

Although it is merely a social construct (Martinot 2010; Gómez and López 2013), race is an effective and damaging construction. Research on race suggests that it is regularly used to judge groups and individuals. It affects us all, and in ways in which most are often not fully aware. This largely occurs because the social structure of American society is racially stratified (Martinot 2010): the United States is a society 'in which economic, political, social, and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories or races' (Bonilla-Silva 1997 p. 469).

The United States is replete with histories of lynchings, beatings, and cross burnings. Only decades ago, these public events occurred frequently and were even condoned. Racially-based attacks and crimes today are largely and legally condemned in the US (Nadal 2008), and most research suggests that interpersonal racism has actually declined in the past few decades. However, even though overt and extreme forms of racialized attacks and assaults have declined in the US, and fewer Americans might indeed be blatantly racist, studies still show that racism nevertheless continues to persist (Nadal 2011). Racism just takes subtler forms in contemporary US, such as racialized microaggressions (Sue 2007; Nadal 2011). The old, overt racism of America's past has

given way to a new, covert racism. This modern American racism is so normalized that it is overlooked consistently, making its effects less apparent.

Research suggests that contemporary racial prejudices and biases are typically difficult to identify because they are frequently cloaked in rhetoric not always considered "racist" (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Wise 2002). Some have found that even the perpetrators are often unaware that they are in fact racist (Nadal 2011; Sue 2010). Other common responses to any discussion on race frequently involve blaming people of color for their own victimization. This occurs because there is often inadequate evidence of racism in contemporary America, enabling the offenders to deflect the blame to the victims (Dixson and Rousseau 2006; Ladson-Billings 2013a).

These more subtle manifestations and racist attacks need to be exposed and addressed because they greatly impact individual and group experiences and outcomes (Wise 2002; Rothenberg 2004). Research concerning the daily and cumulative experiences of people of color in modern America shows that contemporary racism have substantial negative effects: people of color can suffer emotionally, psychologically, and socially from subtle manifestations of racism (Nadal 2008).

Modern racism and its hidden injuries are frequently justified and reinforced through the ideology of the US as a meritocratic society (McNamee and Miller 2009). In particular, the institution of US higher education is usually considered to be an open, tolerant, merit-based system- i.e. the "great equalizer" (Mann 1848), which reduces the effects of social class, race, and background on children's educational success (McNamee and Miller 2009; Smith, Hung, and Franklin 2011). However, research suggests that

social class, gender, race, cultural factors (Bourdieu 2003; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Lareau 2000, 2003), and other non-meritocratic criteria continue to place some at an advantage over others (Madan 2007; Bourdieu 2003; Bowles and Gintis 1976; McNamee and Miller 2009; Kerbo 2008), raising serious doubts about the ideology of meritocracy in the U.S. (McNamee and Miller 2009).

Race continues to play a significant part in stratification in the institution of American education. Studies have found that it works as a structuring agent from early education through college (Collins 2009), affecting students on the first day they enter any classroom in the US. Race guides the expectations and treatment students receive from peers and teachers, affecting their self-esteem, self-expectations, and academic achievement (Collins 2009; Lee and Burkam 2002; Lynn and Parker 2006).

This structuring property of race has hierarchically and effectively arranged individuals and groups since our nation's foundation. For instance, with Plessy v. Ferguson, groups have been systematically and legally excluded from formal education, and students of color were forced to attend schools separate from whites. But efforts to increase educational opportunities to people of color, including the Brown v. Board of Education decision to integrate schools, have promoted the belief that the American education system is a fair system. It is assumed generally that contemporary American education now works as an equalizer, promoting equality and compensating for past discrimination (West 1993). Scholarly research, however, finds that racism continues to pervade schools, but in more subtle and covert ways than the overt Jim Crow laws of the past (Lynn and Parker 2006). This makes inequities more difficult to expose, prove, and

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combat. Therefore, research on the phenomenon is more challenging and trickier, but all the more necessary. Understanding the intricate and perhaps complex ways in which this occurs is a main focus of this research.

Contrary to the lofty, meritocratic ideals, the institution of higher education in the US is actually ridden with racial inequalities (Payne 1984; Collins 2009; Marable 2008), class (Kozol 1991), gender, and other oppressions (Collins 2009). These inequalities involve racial differences in acceptance into higher ranked colleges, emotional and financial support while in college, differential expectations, and varying rates of college completion (McNamee and Miller 2009; Marable 2008). But, many of the inequities facing students of color are often invisible, with evidence showing that race and racism still affect the college experiences of students of color. As in larger American society, subtle interpersonal and covert mechanisms of exclusion and discrimination are pervasive in schools and colleges (Collins 2009).

This new racism greatly affects the experiences of and outcomes for students of color, and includes racialized microaggressions, differential treatment and expectations of students of color, white normative ideology, and internalized oppression. While overt racism is no longer condoned in American education, inequitable experiences and subtle racism can still impact students' self-esteem and their sense of identity (Torres, Driscoll, and Burrow 2010), their psyche (Nadal et al. 2014), their relationships, and even their overall academic performance and attainment (Fordham and Obgu 1986; Willis 1977; Nadal et al. 2014).

While some dismiss or downplay subtle racism, the hidden injuries of racism have real and long-lasting emotional, psychological, and consequences (Smith et al. 2011). Racism's effects require examination in order to promote parity in higher education. The burdens of subtle racism are often ignored, making experiences in higher education different for students of varying racial groups. This racism and its effects are the focal points of this research.

Modern racism is very complex and elusive, making it difficult to detect, measure, and to study. But, in order to understand the actual lived experiences of students of color in various college settings, it is imperative to examine the various manifestations of racism that are not usually considered. Therefore, research on the hidden workings of racism and its overlooked effects on brown and black students is crucial. This research seeks to address the ways in which university students of color experience race and its related injuries, navigate American higher education, manage and/or react to racist encounters and behaviors, and maintain their identities in an institution historically riddled with prejudice and discrimination. This is necessary in order to attempt an adequate understanding of racism and the American university. All of us need to become more conscious of the subtle racism affecting people of color, and our participation in it.

Problem Statement

Race works as a structuring agent in everyday interactions, as well as in large-scale patterns, often in invisible ways (Martinot 2010; Gómez and López 2013). As others have asserted (Ladson-Billings 1998; Dixson and Rousseau 2006), I have come to

realize that racism is endemic to American society -- it permeates and affects every aspect of society. Racism works in a multitude of ways, often not recognized for what it is, but its effects are nevertheless very real and substantial. While classic forms of overtly racist behaviors have declined, research suggests that everyday racism has increased and is now a normalized part of everyday American culture (Lynn and Parker 2006).

This modern racism has been characterized as mundane practices and events that are imbued with often unconscious racial mal-intent. It also includes institutional practices and policies that seem impartial in form (Martinot 2010; Gómez and López 2013), but have disproportionately damaging impacts on people of color (Lawrence 1987). Like other institutions in American society, the university, and the predominately white university, in particular, is not immune to racism (Solís Jordán 1999). Because educational institutions in the US are sites where student identities are constructed, students are routinely forced to engage in exploration of their, and others', identities, including race. Unlike white students, students of color at a predominately white university are immersed in an environment that highlights their racialized identity. Research suggests that this ostracizes brown and black students, and complicates their identity construction and negotiation (Nadal et al. 2011; Collins 2009), forcing them to balance their identities as college students (Luttrell 1996; Tatum 1997) and racial minorities. This identity construction and negotiation process, along with the emotional, psychological, and academic consequences it creates, require exploration.

Significance of the Research

The purpose of this research is to explore the everyday and cumulative experiences of students of color in a predominately white university. Specifically, I set out to explore if and how race is enforced and emphasized in campus settings, as well as the ways in which racism and other forms of oppression affect college life for students of color. Because research suggests students of color routinely suffer subtle racial discrimination on or around college campus, especially in predominately white schools (Lawrence and Matsuda, 1997; Smith, Altbach, and Lomotey 2002; Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000), it is essential to expose and to better understand their impacts. This will promote equity efforts in the institution, including programs to expose racism and its insidiousness and subtleness, and will advance efforts to reduce racism on and around campus.

I consider the characteristics of both the offender and the receiver of racist manifestations, as well as any emotional, psychological, and overt reactions to such racism. Data were collected during nine focus group meetings in which self-identified students of color discussed their experiences with prejudice and discrimination on campus. Each meeting began with a general question of whether or not race is visible[1] on campus, and the participants' interpretations and responses to this question guided the rest of the conversations. Using Critical Race Theory and Methodology, these students' diverse experiences were investigated through counter-narratives. These recounts led to

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[1] I used the term "visible" in the initial question to allow respondents to explain any ways that race might manifest, not only with regards to racism, but also racialization and other ways that race as an identity marker or significant category is evident on or around campus.

rich data as the students revealed unique and sometimes similar experiences with racism in the classroom, in dorms, and other campus settings.

The voices of those affected by discrimination are frequently usurped or denied, discounting the contemporary realities of communities of color in the American university (Yosso et al. 2004). Therefore, it is imperative to not only include, but to base my research on, the narratives of the students of color. These narratives revealed the emotional, cognitive, and social effects of everyday and cumulative discrimination, as well as how students of color cognitively deal with identifying and reacting to actual and perceived racist attacks. Some students wondered why these discriminatory experiences continue to recur, and others implicitly revealed that they, too, sometimes participate in racism on campus.

This research is necessary because too often research on experiences of people of color rely on majoritarian stories which deny and exclude the actual lived realities of these individuals. Students of color offer a perspective typically overlooked in research on race, as they are able to speak about racism in ways many researchers have not experienced nor recognize. They also offer insights into the workings of internalized oppression and bring to research greater insight than those who do not directly experience cumulative racism. In a society permeated by covert racism, it is crucial to utilize the voices of racism's targets in order to better understand its manifestations, experiences, and injuries of racism.

Research Questions

The subsequent and guiding questions that directed my research center on the importance of understanding the significance of and impacts of race and racism, their manifold manifestations, and participants' own contributions in racialization and racism on the campus. To uncover and reveal the ways in which students of color interpret, deal with, and maneuver through environments in which race is a key identity marker, while holding often conflicting statuses as college student and person of color, is a substantial component to the research that guides my research questions.

Therefore, I pursue the following research questions:

1. How is race manifested in a mostly white university in the US Southeast?

2. What role does race play in the overall experiences of, and affect the navigation of, students of color through the university?

3. How do other oppressions (i.e. social class, gender, immigrant status, sexual orientation) intersect with race to affect the experiences of students of color at the university?

4. How do students of color also participate in their own oppression or racialization at the university?

5. How do minority students negotiate their racial identities while pursuing their educational goals in contexts in which race is considered a key identity marker?

Unlike white students, students of color face daily and cumulative emotional and cognitive burdens associated with being marginalized and racialized beings in white spaces. These are hurdles outside of, and in addition to, the considerations and struggles inherent in college life, resulting in qualitatively different experiences for students of

color and for whites. In all, race and racism exact personal, emotional, social, and academic costs for brown and black students in white educational institutions.

Definition of Terms and Concepts

This section defines various terms and concepts that will be used throughout the remainder of the dissertation. The definitions I utilize are as follows:

White as normative is a theme which appears throughout the dissertation, and the terms **microaggression, essentialization, internalized oppression, and the Second Eye** are at the foundation of this study's findings. I have defined these terms at length throughout the dissertation, but I will now briefly discuss them below for continuity.

This study examines the concept of **microaggressions**, mostly related to race, but as they relate to other oppressions as well. Because there are some discrepancies over what the term actually means, I utilize a working definition of the term, while keeping in mind some arguments that insist that the definition should be reused. The conceptualization I utilize is taken from Sue et al.'s (2007) definition:

> *".....brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group. […] Microaggressions are often unconsciously delivered in the form of subtle snubs or dismissive looks, gestures, and tones. […] microaggressions are detrimental to persons of color because they impair performance in a multitude of settings" (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, and Esquin 2007, p. 273).*

Racial essentialism is a status legitimation ideology that infers that there is a particular essence within racial groups, and conceptualizes race as a fundamental and meaningful source of human classification. This helps structure individuals'

understanding of the social world by consolidating groups into meaningful groupings with distinct features and attributes, with whites always faring at the top (Chao, Hong, and Chiu 2013). Embedded within the conversations among the students are reports of and expressions of racial essentialism by whites and people of color at the university.

The students in this study each have experienced microaggressions to some degree on campus, and some have even been perpetrators of such attacks. Much of what the students in the study say reflect intragroup racism, as they seem to have internalized negative stereotypes of their racial group. This reflects the **internalized oppression** that countless people of color experience in the US. For this study, I focus mainly on internalized racism, although I also find aspects of other forms of internalized oppression, such as internalized homophobia, classism, and sexism. The definition of internalized racism which I utilize, and for which racism can be substituted for other oppressions, is as follows:

Internalized oppression is an unintentional and involuntary reaction to oppression which originates from a source external to one's group and which leads to group members loathing themselves, disliking others in their group, and blaming themselves for their subjugation (Rosenwasser 2002). Although I examine a variety of identity characteristics, I focus mainly on internalized racial oppression. As Harper (2006) describes, internalized racial oppression occurs when racist assumptions eventually works its way into the psyche of individuals and negatively shapes the way they see themselves and others within their race (Harper 2006).

Colorism is a common manifestation of white internalized oppression found among and discussed by the participants. Colorism, as defined by Alice Walker (1983), is the internalized preference for and favoring of light skin and European physical features, including "good hair." This ideology has historically and continually stratified the US black community (Herring, Keith, and Horton 2004; Kerr 2006; Patton 2006). Colorism is a substantial component of countless aspects of life, including ideas of beauty, success, and social hierarchy. The university is no exception, especially those spaces in which students socialize with one another. Colorism tends to affect black women more than black men, and specifically impacts self-esteem (Hunter 1998).

"Second Eye" is Joe Feagin's (1991) term that refers to the tendency for black people to look at black-white interactions through a lens colored by personal and group experiences with institutional and historical discrimination. This sensitivity to racism and differential treatment is often regarded by whites as black paranoia, although many would argue it is actually a realistic accommodation to black-white interactions created and consistently reinforced by interpersonal and institutional discrimination against blacks (Feagin 1991). I utilize this concept with all of the students of color, not just the black students. I examine the prevalence of this "sensitivity" among the students of color on campus and university settings, the emotional toll that this extra burden takes on these students, and the reactions that these students have if they, in fact, perceive discrimination from whites.

Although there are other terms throughout the dissertation, an adequate understanding of the aforementioned terms is necessary in comprehending the study's

findings. The majority of the students in my study had a keen sense of what racism looks and feels like, although some experienced racism, but did not know it. Others even expressed their own intra-group and inter-group racist beliefs in their stories and in their explanations, often without recognizing their participation in racism. These topics will be explored as well.

The ideological concept of white as normative, and how this is embedded within students' thoughts and behaviors at the university, as well as internalized by participants of color in this research, is a major theme. The other aforementioned terms appear throughout this dissertation, as they are all connected inextricably, and work together to explain the particular experiences for students of color.

My Early Encounters with Race and Racism

I have learned that explaining to a white person in the US that racism continues to exist after the Civil Rights Era is usually a futile exercise. As others have found, most introductions to the topic are typically met with denial, resentment, defensiveness, and even anger (Wise 2002; Rothenberg 2004). Some suggest that this is because of white privilege- whites have the luxury of living their daily lives as non-racialized individuals in a society that emphasizes the race of "others" (Wise 2002). And there are still those who make no effort to hide their racism, who are proud to express their bigoted ideology and outright hate (Wise 2002).

My mother taught my three sisters and me to recognize social inequalities, both interpersonal and institutional. My mom spent hours each day teaching illiterate adults in

our home, and the overwhelming majority of them were low-income and black. This, my mom explained, was due to racist ideologies and unequal opportunities that worked to maintain inequities based on race.

My mother also taught ESL to immigrants who shared their stories of struggle in the US that were unique from those recounted by her mostly black students. But common to all of the stories was an undertone of subordination by whites. Hearing about the world from people who have substantially different experiences than my own was the only avenue of insight I, a white girl born into a family of comfortable means, had into these unequal social realities. I recognized the importance of these stories and these storytellers.

While my experiences likely differ in some ways from those among children in urban areas, racism is endemic to life in the US. I had my own experiences with racial, class, sexual orientation, immigrant-status, and sex inequalities growing up rural America, attending public schools in the 1980's and 1990's. In grade school, I realized that although I participated in some mischievous rule-breaking with other students, it was only the black students who were punished. And, even though my black friends were creative and smart, they were constantly made to feel ashamed and voiceless by teacher practices and neglect. During my middle and high school years, students, mostly whites, began to contribute more to the racist and other offensive behaviors. The few immigrant students unlucky enough to move into my county were made well aware that they did not belong by racialized physical attacks and relentless mocking of their accent.

The Confederate flag spray-painted on the front steps of my high school was a symbol of what was behind the walls of the institution. The racially segregated classrooms, school buses, and cafeteria reinforced racial and other differences, which were tied implicitly to social status, self-worth and expectations for scholastic and future success. So, it was no surprise that race was part of the experience at the community college I attended. Whites congregated to smoke outside of the Biology building, and blacks congregated to talk outside of the Student Union building. I only had one professor of color, a black woman, who was part-time and who did not have an office. And, students had to park amongst huge pick-up trucks with rebel flags, gun racks, and quotes like, "You wear your X, I'll wear mine" proudly stuck to the windows and bumper.

While my experiences at the community college were drastically different from those at the University of Virginia, racism thrived at this multicultural community, nonetheless. It looked and felt different, but it was there. My Muslim friend and I received cold stares as we walked to class together, classrooms and other settings were racially segregated, and my immigrant professors' accents were mocked. This was a larger, more diverse, yet still racialized campus. Although racism was not openly tolerated, it was still an evident force.

Now, in 2016, it is more than frustrating that overt racism is still legal and a very obvious part of the typical day of faculty and students at the community college where I now work. Each morning, just as when I attended the college as a teenager, I am greeted with legal displays of hatred and ignorance: the parking lot is home to two enormous

Confederate flags strung to what looks to be at least 12 foot- long flagpoles, flying from the bed of two huge pick-up trucks. Students and faculty are forced to either ignore the flags, to feel anger towards the drivers and the society and institution that allows this, or to otherwise be forced to learn and to comply with the rules of an institution that does not condemn public displays of racism. And, classroom discussions of race and racism are more than frustrating, as denial of racism, and even outright racist statements, are typical from white students.

The racialization that individuals face on a daily basis in school and elsewhere enables an essentializing and hierarchical arrangement that works differently for whites than it does for others. Whites are not racialized in a way that places them outside of the norm, but in an implicitly normative way that assumes race pertains to others. Whites enjoy the privilege of simply being or existing, and are able to fly under the radar much of the time. But, a racialized "other" status is imposed upon brown and black individuals, and their race is constantly emphasized as a signifiers, an excuse, and a reason for behaviors and perceived flaws. Whiteness is a category that evades scrutiny that other racialized groups face.

I am now better able to recognize and speak about the various ways in which racism and other inequalities are manifested and function within and outside of education. I hope to contribute in a meaningful way to research and efforts to expose and to alleviate oppression and inequity in education, and perhaps beyond. My goal is to do justice to the experiences of brown and black students, and to effectively utilize their stories to reveal complex and overlooked ways in which racism is maintained in a

supposedly merit-based institution in 2014, decades after my observations of racism began.

Overview

The proceeding chapter reviews literature relevant to this research. The review grounds this study in theory utilized in, and in research similar to, the current study. Chapter Three outlines the study's research methodological orientation, design, and data collection and analysis procedures. This chapter also describes the research participants and location. The next several chapters discuss the research findings. Chapter Four explores the white normative standard at the university, and the various effects this has on the social, psychological and academic lives of the participants. Chapter Five examines the racialization, essentialization, and exoticization and tokenism facing my participants in various university settings. In Chapter Six, I describe the various academic and non-academic expectations and stereotypes facing these students of color, and the likelihood for self-fulfilling prophecy to occur in campus settings. This chapter also explores the burden and efforts involved in identity negation imposed upon these students in this white university. Chapter Seven discusses the pervasiveness and effectiveness of the colorblind ideology that obscures racism and its effects on campus. Throughout these chapters, the various forms of microaggressions effective in maintaining a discrepant experience for students of color and whites are explored. The final chapter explores limitations of this research, and offers future research implications.

CHAPTER TWO | REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The Great Equalizer?

The American institution of education has often been referred to as an equalizing institution (Mann 1848; Bowles 2014; Harper and Davis III 2012). But in reality, this institution has historically been ridden with vast inequalities (Kozol 1991) that maintain and promote achievement and attainment disparities among racial groups. In addition, education has a history of perpetuating class distinctions, gender oppression, and other systems of oppression (Solís Jordán 1999; Collins 2009; Harper and Davis III 2012). For instance, whites are more likely to complete college, to finish it sooner, earn higher grades, and achieve higher degrees, than both blacks and Hispanics (Anon 2010). Of Americans over the age of 26, whites (34.5%) are more likely than blacks (21.4%) and Hispanics (14.5%) to hold a Bachelor's degree or higher. And of full-time BA-degree-seeking students, whites (41.9%) are more than twice as likely as blacks (20.8%), and over a quarter more likely than Hispanics (28.6%), to complete a Bachelor's degree within four years (U. S. Department of Education 2012).

Wages correspond directly to education levels, making completion of high school and college extremely important. Employment rates for American adults aged 25-34 who hold less than a high school diploma (56%) are consistently lower than for those with a high school diploma (69%). And, those with only a high school diploma (69%) are markedly less likely to be employed than those with a BA or higher (84%) (U. S.

Department of Education 2013). Related, the more education one receives, the greater their chances of earning a higher income (McNamee and Miller 2009). In fact, those with less than a high school degree earn an average of about a third of the income earned by those with college and advanced degrees (Mishel, Bernstein and Allegretto 2007). But because equality of education is not a reality in the U.S., occupations that lead to enhanced income tend to be filled by those born into relative advantage, and those of privileged race, sex, religion, and other status characteristics. This system has contributed to the higher completion, achievement, and occupational attainment with higher returns for whites than for blacks and Hispanics (ANON 2010).

Not only is college completion associated with race, but scholastic achievement in college is also racialized. And while racial and ethnic gaps exist in grades K-12, these disparities are even greater in higher education (Lee 2002). For instance, black and Hispanic college students are less likely than whites to earn a GPA of 3.0 or higher (ANON 2010). Further, black and Hispanic college students tend to earn lower grades than would be predicted by their own high school test scores and grades (ANON 2010).

Because much of what actually affects educational attainment is related to one's family background, such as parental occupation and education attainment, the school system acts to reproduce existing social inequalities (McNamee and Miller 2009). There are various structural, institutional, and interpersonal impediments that contribute to these inequities. These disparities accumulate from birth to make American education an institution in which inequities are reinforced and reproduced instead of being alleviated. Social class and family structural location are among the respondent characteristics

examined. And because social class and race are highly correlated in the US, class disparities enhance racial disparities throughout the institution. For instance, children typically receive education in direct proportion to their social standing, and children from different backgrounds are prepped for roles commensurate with their social location. In part, education's role in social reproduction works by rewarding privileged social and cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), and by devaluing the capital of lower class children and their families. This places individuals on discrepant paths to future success (McNamee and Miller 2009).

Also significant are the advantages in terms of quality of schooling, teachers, and materials that economically advantaged parents are able to provide to their children (Johnson 2006). For instance, children from privileged backgrounds are more likely to attend college, to begin college right after high school, to attend a four-year institution, to attend an esteemed school, and to complete their college career on time (McNamee and Miller 2009). Because much of such disparity among social classes is due to various non-meritorious advantages among higher social classes, the relationship between intellectual ability and college attendance is greatly weakened (McNamee and Miller 2009; Lareau 2000; Massey 2007; Shapiro 2004).

What's more, working class and poor children tend to replicate their original social class due to lower achievement aspirations and expectations of their families (Lucas 2011; Morland 1960; Weinger 2000; Willis 1977). Nonetheless, there are countless examples of individuals attaining upwards mobility from working class backgrounds (Lubrano 2004; Sennett and Cobb 1972). Indeed, research has shown that

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positive family communication can counter class disadvantages of poorer families. For example, Simpson (1962) and Serravallo (2004) have found that some working class parents communicate a set of values that support upward mobility. They find that some encourage their children to pursue college education, non-manual occupations, and a middle-class lifestyle (Serravallo 2004).

All in all, while there is the possibility for upward mobility through education, the institution tends to reinforce overall class and racial disparities (Lucas 2011; McNamee and Miller 2009). Race also functions as a structuring institution in its own right. It works to differentially allocate educational and social resources to students, even within the supposedly meritocratic institution of higher education. And, this occurs through various means, from subtle racism (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solórzano 2009; Morales 2012; Nadal et al. 2014) to overt racist policies and programs (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995; Williams 2012; Collins 2009). And, inequities tend to compound when considering the intersection of various characteristics, such as race, social class, and gender, among others.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a useful tool with which to explore racism in higher education (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995; Hiraldo 2010). According to CRT, race and racism are central and defining aspects of American society. They are built into institutions, including higher education (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995; Williams 2012). In essence, race is a structuring agent that affects the lives of everyone. It is indeed a

central element of the experience of life in American schools (Dixson and Rousseau 2006; Hiraldo 2010).

There are several themes or tenets that have come to define Critical Race Theory (CRT) and guide CRT research and scholarship. First, racism is endemic to life in the US. Race is an ordinary "'normal science,' the usual way society does business, the common, everyday, experiences of most people of color in this country" (Delgado and Stefancic 2001, p. 6-7). Race, as a significant identity marker, is so embedded in American life that it is habitually overlooked as a significant structuring agent. Overall, the normalcy of race renders its effects invisible (Dixson and Rousseau 2006; Ladson-Billings 2013a; Bonilla-Silva 1997).

Second, race and racial oppression serve dominant interests, or the interests of dominant groups. Accordingly, CRT acknowledges that efforts to reduce racial inequality often serve to further the interests of whites. In fact, most racial remedies have proven more symbolic and superficial than substantive (Bell 1992). This demands the emphasis that CRT scholars place on interest convergence. Interest convergence refers to the apparent efforts made by whites to alleviate racism and its inequities only if it benefits them.

Third, CRT is highly skeptical of dominant ideologies, such as those of meritocracy, objectivity, neutrality, and colorblindness, and it challenges dominant racist stories and accounts that are commensurate with these ideologies (Dixson and Rousseau 2006; Hiraldo 2010). Critical Race Theory also challenges ahistoricism and calls for a historical and contextual analyses of the law. According to Dixson and Rousseau (2006),

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CRT scholars presume that racism has been central to all contemporary manifestations of racial group disadvantage, and they emphasize that historical context is important in understanding current racial ordering. Although race is normalized in the US (Dixson and Rousseau 2006), CRT recognizes that it is a constitutive element used to organize many world societies. That is, race is constructed and reconstructed with historical and localized shifts, with shifts between racial domination and racial hegemony. It has been used as a mechanism for creating and maintaining hierarchy and ideology of white supremacy based on the socio-politico-historical needs of the time and place (Ladson-Billings 2013; Omi and Winant 1994).

Next, CRT recognizes and values the experiential knowledge of people of color in analyzing society. They construct narratives out of the historical, political, and socio-cultural realities of people of color, which they refer to as *counter-stories* or *counter-narratives* (Dixson and Rousseau 2006; Ladson-Billings 2013b). These stories enable the voices and words of those who are marginalized by racism and other oppressions to be heard, instead of relying on typical stories of dominant groups. While majoritarian stories usually reinforce the normative, exclusionary and biased discussions and descriptions of dominant groups (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995; Ladson-Billings 2013b; Dixson and Rousseau 2006), counter-stories allow readers to understand the ways in which oppression manifests in policy, practice, and lived experiences.

Further, CRT recognizes that race is not the only vector of oppression, and that other forms of inequality intersect to create particular lived experiences with varying degrees of oppression and privilege. Because identities are performed in a myriad of

ways, there is no way to be certain about to which of those identities people react. One's sex, race, social class, religion, and other identity characteristics can trigger reactions, so distinguishing which are more effective in inciting reactions from others can be tricky (Ladson-Billings 2013). Therefore, these scholars emphasize an Intersectionality approach. This approach examines the inequities facing those who experience two or more oppressions, such as class, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, and ability. A goal is to learn how multiple identity/status characteristics might be operating simultaneously, and how this combination plays out in various settings (Ladson-Billings 2013). And, CRT analyzes the ways in which white, heteronormative, male privilege is maintained through interactional, institutional, structural, and ideological inequities (Collins 1993).

Finally, an ultimate goal of Critical Race Theory is social justice. Because CRT emphasizes not just theory, but also praxis, these scholars recognize that it is insufficient to merely point out and to name racism. CRT mandates a focus on rectifying problems by pushing for change through and beyond work in the academy (Ladson-Billings and Donnor 2008). In short, Critical Race Theory seeks to eliminate racial oppression while furthering the broader goal of eradicating all forms of oppression and subordination (Minikel-Lacocque 2013).

CRT and Education

Although Critical Race Theory began as a legal scholarship in the late 1980's (Delgado and Stefancic 2001), its tenets have been adapted to the examination and elimination of racism in American education. CRT scholars insist that the inequalities embedded within and resulting from schooling in the US are a predictable and logical result of a racialized society in which discussions about race and racism are consistently marginalized and muted (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995).

Critical Race Theory examines how educational theory, policy, and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups. It challenges the popular ideologies, such as colorblind ideology and meritocracy, which promote and legitimize white privilege in education. For example, a pervasive ideology in the US is that formal education is an equalizer, a meritocratic institution. Many believe that educational institutions serve as vehicles of upward mobility, an avenue by which individuals can achieve the "American Dream" if they work hard enough (McNamee and Miller 2009; Smith, Hung, and Franklin 2011). CRT challenges this concept of a meritocracy that muddles the effects of racism, and it explores how racism reproduces inequality within American education (Dixson 2007).

Dominant views of education regularly exclude deeper probing of inequalities responsible for racialized achievement, outcomes, and trajectories (Teranishi, Behringer, Grey, and Parker 2009). To counter this tendency, CRT emphasizes experiences of students of color as expert sources of knowledge, whose voices must be brought to the foreground of academia to combat the tendency to view them from a deficit perspective (Teranishi et al. 2009; Minikel-Lacocque 2013). This empowers students of color to

share their lived experiences in the institution, which challenges the taken for granted realities of the majoritarian stories.

Microaggressions

Much of such daily racist offenses directed towards students of color are conveyed via microaggressions. Racial microaggressions are brief, commonplace, everyday exchanges that send demeaning and belittling messages to people of color because of their membership in a minority racial group (Sue et al. 2007). Towards efforts to fight racism, in general, a more sophisticated understanding of microaggressions is necessary. Specifically, there is a crucial need to advance greater awareness and understanding of the diverse manifestations of racial microaggressions, the effects they have on people of color, the dynamic interaction between offender and target, and the strategies used to eliminate them (Sue et al. 2007).

The term racial microaggression was first introduced by Pierce in 1970 to refer to "subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are 'put downs'" (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, and Willis 1978, p. 66). Others conceptualize them as subtle verbal, non-verbal, and/or visual insults (Solórzano et al. 2000; Sue et al. 2008) directed toward people of color, typically automatically or unconsciously (Solórzano et al. 2000), because of their race (Sue et al. 2008). Most accounts recognize that racial microaggressions are derogatory commonplace occurrences, sometimes with alternative, non-racial motives that commonly cause the recipient to feel invalidated and conflicted (Minikel-Lacocque 2013; Bell 1992; Sue et al. 2008). Some insist that they are

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expressions of an unconscious worldview of white superiority, and the corresponding

inferiority of others (Bell 1992; Sue et al. 2008).

Sue's Conceptualization

Because microaggressions are difficult to define, I will use a typology created by

Sue et al. (2007), who describes microaggressions as ¨brief, everyday exchanges that

send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority

group…. often unconsciously delivered in the form of subtle snubs or dismissive looks,

gestures, and tones….microaggressions are detrimental to persons of color because they

impair performance in a multitude of settings" (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri,

Holder, Nadal, and Esquin 2007, p. 273). They identify ten examples of racial

microaggressions, which are useful in conceptualization and analysis in microaggression

research. These microaggression types are displayed in Table 1 below.

This taxonomy has led to further research and scholarship on microaggressions against

women, multiracial people, the LGBT community, religious minorities, and people with

disabilities (Nadal 2014). Such research consistently finds that microaggressions have

significant negative effects on the lives, mental health, and everyday experiences of these

groups.

Table 1. Racial Microaggressions (adapted from Sue et al. 2007)

Theme	Microaggression examples	Message
Alien in own Land When Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans are assumed to be foreign-born	"Where are you from?" "You speak good English." Asking a Hispanic person to speak Spanish for them.	*You are not American.* *You are a foreigner.*
Ascription of Intelligence Assigning intelligence to a person of color on the basis of their race	"You are so articulate." "You are a credit to your race."	*It is unusual for people of your race to be intelligent.*
Color blindness Statements that indicate that a White person does not want to acknowledge race	"When I look at you, I don't see color." "I don't see race."	Denying a person's racial/ethnic experiences. Denying the individual as a racial/cultural being.
Criminality/assumption of criminal status A person of color is presumed to dangerous, criminal, or deviant on the basis of their race	A white person clutching their purse or bag if a person of color is near. A store owner following a person of color.	You are a criminal. You are dangerous.
Denial of individual racism A statement made when whites deny their racial biases	"I'm not a racist. I have several black friends."	I am immune to racism because I have friends of color.
Myth of meritocracy Statements made that assert that race does not play a role in life successes	"I believe the most qualified person should get the job." "Everyone can succeed in this society if they work hard enough."	People are given extra unfair benefits because of their race. People of color are often lazy and/or incompetent and need to work harder.
Pathologizing cultural values/communication styles The notion that the values and communication styles of the dominant/white culture are ideal	Asking a black person: "Why do you have to be so loud/animated? Just calm down." Dismissing an individual who brings up race/culture in work/school setting	Assimilate to dominant culture. Leave your cultural baggage outside.
Second-class citizen Occurs when a white person is given preferential treatment as a consumer over a person of color	Person of color mistaken for a service worker Having a taxi pass a person of color and pick up a white passenger	People of color are servants to whites. They couldn't possibly occupy high-status positions.
Environmental microaggressions Macro-level microaggressions, which are more apparent on systemic and	A college or university with buildings that are all named after white heterosexual upper class males. Overcrowding of public schools in communities of color	You don't belong/You won't succeed here. There is only so far you can go. You are an outsider/ don't exist. People of color

environmental levels		don't/shouldn't value education.

Table adapted from Sue et al. (2007) Table 1: Examples of Racial Microaggressions

Nadal's Conceptualization

Based on Sue et al.'s (2007) taxonomy, along with extant research on microaggressions, Nadal (2011) has created the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS). This scale measures six components of microaggressions. These include: *Assumptions of Inferiority*, *Second Class Citizen and Assumptions of Criminality*, *Microinvalidations, Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity, Environmental Microaggressions,* and *Workplace and School Microaggressions.* These microaggression types are displayed on Table 2 below.

While there are some similarities among the two conceptualizations of microaggressions, Nadal's conceptualization contains some additions and revisions to Sue's typology. Both are useful in conceptualizing and studying different manifestations of microaggressions, as they each focus on slightly different manifestations of racism. And, although they overlap a bit, each taxonomy provides approaches to classification of racism that are useful in conceptualizing microaggressions.

Table 2: Components of Nadal (2011)'s Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS)

Component 1: Assumptions of Inferiority

Someone assumed that I would have a lower education because of my race.
Someone assumed that I was poor because of my race.
Someone assumed that I would not be educated because of my race.
Someone acted surprised at my scholastic or professional success because of my race.
Someone assumed that I would not be intelligent because of my race.
Someone assumed that I held a lower paying job because of my race.
Someone assumed that I grew up in a particular neighborhood because of my race.
Someone told me that I was "articulate" after she/he assumed I wouldn't be.
Component 2: Second-Class Citizen and Assumptions of Criminality
Someone avoided walking near me on the street because of my race.
Someone clenched her/his purse or wallet upon seeing me because of my race.
Someone avoided sitting next to me in a public space (e.g., restaurants, subways, etc.) because of my race.
Someone avoided eye contact with me because of my race.
Someone's body language showed they were scared of me, because of my race.
Someone assumed that I would physically hurt them because of my race.
I received substandard service in stores compared to customers of other racial groups.
Component 3: Microinvalidations
Someone told me that they "don't see color."
Someone told me that they do not see race.
Someone told me that people should not think about race anymore.
Someone told me that she or he was color-blind.
I was told that people of color do not experience racism anymore.
Someone of a different racial group has stated that there is no difference between the two of us.
I was told that I should not complain about race.
I was told that people of all racial groups experience the same obstacles.
I was told that I complain about race too much.
Component 4: Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity
Someone assumed that I spoke a language other than English.
Someone asked me to teach them words in my "native language."
Someone assumed that I speak similar languages to other people in my race.
Someone assumed that I ate foods associated with my race/culture every day.
Someone told me that all people in my racial group look alike.
Someone told me that all people in my racial group are all the same.
Someone wanted to date me only because of my race.
Someone did not believe me when I told them I was born in the U.S.
Someone objectified one of my physical features because of my race.
Component 5: Environmental Microaggressions (scored by their inverse response)
I observed people of my race portrayed positively in movies.
I observed people of my race portrayed positively in magazines.
I observed people of my race portrayed positively on television.
I read popular books or magazines in which a majority of contributions featured people from my racial

group.
I observed that people of my race were the CEOs of major corporations.
I observed that someone of my race is a government official in my state.
I observed people of my race in prominent positions at my workplace or school.
Component 6: Workplace and School Microaggressions
An employer or co-worker was unfriendly or unwelcoming toward me because of my race.
My opinion was overlooked in a group discussion because of my race.
I was ignored at school or at work because of my race. (I was extra paid attn. to b/c of my race!)
Someone assumed that my work would be inferior to people of other racial groups.
An employer or co-worker treated me differently than White co-workers.

Some microaggressions convey to the target that she or he is assumed to be atypical, that she or he is an outsider. These are Nadal's Component 4: *Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity* microaggressions and Sue et al's *Alien in own Land* microaggressions. Both recognize and describe this type of attack. In this grouping, Nadal (2011) also includes messages that essentialize members of a racial group as well as those that objectify members of a racial group. Nadal's (2011) *Component 1: Assumptions of Inferiority* is a broader version of Sue et al.'s (2007) *Ascription of Intelligence* microaggression. Nadal includes beliefs of racialized success in educational and occupational realms, with the assumption that whites are and should be superior on all accounts. On the other hand, Sue et al. (2007) limits this category of microaggressions to those that express perceptions of racialized intellectual capacity.

Further, Nadal (2011) has basically combined Sue et al.'s (2007) *Color blindness* and *Denial of individual racism* types into Component 3: *Microinvalidations*, which essentially indicates that racism is not a factor in the US any longer, and that the offender does not notice race. Nadal also combines Sue et al.'s *Criminality/Assumption of criminal status* and *Second-class citizen* types into his *Component 2: Second-Class Citizen and*

Assumptions of Criminality. These are the major distinctions and similarities among these two typologies, which should be referenced in research on racial and other microaggressions.

Johnston and Nadal (2010) have classified another type of microaggression, which captures the degrading and objectifying messages targeting people of color. These "exoticization and objectification microaggressions" are classified into three subthemes. They are a) race on display, b) sexual objectification, and c) objectifying multiracial people as the "racialized ideal." The "race on display" microaggressions let the target know that their race is of primary importance, and typically demand that the target's race be known. For example, questions such as, "what are you?" objectify the individual while letting them know that their race is of critical importance. The sexual objectification microaggressions tell the target that, based on his or her race and gender, that she or he is expected to be hypersexual. This reveals an intersecting oppression, with brown and black males seen as sexually predatorial, and brown and black females as sexually easy and/or provocative. Finally, the racialized ideal microaggressions expose that the target is seen as the poster child for positive race relations, allowing the offender to seem cosmopolitan for including or associating with an "exotic other."

Microinsults, Microassaults, and Microinvalidations

Sue et al. (2007) indicate that microaggressions can be divided into three categories, and that the concept should also be expanded to include both intentional and conscious attacks. The resulting taxonomy includes *microinsults*, *microassaults*, and *microinvalidations*.

Microinsults are often unconscious, behavioral or verbal remarks that convey insensitivity, rudeness, and debase the target's race or identity. There are a few subtypes of these microinsults. One is *ascriptions of intelligence*, which assigns a degree of intelligence to a person of color based on their membership in a racial group. Another subtype of microinsult, the *second class citizen*, involves treating the target as a lesser person, while the *pathologizing cultural values and/or communication styles* subtype of microinsult indicates that people of color ascribe to abnormal values and communications styles. And lastly, the *assumption of criminal status* microinsult conveys the presumption that people of color are criminal, dangerous, and/or deviant because of their race (Sue et al. 2007).

Patricia Hill Collins (2009) describes a particular manifestation of Sue's Microinsults, which she refers to as "whitening." Whitening is the process through which a person, typically a white person, attempts to compliment a person of color by telling them that they are in some way like a white person. This type of "compliment" insinuates that it is surprising that the positive attribute applies to that person- a person of color, as it is something considered characteristic of whites. Such expressions let a person of color know that she or he is not expected to hold certain positive characteristics that are implicitly associated with whiteness, and that she or he is an exception for their racial

group. For example, Collins (2009) describes a whitening comment in which a white woman said, "It's so nice talking to you- you are so articulate!" (Collins 2009, p. 40). As Collins explains, the remark conveys surprise that a black person could speak so eloquently. This is an unconsciously coded comment that reveals cultural stereotypes and perpetuates racism in the form of a compliment.

Microinvalidations are typically unconscious behaviors or verbal comments that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological feelings, thoughts, or experiential reality of people of color. Sue (2007) breaks this category down into several types: *Alien in Own Land*, or the idea that racial and ethnic minority citizens are foreigners; *Colorblindness,* or the pretense that a white person does not see race or skin color; *the Myth of Meritocracy,* which includes notions that insist that race plays a minimal role in life success, while hard work plays the most significant role; and *Denial of Individual Racism,* or the denial of one's personal role in the perpetuation of racism.

Finally, *microassaults* are explicit and conscious racial derogations characterized mainly by violent verbal or nonverbal attacks on people of color with the purpose of harming them. These include intentional discriminatory actions like name-calling and avoidant behaviors. This is the type most similar to the form of racism existent in the pre-civil rights US, in which it was commonplace and more acceptable to express racism openly and directly. But, because of contemporary condemnations against overt racism, *microassaults* are usually only used under certain circumstances, including some level of anonymity (Sue et al. 2007).

While some use variations of these taxonomies, others find fault with some of these categories. For example, Minikel-Lacocque (2013) insists that Sue's inclusion of the intentional, overtly racist acts of *microassaults* in the category of microaggressions can actually work against efforts to fight racism. For one, it could minimize the deleterious nature of the less obvious acts, as well as the target's reaction to these acts. Adding overt acts of racism detracts from the crucial point: that the insidious, typically hidden and evasive nature of microaggressions is precisely how they maintain their power to cause damaging cumulative effects on people of color. Because they work and look differently, Minikel-Lacocque (2013) argues that overt and purposive acts should not be included under the umbrella of microaggressions. Instead, they should be considered a separate type of racial discrimination, which Minikel-Lacocque calls *racialized aggressions*.

Others have pointed out that racial microaggressions not only affect the target of the attack, but they can also be harmful to white offenders who are unaware of their racism. This obliviousness reduces racial empathic ability, lessens compassions for others, lowers perceptual awareness, and maintains false illusions (Spanierman, Poteat, Beer, and Armstrong 2006). Some offenders are able to live with a distorted view of the true nature and operation of racism (Bell 1992). A goal of the proposed research will be to explore these debates, and to contribute to them in a way that makes examining MA's and their effects more productive. By gaining an improved understanding of the various forms of, and effects of, the varied types of MA's, we are better equipped to spot them and to educate offenders in their contributions to racism. To recognize the subconscious,

as well as the purposive, offenses is important in the detection and response to racism, as each type requires a different approach in an effort to eliminate subtle and overt racism.

Microaggressions and Educational Context

Typical American universities can produce climates of gendered racism, marginalization, and problematized identity among students of color. Black and brown students are commonly perceived as, and made to feel like, outsiders (Bonilla-Silva 2001, 2002; Feagin 2010b; Smith 2008; Smith, Allen, and Danley 2007). They can come to feel as if they are atypical college students, as exceptions, instead of just average college students. Their identity as college students becomes problematic for them and for others. These distractions are often unnoticed, and even the targets might not be aware of the emotional and cognitive burdens associated with identity negotiation. Therefore, navigating historically white colleges and universities in the face of often unrecognized burdens can be difficult and requires added attention and stress not imposed upon whites. Much of this attention and stress are achieved through racialized microaggressions in various college settings. The effects of these subtle forms of racism are extensive and regularly unnoticed, and can include emotional strain, blocked opportunities, and lower academic expectations and achievement among students of color (Smith, Hung, and Franklin 2011).

Research on microaggression has attempted to better understand these covert and invisible burdens on students of color who must navigate within a climate in which they are continuously made aware of their atypical, othered status (Smith 2008; Smith, Allen,

and Danley 2007). For instance, Smith et al. (2011) found that as educational attainment increases towards college completion, racial microaggressions are responsible for an increasing degree of emotional and psychological stress among black male college students.

Racialized microaggressions pose a threat to the target's mental health (Sue, Capodilupo, and Holder 2008). Because of the psychological toll that racism commonly takes, brown and black experiences in predominately white institutions (PWIs) can be conceptualized as MEES, or mundane, extreme, environmental, and stress (Pierce 1974, 1975, 1995; Carroll 1998). Based on this, racial microaggressions contribute to mundane, taken for granted, and ubiquitous forms of discrimination. They also have substantial negative impacts on physiological, psychological, cognitive, and emotional well-being. Racial microaggressions are also environmental, as they are part of the ideology that influences the culture of the dominant environment. Finally, they produce excessive stress resulting from the culmination of racialized experiences. As Smith et al. (2011) assert, microaggressions function as "psycho-pollutants" and contribute to overall race-related stress.

Some have revealed through counter-stories that many brown and black college students in white institutions see themselves as targets of racism on a regular basis. In turn, they feel isolated and out of place, diminished, silenced in the classroom, and forced to represent and to speak for all students of color (Minikel-Lacocque 2013; Feagin, Vera, and Imani 1996; Strange and Banning 2001; Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000). These students also feel that others have lowered expectations of them, and that their

experiences and perspectives are constantly ignored and invalidated (Solórzano 1988; Nadal 2011; Sue 2010; Solórzano et al. 2000). Among other typically unnoticed effects of racial microaggressions are the promotion of stereotype threat (Steele, Spencer, and Aronson 2002; Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Davidoff, and Sriken 2014), the creation of discomfort on campus (Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000), and the reduction of problem-solving skills among brown and black students (Salvatore and Shelton 2007).

For instance, extant research reveals effects of microaggressions among Asian-American college students in PWIs to be extensive. Quantitative data on experiences of Asian American college students at a PWI show that almost 80% experience microaggressions over a two-week period and they experience microaggressions on over three-fourths of days. Microinvalidations, specifically assumptions of being an alien in one's own land, were the most common form reported by these students. Those who experienced higher rates of microaggressions reported higher degrees of negative affect (higher NA, $\gamma = 0.31$, $t(145) = 9.65$, $p < .001$) and lower positive affect (lower PA, $\gamma = -0.18$, $t(145) = -5.24$, $p < .001$); and more somatic symptoms ($\gamma = 0.04$, $t(145) = 4.31$, $p < .001$) (Ong, Burrow, Fuller-Rowell, Ja, and Sue 2013). These data evince the psychological and physiological impact of cumulative subtle racist incidences affecting Asian American college students at PWIs. Although these effects are troubling, Asian American students tend to face less negative racialized experiences than other students of color at PWIs (Hurtado 1992; Cabrera and Nora 1994). That is, Asian American college students are significantly more likely to endure this type of racism, while other students of color face a broader range of these racialized attacks.

Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solórzano (2009) have revealed three types of racial

microaggressions experienced by Latina/o students at three American universities. These

affronts include interpersonal microaggressions, racial jokes, and institutional

microaggressions, which prompted these students to develop strategies to cope with these

forms of racism (Yosso et al. 2009). It is common for students who experience such

attacks to rely on group cohesion and solidarity to deal with white racism (Yosso et al.

2009).

As with other Critical Race Theory studies, research in education has relied on

counter-stories of students of color to challenge the dominant discourse, which typically

reinforces equality, meritocracy, and colorblind ideology (Dixson and Rousseau 2006).

Overall, subtle racism consumes valuable time and energy that could otherwise be used

for educational and professional goals. Because of this, brown and black students at white

institutions spend considerable time and effort navigating possibly hostile environments

and dealing with the emotionally burdening and time-consuming psychological and

cognitive strains associated with white racism (Smith et al. 2011). This contributes to an

overall different college experience for students of color and white students.

Difficult Racial Dialogues in the Classroom

Because college classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, the potential for

racial tension and racial microaggressions is growing. Racial microaggressions have been

known to elicit difficult dialogues in the classroom. Students of color are repeatedly

offended by the ways in which some of these discussions take place, while perpetrators

typically prefer to avoid confronting the issue and/or feel unfairly accused of being racist (Constantine and Sue 2007). Because this dialogue is often difficult, it typically becomes racially charged. In turn, this creates misunderstandings and hostility among all involved, as well as impediments to learning for students of color (Sanchez-Hucles and Jones 2005).

Further, most research on difficult racial dialogues in the classroom focuses on the biases and fears of white students' perspectives, while those of students of color are largely ignored (Constantine and Sue 2007). This problem is exacerbated by the fact that most educators, the overwhelming majority of whom are white (National Center for Education Information 2011), are not equipped to recognize these offenses when they occur. They usually feel uncomfortable with race-related issues, and they are usually not sure how to facilitate race discussions (Young 2011).

Problematic Ideology

Making matters more troublesome for targets of racism are various ideologies, including colorblind ideology, belief in a meritocracy, and Feagin's White Racial Frame. These belief systems confound and confuse the multitude of effects of racism and efforts to alleviate its injustices in education.

As espoused by CRT, it is imperative to problematize the US belief in a colorblind society, in which success is attributed to merit, not race or other ascribed factors (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995). The assumption that education is a colorblind institution buttresses Mann's (1848) well-known proclamation that education is the "great

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equalizer," (Mann 1848) as well as Feagin's White Racial Frame (WRF). Feagin (2010a) describes the "White Racial Frame" as the lens through which whites view society. It reflects the culmination of racial stereotypes, narratives, racial images, racial emotions, and propensity for racial discrimination. This white-centric perspective is conducive to racial microaggressions that produce racial battle fatigue among targets of racism. This exacts emotional, physiological, and physical stress among people of color. And, the WRF insists that institutional and personal success are dependent upon individual effort and hard work, not racial inequality (Feagin 2010a).

Such ideologies are not only untruthful, but they also blame people of color if they do not meet the standards of whites in various institutions, including education. In fact, the US is not, and has never been, a colorblind nor a meritocratic society, and the inequities embedded within education reflect the inequalities embedded in the broader society (McNamee and Miller 2009). Students of color have found colorblind claims by white students to be frustrating and to perpetuate racial hostility on campus, as they quite frequently experience racialized communication and behaviors from whites. But, it is the case that some whites actually believe themselves to be "colorblind," as if they are not aware of their own race-coded behaviors and exchanges, which makes these offenders practically immune to efforts to ameliorate racial tension on campus (Lewis, Chesler, Forman 2000).

Whites are not the only ones who adhere to the colorblind ideology, as people of color many times internalize and espouse racist beliefs and belief systems. This internalization of racism has been found to have emotional, physiological, psychological,

and academic costs for students of color attending PWIs (Smith et al. 2011). It has also

stifled awareness of racialized educational experiences, as many continue to believe in a

just education system (McNamee and Miller 2009).

The Model Minority Myth

Contributing to this meritocratic ideology and reinforcing the colorblind ideology

is the pervasive "model minority myth" (Wu 2002). Wu (2002) emphasizes that most

who indicate their adherence to a colorblind ideology are actually very much color

conscious when they point out and emphasize expectations of (East) Asian superiority. A

common thought is that because East Asian Americans are commonly successful in

American institutions, then other racial and ethnic minorities should be able to achieve

the same level of success. This stereotype reinforces the possibility of attaining the

American Dream, as it blames other groups for their traditionally lower collective

mobility and success (Wu 2002).

At the same time, Asian-Americans are also susceptible to a type of

microaggression that conveys a different message than those directed towards other

people of color (Sue 1994). For example, Asian-American students are sometimes subject

to messages that let them know they are expected to be highly intelligent, bad at sports,

socially-awkward, and nerdy (Sue 1994). While some of these stereotypes facing Asian

students are positive, and others are negative, they all work to marginalize and

essentialize these students. But, the effects are different from stereotypes facing other

brown and black students, who are subject to stereotypes of lower academic potential and "pathological" behaviors (Collins 2009).

Americans tend to believe these to be benevolent and sometimes complimentary stereotypes, and many do not understand why Asians would not appreciate being perceived in such a seemingly positive light. In reality, such praises are actually dangerous generalizations. The stereotype is not mere flattery nor is it always well-meaning. Wu (2002b) writes that Asian American rights are regularly talked about as if they are synonymous with civil rights, which impedes deliberation of actual Asian civil rights. Wu (2002) asserts that eradicating this laudatory stereotype is crucial for Asian Americans if they are to gain group autonomy.

This model minority myth, although there might be some truth to the notion that Asians tend to prosper more than other groups in the US, should be rejected for a few reasons. First, as with any stereotype, it is a gross over-simplification that cannot accurately describe over ten million individuals. Second, within it is a hidden statement about black Americans and other minority groups: if Asians could immigrate to the US and succeed, then other people of color should be able to do so. Last, this myth denies actual experiences of Asian American racial discrimination and transforms them into a racial threat to other Americans (Wu 2002).

Even though they are viewed as more academically capable, Asian-American college students often endure negative social evaluations from their peers, and are vulnerable to negative treatment from others (Huynh and Fuligni 2012). But, there are other stereotypes of Asians and related microaggressions, as discussed previously. Some

view Asian-Americans as "perpetual foreigners" (Wu 2007), and assume that they all look alike. Other stereotypes are embedded in American ideology, as well. For instance, Asian males are commonly seen as chauvinistic, while Asian women are stereotyped as sex symbols. These women and girls are sometimes seen as a geisha girl, dragon lady, or china doll (Prasso 2005). Overall, it is important to understand the intention behind the microaggression to better assess the implications for the targeted group (Minikel-Lacocque 2013).

Not only are the intentions and substance of microaggressions of significance, but how students of color perceive, recognize, and respond to them are also important. These considerations demand mental energy from the targets (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal and Esquin 2007). For one, because targets' reactions to microaggressions are often seen as "pathological" by offenders, and it might be difficult to gauge if the act was intentionally racist, people of color face challenging considerations. They must process not only the action, but also the intention and the possible reaction to racial microaggressions. This involves emotional and cognitive energy not demanded from whites. This is the burden of knowing that an attack is possible at any time as well as having to deal with the actual attacks when they *do* occur. This can be emotionally and psychologically draining, and is related to Feagin's concept of the Second Eye, as discussed below.

The Second Eye

Feagin (1991) explains that everyday acts of racism, including microaggressions, place an often unnoticed burden on people of color. This encumbrance and its effects are commonly overlooked and ignored because they do not generally impact the dominant group in a negative way (Feagin 1991).

Because many of the racist attacks by whites are subtle, the targeted individuals must quickly determine if comments or behaviors are racist and they also must decide if and how to respond to them. This encourages the development in students of color of what Feagin (1991) calls a "second eye," to look out for and to recognize everyday interpersonal racism that might or might not be intentional (Feagin 1991). Therefore, because it is hard to prove, or even to recognize if, some actions are racist, the emotional and psychological toll facing people of color can be high. And, the colorblind ideology and the White Racial Frame make recognizing and reacting to racism difficult for people of color.

The reactions to racist attacks are important to examine. In fact, Minikel-Lacocque (2013) insists that a full understanding of the concept of microaggression is incomplete if the reaction to the attack is not adequately considered. As mentioned above, some targets of racism fail to recognize racist attacks for what they are. But, even if the target views behaviors or comments as being malicious or racist, they often face another problem: it might be tough to prove the intent of the act.

Sue (2010) asserts that if microaggressions are recognized by observers as racist and problematic, then anger and other hostile reactions are normal and understandable.

But, if the microaggression is not recognized as such, but is instead seen as acceptable by perpetrators and witnesses, any reaction by the target can be seen as oversensitive and unwarranted. For this reason, Minikel-Lacocque (2013) indicates that it is important to distinguish between those cases in which a target decides to react to racism and when she does not. She calls for research on contested microaggressions since an understanding of both the target's and the offender's perception of the situation would significantly contribute to the understanding of the precipitating and subsequent events involved in the act of a microaggression, and could subsequently curb racism (Minikel-Lacocque 2013).

Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) write about this need for constant assessment of offenders' behaviors and attitudes and the split-second decision to respond or not. In their qualitative study, they find that black women are especially alert to their own behavior, as well as to what is happening or said in their surroundings. They are especially aware of the need to decide quickly if various actions or language are racist or not, as well as whether to challenge or to abstain from reacting to racist actions (Jones and Shorter-Gooden 2003). But, even if targets perceive a need to confront an offender, there are several considerations that make responding to these attacks potentially harmful.

For one, whites are sometimes unaware that their behaviors or comments are actually offensive and/or racist. It is also the case that whites tend to have strong emotional reactions to being accused of racism (Sue et al. 2008), and they tend to label the accusations of people of color who speak out against these acts as irrational and hypersensitive (Harris 2008; Thomas 2008). Further, whites tend to deny their contributions to racism and place the blame on the person of color. Some affected by

racial microaggressions have reported that whites who do not acknowledge their offense, or the gravity of it, insist that the person of color is oversensitive, paranoid, or has perhaps misinterpreted the situation. Here, people of color risk seeming defensive or playing "the race card" if they confront an aggressor of subtle attacks (Feagin 1991). Therefore, because offenders are often unaware that they are being racist, reactions from the target can exacerbate racial tensions. Because less explicit forms of racism occur in private and in public (Feagin 1991), students of color must use their "second eye" in school, placing an extra academic burden on brown and black students.

But, even when the offender does acknowledge intentionality, he or she often minimizes or trivializes the attack (Constantine and Sue 2007). The vehemence with which many whites respond to these accusations is another reason why individuals hesitate to confront an aggressor of racism. The covert character of microaggressions provides offenders the power to affect targets psychologically, and to limit the likelihood of responding to them (McCabe 2009). And, the troublesome, but pervasive, ideologies of meritocracy, colorblind logic, and Feagin's White Racial Frame exacerbate and legitimize whites' ignorance and denial of their offenses.

Some have explored this phenomenon via quantitative research. For example, Smedley, Myers, and Harrell (1993) have found that such stresses associated with subtle, hard to recognize and define, racist incidences and manifestations affect students of color beyond those common stresses associated with attending college (Smedley, Myers, and Harrell 1993). D'Augelli and Hershberger (1993)'s quantitative research shows that black students in PWIs are aware of the possibility of impending racism in their environment,

and face an immense burden of dealing with it (D'Augella and Hershberger 1993). Further, quantitative research by Hurtado (1992) and Cabrera and Nora (1994) have found that the PWIs racialized climate to be most impactful among black students, who have to be vigilant against racism in their environment.

The effects of racial microaggressions, and the need to constantly monitor and assess the environment and analyze exchanges with whites for racist offenses, are not only emotionally draining on students of color, but these considerations have also been found to affect students academically. Some students of color have reported that racial microaggressions on campus have affected their assessments of their own academic capabilities (Solórzano et al. 2000; Freis-Britt and Turner 2001; Feagin, Vera, and Imani 1996) and have even impacted actual educational achievement (Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Davidoff, and Sriken 2014).

Marginalization and (In) visibility of Students of Color

Using counter-narratives, as espoused by CRT methodology, Derrick Bell finds that in the educational community, namely in the K-12 grades, black students are regularly neglected and ignored by teachers in the classroom. For example, Tyrone (2008) also finds evidence that young black boys are marginalized in elementary school by disproportionately being classified as disabled and placed in alternative classrooms. This often occurs through daily microaggressions. Specifically, in research on microaggressions in university settings, it is common to find evidence that students of color feel invisible in the classroom due to racial microaggressions (Nadal et al. 2008;

Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000). Nadal et al. (2010) found in a study of Filipino American graduate students, racial microaggressions led to feelings of marginalization, invisibility, and disconnect from their universities due to their racialized other status (Nadal, Pituc, Johnston, and Esparrago 2010).

On the other hand, many times, the "othered," stereotyped, racialized identities of brown and black students often induce extreme visibility and hyper-surveillance at PWIs. This is somewhat linked to commensurate cultural stereotypes of people of color in US society. As within any institution, expectations, practices, and policies reflect the values and perceptions of normalcy of those who create and maintain power to reinforce them (Monroe 2005). The academic, social, and residential settings of the white university are overwhelmingly inhabited and controlled by whites and permeated by white ideology. As Monroe (2005) explains, because the values of people of color tend to be pathologized by whites, they typically suffer stricter surveillance (Collins 2009).

Overall, brown and black students are forced to adhere to the standards of normalcy of the white students and of the white institution, even more so than white students. This results in a racialized process of detection, definition, and response to behaviors that targets and negatively affects students of color (Hanna 1998; Weinstein, Curran, and Tomlinson-Clarke 2004). Faculty and other students often unknowingly contribute to the stricter disciplining (Collins 2009) and policing (Rios 2011) of students of color. Such selective and harsher disciplining begins in grade school (Monroe 2005), and follows these students through their educational careers (Rios 2009; Collins 2009).

This mirrors the hyper-surveillance of people of color in larger society, as the university acts as a microcosm of the larger society.

Pathologization of minority students' behaviors and values are commonly conveyed through Sue et al.'s (2007) *Pathologizing cultural values/communication styles* microaggressions. Because of the negative stereotypes and expectations facing students of color in PWIs, there is the tendency for some students of color to incorporate some or all of these negative stereotypes into their sense of self. This can affect self-esteem, self-worth, and even actual educational achievement. This internalized oppression is discussed next.

Internalized Racial Oppression

Racist ideology and racist offenses are many times internalized by the oppressed group, contributing to their own oppression (Robinson 2012; Pyke 2010). Internalized racial oppression is a psychological manifestation of racism. In fact, it is often considered the most psychologically destructive injury (Speight 2007) of racial oppression that maintains white dominance in the US. Because overt racism is no longer universally accepted in today's US, and many subscribe to colorblind and meritocracy ideology, internalized racial oppression is especially effective. This form of oppression is especially destructive because it is self-perpetuating (Wilson 1993).

Some suggest that once affected psychologically by racism, the oppressed enforce this type of oppression upon themselves (Poupart 2003), reproducing the discursive practices of their oppressors (Fanon, Sartre, and Farrington 1965; Friere 1970; Poupart

2003). Lipsky (1977) elaborates that internalized oppression involves the oppressed turning on themselves, their families, and their own people. Behaviors resulting from internalizing white racism, including accepting negative stereotypes and repressive cultural codes created by the dominant group, typically occur without intention and awareness of the oppressed. This lack of awareness reinforces white dominance, and increases likelihood to perpetuate this oppression within the group (Padilla 2001).

Pyke (2010) argues that internalized racial oppression is largely misunderstood and understudied, although it is one of the most common forms of racism. Some suggest that extensive ignorance or misunderstanding of the topic is not accidental, but stems from a taboo associated with it (Pyke 2010; hooks 2003). Nevertheless, there is a tendency to mistakenly see internalized oppression as a deficit of the oppressed. Further, it is not a uni-dimensional problem, but instead, works across and among multiple dimensions. It presents in various forms, and across a host of situational contexts. And, it intersects across multiple systems of domination (Padilla 2001). Therefore, it does not affect all members of an oppressed group in identical ways, demanding a need to apply an Intersectionality approach to the study of this complicated phenomena.

Effects of internalized oppression can be very damaging. It has been found to significantly affect the scholastic achievement and trajectory for students of color who internalize lowered academic expectations from the dominant group (Brophy and Good 1970; Wittrock 1986; Jencks and Phillips 1998; Mayer 2002). Specifically, assumptions of lower intelligence and academic inferiority of students of color can negatively affect one's self-esteem and self-worth (Nadal et al. 2014; Torres, Driscoll, and Burrow 2010),

and can contribute to self-doubt. For example, black and Hispanic college students have reported questioning their academic capabilities when faced with microaggressions in the educational environment (Solórzano et al. 2000; Yosso et al. 2009).

Internalizing such negative expectations can even prompt students of color to consider, or to actually, drop out of college (Aronson, Quinn, Spencer, Swim and Stangor 1998). Therefore, an examination and understanding of the psychological effects of racism in the university is incomplete without a consideration of this form of oppression (Hipolito-Delgado 2010).

Internalized Oppression and Microaggressions

Although any group can deliver racial microaggressions, some argue that the most deleterious ones are those initiated by whites against people of color, as whites hold social power to collectively disempower other groups (Sue, Capodilupo, Nadal, and Torino 2008). People of color frequently assume that microaggressions that affect their daily and overall life experiences are perpetrated by seemingly well-meaning whites who are unaware that their actions and behaviors are offensive (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, and Hodson 2002).

Brown and black students are not only subject to racialized attacks and marginalizing behaviors from the dominant racial group, but these students of color also frequently suffer "sound wounds" (Pizarro 2005; Valenzuela 2010) from other marginalized individuals. These sound wounds are negative stereotypes of the target's racial group expressed by members of that group, often through microaggressions. They

are common in American schools, as schools are places where young people are likely to internalize dominant ideologies of a racial hierarchy (Olson 1998; Valenzuela 1999). These sound wounds reveal that the attackers, other brown and black students, subscribe to the dominant group's negative racial stereotypes, and they treat others in their group accordingly (Córdova 2005; Memmi 1965; Torres 2003).

Identity Construction and Reconstruction

White racism and internalization of oppression can prompt some brown and black students to actively circumvent identification with members of their stigmatized group. Here, the desire is to avoid emphasizing their marginalized identity and sense of community with others of their oppressed group. Instead, they try to elude being associated with others of their marginalized racial group in effort to "succeed" in the white-dominated university (Bridges 2011; Neville, Heppner, Ji, and Thye 2004). This phenomenon contributes to intragroup racism, which has received very little attention by researchers and scholars (Clark 2004; Cordova and Cervantes 2010).

Because the academic stereotypes associated with brown and black students are not favorable, being a student of color brings with it much stigma. It is often a struggle for students of color to carve out an identity commensurate with that of a successful student, while also maintaining their identity as a person of color. The psychological burden students of color must face in white institutions can be overwhelming (Torres, Driscoll, and Burrow 2010). Identity re-working can create a sort of juggling act for students of color who wish to create a positive identity around their race, as well as their

status as a student, in a society in which the two are not typically compatible (Morales 2012). Yet other students react to this duality with frustration, and are eventually forced to create an identity oppositional to the dominant group. These students are ultimately responding to perceptions of being subordinated within an unfair system (Fordham and Ogbu 1986; MacLeod 1987) and their inability to change their lower social standing through education (Willis 1977).

Double Consciousness

DuBois's notion of "double consciousness" is a useful theoretical concept for understanding these psycho-social divisions associated with internalized oppression. The term "double consciousness" describes this tension between multiple selves of blacks and the lack of fluidity with which they are forced to simultaneously participate in both the white world and the black world. DuBois describes that black Americans find themselves constantly struggling against "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings" (DuBois 1903, p. 3).

To explain this particular experience, DuBois explains, "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one-self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (DuBois 1903, p. 3). Hence, people of color view themselves through the eyes of the rest of the society, which has historically viewed them as inferior, leading to lower self-esteem among this group. This double consciousness is connected to the internalization of cultural beliefs associated with individual-blame, which is reflective of

and reinforces a colorblind ideology. It also reflects Feagin's White Racial Frame (2010),

which explains how people of color are socialized into the racial hierarchy. This

socialization includes the recognition of the impediments imposed upon people of color,

namely blacks, by historical and continual racial discrimination (Smith et al. 2011).

While DuBois spoke mainly about the black experience, this theory can be applied to

other people of color as well.

For example, Poupart (2003) describes the double consciousness of American

Indians, in which she explains their internalization of Western meanings of difference.

These ideologies cause them to view themselves through the dominant constructs that

define them as racially subhuman, and culturally deficient and contemptible. This results

in an interesting phenomenon in which American Indians simultaneously accept and

reject these debasing stereotypes and conceptions, as they somehow view them as being

both true and false. They remain silent about their internalized oppression, which enables

the dominant culture to further the marginalization and subjugation of this racial and

cultural "other" (Poupart 2003).

This double consciousness occurs among brown and black students in the typical

American university. This is especially true in predominately white universities, in which

many students of color have reported life to be exceedingly exhausting and discouraging

(Robinson 2013). Often, the student of color can be "Othered" by other students, faculty,

resulting in a "twoness" of a subjective agent self and the objective excluded Other

(DuBois 1903). As research shows, students of color experience college life as a

racialized other (Moane 2008; Minikel-Lacocque 2013).

This double consciousness, and the related pull at one's identities, can be somewhat different for immigrant or second- and third- generation American students. Their identities are unique in that they tend to find themselves feeling forced to walk a tightrope of maintaining the language and culture of their family's roots, while forging a new identity in an American institution. Specifically, the American public school is often hostile or indifferent to diverse cultural expressions among students (Valenzuela 2010). This can incite students to ascribe to, and impose upon other students of color, an ideology of dominant group superiority. This works as a coping mechanism in an institution which basically insists that these students degrade their own heritage and others with whom they might otherwise identity. Stigmatized individuals commonly turn to attack their own group members. This internalized oppression reflects superiority and racism, and the oppressed are sometimes the vehicles through which this hierarchy is reinforced (Valenzuela 2010).

On the other hand, this imposed tension among identities can enhance intra-racial identity among black and brown college students. In fact, racial identity is actually more salient for black and non-white Hispanic college students than for white and Asian-American students (Phinney et al. 1994). This is likely due to their oppression and marginalization by white peers and the overall white climate at the university (Fife, McCreary, Kilgour, Canter, and Adegoke 2010). Therefore, the need to maintain a positive self-identity around race is important, but managing a student and racialized identity can be tricky and emotionally-draining.

Intersecting Oppressions at the PWI

For most brown and black students, their college experiences involve debasing comments, questions, and actions on or around campus that let them know they are not accepted, that they are outsiders (Nadal et al. 2011). Because the prototype of a typical college student is white, upper or middle class, heterosexual, and male (Morales 2012), those who deviate from this identity are often marginalized, pathologized, and otherwise "othered" at the PWI.

Therefore, race is not the only category imposed upon students that affects their overall college experience. Sadly, a majority of brown and black students are saddled with overlapping oppressions. For example, many have researched parallel identities among people of color in college settings to find that sex and race tend to create differential experiences. Cultural stereotypes about particular combinations of sex and race promote experiences for individuals that can exacerbate racism, sexism, classism, and other isms. For example, black men and Hispanic women commonly feel marginalized in PWIs due to messages received via microaggressions (McCabe 2009).

Smith et al. (2011) explain that black men in white institutions are racialized contradictions. They are told that they can find success through attaining an education within white college settings, but they experience racist climates that block opportunities, and promote mundane, extreme, and environmental stress (MEES). MEES contributes to lowered chances for academic success for this group. In fact, using a structural equation model, Smith et al. (2011) find that as educational attainment among black men increases, racial microaggressions contribute to a substantial amount of MEES in college.

Therefore, white college campuses incite battle fatigue among black men (Smith et al. 2011). They are forced to navigate within a supposedly meritocratic institution, while maintaining the discrepant identities surrounding race, sex, and academics.

Many people of color experience gendered racism in some form within white spaces. Black women often experience difficulties balancing their racial and gender identities in white colleges and universities as well. Some report a sense of "homelessness," as they feel out of place and isolated in white colleges, but they also feel as if they no longer belong in their neighborhood of origin. Many also feel invisible and/or neglected by whites in the classroom, and they also report feeling tokenized. Further, some black female college students at PWIs experience pressure to balance acting "too white" or "too black." Race and gender intersect in this learning how to be a socially acceptable "good woman," due to conflicting norms of white womanhood and black womanhood as perceived by others on campus (Winkle-Wagner 2009).

The intersection of race and immigrant status adds another layer which US native-born students do not have to consider. For Hispanics, or those thought to be Hispanic, they are sometimes considered as extreme outsiders to PWIs, as they are marginalized in academia, as well as in society at large. Those who are not US native-born face a tension between feeling like a foreigner, and creating an identity commensurate with that of an American college student. Therefore, non-natives are minorities in multiple ways in PWIs.

Further, Hispanic immigrants, especially those from Mexico (Pyne and Means 2013), can feel less privileged than nonimmigrant peers. This is because it is common for

individuals to conflate race, class, and ethnicity in a way that further marginalizes these students. And, some students experience tensions at home, with family and friends perceiving their attempts at American college education as trying to move away from their roots. Like their black counterparts, this strain can be exacerbated by the lack of faculty and peer support (Rodriguez 1983), as they must figure out how to juggle the intersecting identities they hold as immigrant college students (Anzaldúa 1999).

The unwelcoming culture of educational institutions can affect the educational attainment (Gloria, Castellanos, López, and Rosales and 2005) and emotional and psychological well-being of Hispanic students (Gloria, Castellanos, Scull and Villegas 2009). Hispanic males also report lack of attention from faculty and mentors in PWIs, that might help offset some of the discrimination and negative experiences they experience among white peers (Zalaquett 2006). Hispanic students routinely endure microaggressions that let them know that they are viewed as criminal and nonacademic (Rosenbloom and Way 2004). These students report experiencing comments and behaviors from whites that make them feel ashamed and embarrassed, and they are made to feel as if they will not excel in college. And, regardless of national origin, Hispanic students are commonly treated as if they are Mexican. Because Mexicans in the US area subordinated group, these students are often degraded and demeaned by white peers. Whites convey to these students in subtle and overt ways that their proper place is in the fields, mowing lawns, and performing other stereotypical jobs assumed to be filled by Mexican males in the US (Yosso, Smith, Ceja and Solórzano 2009).

The experience for Hispanic women in college, as with any group, is also colored by overlapping oppressions associated with race, class, and gender. Many report negative experiences with mentors, faculty, and administrators at PWIs (Gándara 1995). This can be detrimental because support from faculty at PWIs is crucial in the overall college experience, including educational outcomes of students. Further compounding their difficulties, some American Hispanic female college students are socialized to prioritize family and nurturance over one's own scholastic and professional well-being (Gil and Vasquez 1996; Ginorio and Martinez 1996). These familial expectations are sometimes in addition to the hypersexualization of Hispanic women, which imposes stereotypes upon these students that can interfere with their college experiences socially, academically, and emotionally (Collins 2004; Nadal et al. 2011).

Sexual orientation also intersects with race and gender in ways that provide marginalizing experiences for students. Collins (2004) explains that due to the legacy of slavery and racism in the US, there is a distorted conceptualization of black sexuality that has been reinforced and internalized by blacks. Black male college students at PWIs who identify as gay or bisexual many times face varying psychosocial and emotional challenges related to their status as both sexual and racial minorities. They experience isolation, lack of faculty support, and marginalization (Connolly 2000; Mobley 2000; Schueler, Hoffman, and Peterson 2009), and they often struggle to find a space in which they feel comfortable, safe, and welcomed in the university (Goode-Cross and Good 2008). These experiences can threaten chances for gay or bisexual black males to thrive in PWIs (Goode-Cross and Tager 2011). Because multiple identities of oppression tend to

incite emotional, psychological, and social costs (Goode-Cross and Tager 2011), black and Hispanic female college students, and male Hispanic college students who identify as part of the LGBTQIA community also typically face exclusion and extreme isolation at PWIs.

Overall, differential treatment and expectations within the white university reflects an intersectionality of oppressions, including the often overlooked strain on women and men of color with other minority statuses, such as lower social class, sexual minority status, and immigrant status (Bonilla-Silva 2001, 2002; Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000; Batur, Vera and Feagin 2000; Feagin and Sikes 1994; Smith, Allen, and Danley 2007). They are seen as an outsiders along multiple dimensions, not just race, which can prove to be very physically, psychologically, and emotionally exhausting. This strain can affect the academic motivations, activities, identity formation, and overall welfare of women and men of color (Garibaldi 1992; Pierce 1970).

CHAPTER THREE | METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Broadly, this research sets out to better understand the experiences of students of color in a predominately white university in the US Southeast. Countless examined experiences and their effects are often hidden, and are typically not recognized by white students, professors, or administrators. What's more, some are not even fully analyzed by the targeted students themselves. These incidences accumulate and contribute to differential educational trajectories, expectations, outcomes, and overall college experience compared to whites. And, intersecting and internalized oppressions that are known to have compounding and qualitatively different effects on schooling and interpersonal experiences among students are also a focus of this study.

What is crucial about this research is that not only are the forms of oppression experienced by the students usually too subtle to notice, but the effects are also largely ignored or denied. Bringing awareness to effects of racism on campus is important to promote equitable academic experiences, outcomes, and achievement among brown and black students at American PWIs. This research also relies on the personal accounts of students of color, which is an underutilized approach to educational research that will advance an overall goal of social justice in education.

The Setting

This section describes the university in which the research occurred, its demographics, and its racial and ethnic landscape. Similar statistics and information about the town in which the university is located are also discussed in the next section.

Westfield[2], NC

The university is located in a predominately white, racially and economically segregated city in North Carolina, with a dark history of turbulent race relations. I will call this community Westfield for the duration of my dissertation in order to maintain its anonymity. Westfield's racist legacy involves violence, mobs, lynchings, torture, and forced relocation of blacks by whites. The city is infamous for racist atrocities of 1898, and terrorism by whites has been rationalized and even glorified since. The Westfield black community was systematically and effectively controlled and stereotyped in ways that continue to affect race relations in the community today. Historical white denial of culpability and lack of significant reparations have allowed a continual reliance on meritocratic explanations for white privilege in the town, as in larger society (Hossfeld 2005).

Currently, the town remains racially and economically segregated. It is located in a county that is 81.3% white, 14.6% black, 0.6% American Indian or Alaska Native, 1.5% Asian, 5.5% Hispanic or Latino, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander and multi-racial individuals comprising the remaining 5.6% of the county population.

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[2] This is not the actual name of the city. It has been changed to protect anonymity.

This proportion of whites (81.3%) is higher than that in the overall state (71.1%) (US

Census Bureau 2014).

According to the Center for American Progress, demographic shifts in North

Carolina reflect a steady state-wide growth of communities of color over the past ten

years or so. This mirrors an increasing significance of Hispanic consumers and

entrepreneurs who are aiding in the expansion of North Carolina's economy. The Center

for American Progress also reports that immigrants are more and more a critical part of

North Carolina's economy and workforce than in past decades (Schoenbach 2012). In

fact the 2012 North Carolina Hispanic population percentage increased by 124.2% since

2000 (Pew Research Center 2014).

While Westfield remains mostly white, and is not situated in one of the counties

experiencing the most increase in communities of color, as of 2011, its Hispanic

population in this county has more than doubled (255% increase) since 1990, and has

seen another increase by 3% since 2000. In 2011, the percentage of this county's

residents who were Hispanic was 5.38%, while the corresponding percentage of

Hispanics comprising the North Carolina population was 9% (Pew Research Center

2011).

This increasing influx of immigrants to North Carolina and in this particular

county reflects a larger, often unexpected and unexamined trend since the 1980's, of new

immigrants settling more commonly in rural and suburban areas, particularly the US

South (Marrow 2009). What's more, this substantial growth among communities of color

in NC has initiated a generation gap. That is, there is a growing and disproportionate

number of youth of color, who must be prepared to be the future leaders and workers of the nation (Schoenbach 2012). The new face of immigration in North Carolina is comprised of Hispanic communities made of young, first-, second-, or third- generation immigrants. After all, immigrant and US-born children of immigrants make up the fastest growing portion of the US population under age 18 (Gill 2010).

For this reason, one might assume that the face of the North Carolina college student is changing and diversifying to reflect this trend of newcomers. It might seem that there is great potential for the upward social and economic mobility of these Hispanic newcomers (Marrow 2009; Gill 2010). While a small proportion of these youth do graduate from college, most do not. There is still the real threat that anti-immigrant sentiment and immigration policies will degrade their experiences in the region (Marrow 2009), as well as in the university. In reality, a lot of these immigrant youth are undocumented, barring them from participation in higher education, forcing them to take low-paying jobs. Others, if born in the US, often face discrimination and other impediments to their educational attainment (Gill 2010).

The reality of the situation is that these Hispanic newcomers face a higher risk of living in poverty compared to whites, and while about 80% of whites graduate from high school, less than half of Hispanics do (Gill 2010). What's more, there seem to be impediments to job opportunities for these youth, with lack of access to higher education leading them to take low-wage jobs. Social, political, and economic marginalization has started to secure for these youth a position in a newly forming permanent underclass (Gill 2010).

Although it is difficult to distinguish between the anti-immigration sentiment extant in the South, and in Westfield already, especially considering the difficult race relations it has seen historically, this increased influx of Hispanics in the state might account for some of the racism experienced by the students in the study. The proportion of Hispanics among the school's student population has increased dramatically in the past several years, which has created among the student body a different experience for Hispanic immigrants. While this opportunity to attend higher education might lead to positive outcomes not available to those who are not documented, those who are documented face unique struggles in college. Immigrant status is crucial in determining quality of life for immigrants (Gill 2010), and as the current research suggests, even a perceived undocumented status is stigmatizing. Perceptions of an undocumented status is responsible for much of the white racism Hispanic students endure, making for a hostile or unwelcoming college climate. In all, results show that Hispanic students experience a different form of racism compared to native black students and others thought to be native to the US.

"UNC Westfield"

Like the town in which it is situated, the University is known for its predominance of whiteness, both among faculty and among students, as both are close to 80% white. The University is a moderate sized, public institution in the US Southeast. It was established as a college center in 1946, as an extension of a large, prestigious state school, offering freshman courses to about 250 students enrolled during the 1946-47

academic year. The University was officially accredited as a junior college by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 1952, and in 1963, it became a senior college, offering the bachelor's degree. It began to grant Master's level degrees in 1977, and became a Comprehensive Level I University in 1985 (University website 2014). The University now has a couple of PhD programs.

As of spring of 2014, when the focus group meetings were conducted, there were 11, 571 total undergraduates, and 13, 032 total students, enrolled at this university. Of undergraduates enrolled, 60% were female. In terms of racial composition, the majority (79.94%) are white. Of the remaining 20.06 percent, 4.93 percent are black, 6.34 percent are Hispanic, .47 percent are American Indian, 2.90 percent are multi-racial, 2.09 percent are Asian, .16 percent are Pacific Islander, and 2.45 percent have racially self-identified as unknown. In terms of residency status, 85.65 percent are in-state residents, and 14.34 percent are considered out-state. Only .70 percent are international students (University website 2014).

Of all first-time full-time freshman students entering the University in 2008, the graduation rate after 5 years of enrollment was 67.6 percent. The corresponding rate was 46.7 percent for American Indians and Alaskan Natives, 72.7 percent for Asian and Pacific Islanders, 62.4 percent for blacks (Non-Hispanic origin), 68.4 percent for Hispanics, and 67.9 percent for whites (non-Hispanic origin) (University website 2014).

Table 3, presented below, displays the changing racial and ethnic demographics of the University since 1998, which is the year when these data were first available.

As reflected in Table 3, the percentage of whites comprising the total undergraduate student body of the university was reduced by about 10% from 1998 to 2014. Within these years, the percentage of non-Hispanic black students declined overall by less than a percent, while the percentage of Asian/Pacific Islanders about doubled (university website 2014). And, the largest increase in percentage of composition during this time was found among Hispanic students (about 5% increase).

This disproportionate increase in the Hispanic student population at the University might reflect the considerable proportion of Hispanic youth in North Carolina resulting from the recent influx of Hispanics into the state (Schoenbach 2012), as well as explicit and announced efforts by the university to recruit and retain a more racially and ethnically diverse student body (university website 2014).This influx of immigrants has created a generation gap among this ethnic group, with youth representing a disproportionate number of these immigrants. While North Carolinas' Hispanic population has doubled since 2000, the 2014 percentage of Hispanic undergraduates enrolled at the university has increased by far greater proportions. In fact, the 2014 enrollment of these students increased to over 4.5 times its percentage in 1998 (university website 2014).

Table 3. Percentage of Total Undergraduates Enrolled as of Fall Semester**

	1998	2003	2008	2012	2014*
Non-Hispanic White	90.39	90.31	84.50	81.55	79.94
Non-Hispanic Black	5.69	4.52	5.18	4.63	4.93
Hispanic	1.38	1.62	3.25	5.84	6.34
Asian/Pac. Islander	1.12	1.50	2.03	2.08	2.25
Am Indian/AK native	0.67	0.82	0.69	0.51	0.47
Two or more races	NA	NA	NA	2.39	2.90
Total	8,660	9,974	10,989	12,348	11,571

**The remaining percentage reflects students of unknown or unidentified race
*These data reflect spring 2014 semester enrollment, when the focus groups took place

Why Focus Group Design?

I chose to employ a semi-structured focus group design, in which I, as the
moderator, primarily facilitated discussion, rather than directed it. This is an ideal choice
for this type of research, because such qualitative methods emphasize the "rich contexts
of history, society, and culture; … "resituate" participants in their worlds; and perceive
participants, not as subjects, but as "reflexive, meaning-making, and intentional actors"
(Marecek 2003, p. 49). Ultimately, the aim of this research is to understand the
participants' meanings and interpretations (Morgan 2002), enabling their words and
conversations to be the primary source of data. The participants largely controlled the
direction and content of the discussions, which is typical of focus groups in social science
research. This reflects Critical Race Theory's emphasis on the empowerment of
marginalized communities and the centrality of experiential knowledge (Yosso et al.
2004).

Focus group meetings occurred in classrooms and conference rooms on the
university campus. It was crucial to obtain honest and open discussions of experiences of
participants, so I worked to develop a non-threatening environment within the group, in
which participants felt comfortable to discuss their experiences and opinions without fear
of judgment from others (Hennick 2007).

While observational methods typically require long periods of waiting for
interesting occurrences to happen, focus groups allow the research to take initiative to
elicit data by following an interview guide (Morgan and Krueger 1993). As with other
types of interviews, focus group research yields data quickly, and in relatively abundant

quantity. And, with multiple participants, the procedure takes in a wider variety of information than if there were fewer participants. What is also helpful about any form of interview, including focus groups, it is possible to obtain immediate follow-up and clarification for any ambiguous or unclear statements. Another benefit of focus groups is the ability to gather observational data as well as interview data (Marshall and Rossman 2011).

Focus groups also conjure a host of views and emotions that occur when interacting within a group setting that individual interviews are not able to capture. Because examining group interactions is a substantial part of the method, participants are encouraged to talk and converse with one another, exchanging experiences and commenting on one another's stories and perspectives. Oftentimes, this method allows some participants to better understand their own feelings, or to be able to put words to their feelings by utilizing the reports of similar others. A major benefit of focus group interviews, which is not offered by other types of interviews, is that group processes can help participants explore and examine their own experiences and knowledge, as compared and contrasted to those of others (Kitzinger 1995).

Members of any group, including a focus group, influence and are influenced by one another. Therefore, there is a great possibility that individuals will behave differently in a group than when they are alone (Stewart and Shamdasani 2014). Focus group research allows researchers to draw upon participants' attitudes, beliefs, experiences, knowledge, and reactions in ways not feasible with other methods of research, such as one-on-one interviews, surveys, observations, and other modes of data collection.

Participant beliefs and attitudes revealed during a group meeting might be somewhat independent of the social setting of the group, but are more likely to be exposed during interactions occurring within a group (Morgan and Krueger 1993).

Focus groups also allow for obtaining several perspectives about the same topic, and also to determine if there is consensus among participants concerning any issue at hand (Morgan and Krueger 1993). Because my research aimed to gather data on the experiential knowledge of students of varying racial, class, sex, and other characteristics, the focus group method is particularly suitable for my research. While the intersection of these and other characteristics most likely create differing perspectives on any topic, some characteristics, such as race and sex, likely lend themselves to sometimes similar understandings and experiences of everyday life, as well as particular variations of exchanges and responses from others in society. Examining differences and similarities among participants' accounts and experiences, it is possible to decipher which characteristics of participants lead to, or incite, varying types of interactions, reactions, and interpretations. These are important to disentangle, as effects of certain characteristics, as well as their intersections, are a substantial component of my research.

Because I was able to obtain a substantial amount of racial, class, sex, and sexual identity diversity among my participants, there is potential for the results to achieve significant perspective and innovation (Levine and Moreland 1998). An aim of the study is to learn more about the experiences of student who are not white, but who attend a predominately white university. Therefore, all participants have in common the status of being a racial minority student in a white space. This shared characteristics might

encourage communication and member participation, maximizing interaction and enhancing research data (Stewart and Shamdasani 2014).

With research on sensitive topics, such as race, group interactions might be helpful in encouraging participants to open up about experiences that might otherwise be difficult to discuss in a one-on-one interview. Focus groups are particularly useful when there are power disparities between the participants and the researchers. My participants live with at least one oppressive status, race, and in this regard, lack the privilege which whiteness affords most Americans. Further, as a white researcher hoping to gain insight into the experiences of students of color, issues such as white racism and internalized oppression would likely be difficult to discuss if the participants are not comfortable sharing their experiences with a white person. Therefore, sharing such experiences with other students of color in a group setting is a way to alleviate some of that discomfort.

Further, some participants might not be as articulate about their experiences and feelings, so listening to others who are more able to effectively express themselves is helpful. Further, it is useful to listen to the stories of others, as people often do not assess similar experiences in the same ways, and by digesting the interpretations of others with shared or similar experiences, one might gain a better understanding or perspective of their own experiences. Some might not recognize microaggressions and other overlooked forms of oppression that can have dangerous effects, so by hearing others' interpretations of examples of such racism, participants learn a new perspective of their social world. Meaning-making is an important aspect of group interaction, and is a key benefit of focus groups.

It is also beneficial to observe the ways in which group dynamics affect individuals and their participation, with special attention to the ways in which people of varying race, sex, class, and other characteristics assert themselves, attempt to dominate, or are susceptible to subordination during meetings. Since oppression and power are a large part of my research, watching as related processes unfold during the focus group meetings sheds light on the intersections of characteristics, and although individual personality characteristics are also at play to affect how one responds in group settings of any kind (Stewart and Shamdasani 2014), it is possible to capture hierarchical arrangements that arise in the group that might reflect larger societal arrangements. These might reveal themselves in body language, verbal communication, and other manifestations of power and tension among members. Of course, with focus groups, problems not found in other forms of interviewing are possible. Because the contributions of some might affect or color the responses of others, it can be difficult to identify the individual perspective from the viewpoint of the group as a whole and/or that of another participants who might be more dominant. Hence, the moderator is very important in focus group research (Kitzinger 1995), and must be effective in organizing and structuring the conversation in an appropriate manner.

Overall Design: Focus Group Meetings in a Predominately White University in Southern-Eastern US

While focus groups involve as few as two participants per data collection session (Wilkinson 2004), each of my meetings consisted of 3-7 university students of color. In

total, I had 31 students of color in my research, with an average of 5 participants present at each meeting. This relatively smaller sample size is a feature of qualitative research (Kvale 1996, p. 102).

Before each meeting began, I read the Informed Consent agreement aloud and asked participants if they had any questions, and each participant signed the agreement. And, I asked each participant to complete a demographic information form, which requested information including the participants' race, ethnicity, age, sex, gender identity, SES, sexual orientation, organizational memberships, place of birth, among other information. All participants willingly provided responses to each demographic item.

Food and drinks were provided at each meeting. Because of difficulty of coordinating student schedules, some of the participants were only able to attend a few of the meetings, but others attended most of them. Meetings lasted about an hour to an hour and a half. Therefore, based on their availability and interest, some participants contributed about an hour to the research, while others contributed as much as several hours to the research.

Each meeting began with the same orienting question, "Is race visible on UNC Westfield campus?" The subsequent direction of the conversation was largely guided by the responses to this question. While the participants were mainly responsible for much of what was discussed, I refocused the group with various other questions throughout the conversation in order to ensure that all research questions and issues were addressed adequately until saturation.

Topics addressed include various experiences associated with race and other intersecting characteristics. Specifically, meetings covered experiences with racial microaggressions; identity construction and negotiation on campus; the particular contexts within which race is significant; internalized oppression and intra-group racism; and overall white normatively on campus (See Appendix 1 for focus group prompts). While focus group prompts were designed to capture these various themes, the directions of the conversations often moved to a variety of topics, as determined by the responses of the participants. The target themes were developed from extant literature, as well as from a recognized scarcity of literature, on research related to a host of aspects associated with experiences of brown and black students in mostly white schools across the United States.

Because it is important to consider the context of racism and racist attacks, and how setting and location affect tendency for racism to manifest, I asked the participants to report their experiences within various university settings. Some include the classrooms, faculty offices, instructional building halls, social locations (dining and recreation areas), dorms and university apartments, university organization locations, and on-campus parties. Many of the students spoke about their experiences with racism on Chancellor's Walk, the main walkway on campus that leads from the university library, along academic buildings, and to the main dining hall. During school hours, it is typically a very high traffic walkway, as it provides the central pedestrian traffic for students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

HSRB approval was attained from UNC Westfield and George Mason University. I recorded each meeting using three audio recorders. I also took hand-written notes to capture non-verbal communication, environmental factors, any notable changes in observable mood, or other interesting dynamics among participants. The students were given the consent form that I read aloud to the group before each meeting that included a new member, and they each signed the form before their initial participation. This form explained that they would be audio-recorded, and that their identification, responses, and other information would remain anonymous and confidential.

Recruitment of Respondents

Participants were recruited using emails circulated by department chairs, which were extended to students by willing professors. Because an important aspect of my research is to examine the effects of various intersecting characteristics on student experience, I also reached out to the university's diversity clubs in attempt to obtain an adequate representation of students of varying racial, sex, and sexual orientation classifications. I emailed these organizations' coordinators, posted recruitment messages on the FaceBook page of these organizations, and posted recruitment fliers in the offices of these organizations. These organizations include the school's organization for black students, Hispanic students, and sexual minority students.

Description of the Research Participants

Of course, the concept "student of color" is a broad, vague, and ambiguous term that can be interpreted in various ways, so I relied on the students' self-identification as "students of color." Although I aimed to gain representation of students from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds, the overwhelming majority of my participants self-identify as either black or Hispanic, or as multi-racial, typically including one or both of these classifications. Of all 31 participants, 16 self-identify as black. Four self-identify as strictly Hispanic, with two Mexicans, one Colombian, and one as "Hispanic." Of those who self-identify as multi-racial, four are mixed black and white; one is black and Hispanic; two are Hispanic and white; and two report being "mixed." There are two Native Americans in the study.

Nativity and Immigration Status

Because national origin and particular region of the US affects perceptions and understandings of race, I recorded where each participant was raised. For instance, those born in the US, and especially those raised in the region in which the university is located, likely have an understanding of race, and experiences with race, similar to those which are probably most manifested at the university.

A large proportion of participants are from North Carolina. Only a few students are either first or second generation Americans, which can create differential experiences and expectations as compared to native-born students. Further, because of recent and ongoing culture wars over immigration, with Hispanics the target of much focus, it is

important to consider that students from Latin and Central American countries might face a different form of and prevalence of racialized experience than other students of color (Marrow 2009). And, there are differing societal beliefs about, stereotypes of, and expectations for people from varying racial and ethnic groups. This makes the experiences among whites and those who are brown or black qualitatively different. These differences are important in my analysis.

I also tried to represent the sexes equally in my study. The majority of the respondents who first contacted me were female, so I tried to recruit more males through snowball sampling. I was successful in obtaining additional males for the remainder of the meetings, and although there were almost twice as many females in my study (20:11 ratio), I believe I achieved a balance sufficient for the purpose of my research.

Of the thirty-one participants, 18 self-identified as middle-class. Nine of them reported being of lower middle class or being poor. One explained that she was raised poor, and is now upper middle-class, another is middle to upper-class, and another student did not report his social class at all. While it might be the case that these students adequately identified their actual social class, it is likely that some have reported a misclassification of their own socio-economic status. Although five years ago, almost half (49%) of Americans self-report membership in the middle class, in 2014, this percentage dropped to 44%, as there seems to be increasing pessimism regarding one's own social standing in the US. Still, there is a tendency for Americans of all social classes to self-report membership in the middle-class (Pew Research Center 2014). Therefore, it is likely that my participants over-reported middle class status.

While I made efforts by advertising and reaching out to organizers for the LBTQIA organization on campus to obtain diversity in terms of sexual orientation, the overwhelming majority of my participants, 28 of the 31, self-identify as heterosexual. Of the three participants who reported anything other than heterosexual, one participant identifies as a bisexual black woman, another as a bisexual/asexual/heterosexual Mexican women, and another as a homosexual black man.

Most of the participants were between the ages of 19-24 when the research was conducted, while there were a few outliers. One black man and one mixed-race (white, Dominican, and black) man were 27 years old. There were also black men aged 25, 29, and 38. The oldest participant is a black immigrant woman from Jamaica who was 49 years old when I collected the data.

It is important to examine the impact that all of the aforementioned identity characteristics have on each student's overall college experience, while also recognizing the ways in which these characteristics intersect. These intersections create particular experiences, perceptions, views, and reactions among the participants and those around them. This Intersectionality focus is espoused by Critical Race Theory, which guides my theoretical lens, my data collection and my data analysis.

Critical Race Theory Methodology

As Tyson (2008) reveals, there is inadequate and scarce attention afforded to the lived experiences and voices of students of color within education, and this is true even within the educational research community. This is troubling considering that the voices

and stories most often considered in such research support white dominance, supremacy, and normalcy within the institution, as in society at large (Delgado and Stefancic 2001). Critical Race Theory insists upon utilizing the voices of oppressed groups to counter and to replace the master narratives of dominant groups, which have been considered as the source of truth and knowledge in theory and research (Delgado 1989). To avoid this, I have chosen to employ theoretical and methodological tenets of Critical Race Theory in this research.

While educational researchers can use one or many tenets of CRT in their research methodology, I employ several of these principles in my research, from data collection to data analysis.

a) Critical race methodology is a theoretically grounded approach to research that foregrounds race and racism in every aspect of the research procedure, but emphasizes the intercentricity of race and other forms of subordination. CRT methodology also includes an Intersectionality focus, as it challenges the separate discourses on race, gender, and class by revealing how these elements intersect to affect the experiences of students of color.

b) CRT methodology questions and challenges traditional research paradigms, theories, and texts that are typically employed to explain experiences of students of color.

c) CRT methodology privileges and relies on the experiential knowledge of people of color as legitimate, appropriate, and crucial in understanding, examining, and teaching about racial and social justice. CRT draws unequivocally on the lived experiences of people of color by utilizing data collection methods such as biographies, parables,

cuentos, family histories, biographies, scenarios, testimonios, chronicles, and counter-narratives. I chose to use counter-narratives as my source of data, as will be discussed in this chapter.

d) CRT methodology provides a liberatory and transformative solution to various forms of subordination, including those associated with race, class, and gender.

e) CRT methodology emphasizes the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of students of color, and utilizes these experiences as sources of strength, reflecting the empowerment initiative of CRT.

Major components of these tenets are explained in more detail below.

Intersectionality

Throughout the paper, themes of intersectionality of oppressions are prevalent. In accordance with CRT, my research emphasizes the importance of applying an Intersectional approach to research and theorization of the experiences of students of color. Separating race from other systems of oppression greatly distorts the unique experiences of individuals, and essentializes the individual (Barnard 2004). Intersectionality is one of CRT's most generative concepts (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013), and together, CRT and Intersectionality Theory offer complex and nuanced understandings of various oppressions that are often missed otherwise (Anderson and McCormack 2010). Critical Race methodology allows me to explore the intersectionality of racism with other forms of oppression and marginalization, and reveals deficit-

informed research that silences and distorts research and theorization of people of color (Solórzano and Yosso 2002).

Counter-Storytelling

Much research in social sciences is conducted under the assumption of objectivity, while in actuality, it regularly uses and reinforces racialized notions about people of color. Dominant, or majoritarian, narratives carry various layers of assumptions which serve to filter discussions of oppressions, including racism, sexism, classism, and the like. Because of this, actual lived experiences and knowledge of oppressed and marginalized groups are typically distorted and silenced. The usual accounts often privilege the dominant group, namely white middle and/or upper class heterosexual Christian males, by enforcing these social locations as universal and normative points of reference for all groups. By drawing on and assuming as normative the tacit knowledge of people of the dominant groups (Delgado and Stefancic 1993), sexist, classist, and racist narratives are maintained. In effect, traditional research tends to render the voices of marginalized and oppressed individuals and groups mute (Ladson-Billings 2010).

On the other hand, as Patricia Hill Collins (1990) writes, lived experiences shape one's perspectives and change one's position from observer to expert. This reveals the utility of experiential knowledge as a source of data. It is for this reason that I chose to utilize counter-stories of students of color, as prescribed by Critical Race Theory methodology. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) define counter-storytelling, as "a method of

telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told," including those of minority racial, class, sexual, sex, and other social categories (p. 26).

Using counter-stories, or counter-narratives, Critical Race Theory methodology provides the space to organize, to carry out, and to present research grounded in the experiences and knowledge of people of color. Counter-stories are tools to challenge, and to counter and usually contradict, any myths (Delgado 1989) and racist characterizations of social life. This "voice" component of CRT provides a way for the experiences and realities of marginalized individuals to be communicated to others, as well as to others not aware of these unjust realities (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995). Of course, having outside scholars accept these counter-stories, the voices of the oppressed, as legitimate knowledge can be a struggle, as these narratives expose the biased tendency for white viewpoints to be considered as *the* truth (Taylor 1998).

My research strives to understand the students under study through their counter-stories, and to best express the sentiment behind their narratives. Through counter-storytelling, the participants in my study assist me in exposing race neutral discourse to reveal how white privilege works within an ideological framework to bolster and maintain unequal social relations between whites and persons of color (Solórzano and Yosso 2002).

Aside from serving to oppose majoritarian stories, counter-stories are also told for initiating and facilitating social change, including political, social, and cultural cohesion, to assist in the survival and resistance of dominated groups (Delgado 1989). By challenging myths embedded within traditional, possibly lacking and insufficient

research, or storytelling, there is the possibility to advance towards social justice (Solórzano and Yosso 2002).

There are three types of counter-stories utilized by CRT researchers. First, personal stories, or autobiographical stories, are direct reports of people of color. They reveal the racial discrimination, insult, disadvantage, and injury directly experienced by people of color. Next, other people's stories, or biographical stories, are stories of personal experience re-told by someone else. This re-telling validates the narrative, enabling the story to gain a larger-than-life quality, and enabling it to move others in a powerful way. Finally, composite narratives signify an accumulation and synthesis of multiple individual counter-stories (Yosso 2013). I use composite narratives for this research.

Reflexivity in Research

Bergerson (2003) encourages white scholars to use CRT strategically, and as we endeavor to learn more about and to work towards eliminating racism, to be sure not to assume to be able to adequately speak for people of color. It is imperative for white researchers, like myself, to remain reflexive while reporting the stories of people of color.

With focus group research, there is the assumption that data are essentially independent of the moderator (Litosseliti 2010). But, I must recognize the possibility for bias which my statuses most always entail. First, as a white researcher examining experiences that I acknowledge I cannot fully understand or experience myself, there is the possibility that I might reproduce various extant inequalities in sociological research.

For example, there is the potential for me to inadvertently distort or misinterpret the voices of systematically oppressed groups. And, I must ensure that what my findings reflect is not a white woman's interpretations of observations of students of color, no matter the intent. Instead, I must be sure that I present an analysis of actual first-hand stories of those who experience the various inequalities and manifestations of injustice that I seek to learn more about. This requires a continual reflection throughout the course of the research. As part of this reflection process, I must continue to remind myself that the experiences provided by my social location are sometimes very different from those of others. Therefore, it is crucial that I consistently and continually acknowledge this as I collect, analyze, and interpret my data. The acknowledgement of differences in experiences and reactions to our social surroundings is sufficient to indicate that our social locations offer differential experiences, which deserve attention.

As an instructor, I have witnessed racism, sexism, and homophobia of various forms unfold in the classroom, and I have heard stories from targets and witnesses of such occurrences. So, my experiences as a sociologist, researcher, student, and instructor have led me to this dissertation project. I have read about, heard about, and experienced, unjust realities of students of color in a white space, but I am now excited to expose the realities of students of color, using their voices, which are often hidden or misconstrued during the research.

Commitment to Social Justice

CRT espouses a strong commitment to social justice and empowerment (Chapman 2007), which I enforce through my work on this research. Utilizing the voices and experiences of students of color allows me to empower them along my own journey towards social justice. To help university faculty and all students to better understand their own and others' contributions to racism and differential experiences for students of color through my research is very important to me. And, to enable students of color to better understand their own oppression is crucial, as well. These efforts are intended to advance social justice and empower students and faculty to actively create an equitable campus climate and equal outcomes for all students. This empowerment and social justice component drives my passion for my research and it is my hope that this research will aid in creating efforts to promote awareness of the varying experiences of students, and the relative participation of various individuals and groups in racism. To work towards equity, and to de-center knowledge of racialized experiences and race relations is the ultimate goals of this research.

Confronting Personal Privilege, Oppression, and Bias

As a woman, I have experienced systematic and interpersonal inequalities and differential treatment not obvious to some groups. These experiences will work to some degree to enable me to understand the ways in which subtle and overt discrimination and often ignored forms of sexism color the experiences of women in various settings. But, I acknowledge that my subordinated status as a woman works differently than the related

experiences of people of color and of other oppressive statuses, although as a subordinated person, I am relatively sensitive to the experiences of oppressed others.

Because race is endemic to American life, it structures experiences in ways not always obvious to members of all racial groups, even those who study race and racism. As CRT scholars emphasize, it is important to situate my own identity, as the researcher, into the broader context of the social and political institutions, such as education, that, as I argue in my analysis of my data, maintain and buttress white supremacy and normativity. This differentiates CRT from objective and supposedly colorblind methodologies (Delgado and Stefancic 2001).

CRT asks the critical qualitative researcher to operate in a self-revelatory manner, acknowledging the multitude of consciousnesses in which she or he is working (Ladson-Billings 2000). I embarked upon this research based on experiences with racism and injustice I have endured while operating as each of many of my selves. I became vested in racial equality in education because of my experiences as a student, a researcher, a friend, and, in particular, my experiences as an instructor. Since I was a child, I was implicitly and explicitly taught about social injustice and the importance of providing voices to those systematically excluded from full social participation and from various other important resources. I am a white woman whom society views differently, at least in some ways and to some extent, than it perceives people of color. Thus, my experiences in and perceptions of, the social world are not necessarily the same as those with various intersecting oppressions and status characteristics.

The trust that my respondents have bestowed upon me as a researcher, along with the historical oppression of the groups to which these participants belong, demand that I am extremely sensitive to accurately understanding and reporting the meanings embedded within their stories. As a white person engaged in anti-racist research, it is important to acknowledge the importance, and to practice, theoretical and cultural sensitivity as I interpret and report the counter-stories of my research participants of color. Theoretical sensitivity involves the ability and acumen of the researcher to interpret and to give meaning to data (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Cultural sensitivity refers to the capability of members of socio-historical communities to accurately read, interpret, and understand the meaning of research informants (Bernal 1998).

This process demands that I confront my white privilege directly and honestly. My white privilege is constantly operating in ways I might not always recognize, and I must be aware for the potential that it might function in the context in which the counter-stories of my participants developed. Although I face oppression related to sexism, and my experiences might be similar in some ways to those of some of my participants, they are also qualitatively distinct from the "othered" experiences which I seek to understand. As a member of the dominant racial group, my very questioning of the normative discourse concerning race and education might seem unreasonable, and my intentions might seem questionable. Therefore, I must acknowledge the likelihood that I might encounter lack of complete and immediate trust from both my participants and other whites.

Not only is my status and lived experiences as a white person in a white dominated society, conducting research on people of color in a white dominated institution, but as an instructor at the university under study, this increases the possibility for research bias. And, this demands further reflection and care while collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. Because I recruited participants through emails sent from various university departments and organizations associated with race and other identity characteristics, it was likely for some current and/or former students of mine to join my research. As I was only teaching online courses that semester of data collection, I felt comfortable including any students who were currently or formerly enrolled in one of my classes. In recruitment emails and during the introduction segment of my focus group meetings, I made it distinctly clear that participation I my research would not affect, positively or negatively, anyone's grades in my class, or in any other university course.

Only a couple of the students were actually in an online class of mine at the time of data collection, but I made it clear to them, as well as to other students who chose not to participate, that the participation in my research would have no bearing on their grades or any assessments I made throughout the semester. These participating students received no extra credit, nor did we ever discuss the research during class, or at any other time aside from during actual data collections. Another of the participants was a former student of mine in an online class, so in her case, there was no potential for her participation to affect her grades or assessments in class.

Conclusion

Chapter Four through Seven will explore the findings of this research. In particular, Chapter Four examines the white normative standard and ideology at the university, as well as the numerous effects of this norm. In Chapter Five, I discuss the racialization imposed upon my participants, and the resulting essentialization and exoticism/tokenism they face in various campus settings. In Chapter Six, I explore the stereotypes, expectations, and self-expectations that my participants experience in the classroom, social settings, and other campus areas. This chapter also examines the identity negation these students of color are forced to undertake as marginalized individuals in white settings. Chapter Seven discusses the ideologies of the US and its institutions as meritocracies, and the pervasive colorblind ideology that obscure racism and its effects on campus. The various forms of microaggressions effective in creating different and inequitable experiences for black and brown students are discussed as they pertain to the chapter themes. The final chapter reveals limitations of this project, and offers a conclusion and future research implications.

CHAPTER FOUR | WHITE AS THE NORM AND A DESIRE FOR RACIAL DIVERSITY

"I wish that there was more, you know, just different types of people (at the university). I think that diversity is a beautiful thing, and it's lacking here." (Astin, 19-year-old black male[3])

Studies show that majority group members tend to adhere to ideologies that legitimize and reinforce their dominant status (Veruyten 2003). They often use ideologies that rationalize the exclusion of out-group members, as their inclusion threatens in-group members' domination, power, and racial purity (Castano, Yzerbyt, Bourguigon, and Seron 2002; Leyens and Yzerbyt 1992). One such ideology is the white as normative perspective. Because whites in the US have not experienced oppression by virtue of their race, or ever see themselves as racially marked or having any racial identity, they perceive themselves as racially neutral. They embody the norm (Lorde 1984). For whites, racial identity is seen as a reflection of their views of the "other," or those who are not white. This stance is an expression of the seeming naturalness and dominance of whiteness (Chesler, Peet, and Sevig 2003). The privilege to ignore their own race allows whites a particular social advantage beyond that which they receive from overt discriminatory racism (Grillo and Wildman 1991; hooks 1989). What's more, many

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[3] Any respondent demographic information (race, social class, age, sexual orientation, sex, immigrant status, and/or national origin) provided with their pseudonyms or actual names reflects self-reported data gathered from respondents via an initial questionnaire. It is especially important to point out that the social class of the respondents indicated in the descriptors are their self-reported social class. Because social class can be subjective and is highly experiential, I asked each respondent to indicate how they experience the world in terms of social class, as they interpret it.

whites fail to recognize that they frequently contribute to this unjust system. Because they have not been in subordinate positions, most whites see race as a characteristic of others, and racism as a problem of people of color (Feagin, Vera, and Imani 1996).

As CRT education scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings asserts, the distinction between white and other has remained stable for years. She explains, "While the creation of the category does not reveal what constitutes within it, it does create for us a sense of polar opposites that posits a cultural ranking designed to tell us who is White or, perhaps more pointedly, who is not White!" (Ladson-Billings, 2010, p. 8).

Many have argued for the need to problematize the white-other dualism and white normalcy, as these ideologies highlight difference and preserve minority spaces (Myser 2003). But while the white norm and the white-other duality benefits whites, even non-whites also adhere to this perspective of white normalcy and hold that race is something that pertains to only black and brown people (Jones 2005). This makes whiteness a sort of normal identity by which others are compared and labelled based on their divergence from this identity. My focus group participants internalized this notion of white as normative, devoid of race, and other racial groups as an *other*, a racialized group. This racialization of brown and black students is a pervasive theme of the meetings. Keisha (23-year-old, black female) describes this racialization she observes on campus, and her perception is echoed by several of the other research respondents:

> I think that race is obvious to certain people on campus. If you are a minority, you notice it because you are the one that's different. But I feel

that, because I have lots of friends that aren't, they don't really see it. It doesn't bother them- they don't see the difference, until you do something that reminds them that you're a minority or you're a little bit different.

Being the numerical majority, whites often do not consider themselves as racialized beings, while they do have the tendency to see black and brown students as non-whites. And, Keisha's description indicates that "race" is regularly used in reference to people who are not white as whites are implicitly considered as non-raced individuals.

Along these lines, whites' perspectives are usually considered the most pertinent ones, and they are afforded the position of subject and center of discussions and thought, while people of color are the often marginalized, tokenized, or silenced objects (Grillo and Wildman 1991). This mirrors the ways in which these groups are habitually silenced within American institutions, while their otherness enhances their visibility. This visibility enables the appearance of meritocracy and fairness by superficially presenting brown and black as included members of the institution, promoting the perception of a diverse and equitable college campus (Collins 2009; Winkle-Wagner 2009).

As it would be apparent, this taken for granted normalcy of whiteness is embedded in and is reflected by the major themes of this research. Marginalized racial group members at the university have internalized these ideas, and they guide much of their thought and behavior. Not only must students navigate the institution as outsiders, but they are also racialized, and this matters. This category of "students of color" brings with it a host of connotations and expectations that will be explored in further detail in future sections.

Internalization of White Normalcy

John (27-year-old, middle-class, black male) reveals his internalization of white as a normative group devoid of race when he states, "I think that there's a mix of both types of people on campus, like you know the people who see everyone like equally, and those who like, "Oh, I hope I don't see <u>race</u> today."

In this statement, John is using the term, "race" to refer to brown students of color, indicating that some people on campus do not want to see people who represent "race." By race, John means people who are not white. This shows a subconscious ideological belief in the normal, non-racialized status of whiteness, and by implication, the racialization of others. His subconscious use of "race" to indicate person of color status reveals that he views whites as being devoid of race. He was not implying that whites felt this way, but this is how he referred to brown and black students. This internalization of white normativity by brown and black students is a symptom of internalized oppression, resulting from socialization into a white society where white is the norm for virtually everything. As victims of racism, people of color develop beliefs and ideas that support and reinforce the racist ideology that marginalizes them. White normativity is one of those internalized racist beliefs, and is part of a system of internalized oppression with its own set of negative and overlooked effects (Pyke 2010; Bivens 1995). Just as white privilege works to systematically advantage whites, internalized racial oppression systematically discourages and diminishes the power of people of color as it stifles them in their own oppression (Bivens 1995).

At a more basic level, the white normativity ostracizes, marginalizes, and excludes students of color, making the college experience more difficult for these

students. What whites fail to recognize is that minority students face an added burden that requires additional cognitive and emotional energy and time, and affects the emotional, psychological, social, and academic experiences and well-being of the students involved (Sue et al. 2007).

The theme of whiteness as normative will be explored further throughout the paper. The probable causes and effects of this ideology will also be discussed. The white normativity at this university does not only color the academic and social experiences of students of color, but it also affects their self-perceptions, the strategies they use to deal with this, their emotional and psychological well-being, and their sense of responsibility to alleviate racial tensions and inequities. In the next section I explore the effects that white supremacy has on students of color, namely what it means to be a racialized "other."

UNC "Westfield": Where White is the Norm

The racial homogeneity of this particular university is well-known. In fact, its white predominance has inspired several reconceptualizations of the school's acronym, some of which the participants recounted. Some of these include: *"University of Not many Colored people Walking around," UNC Wasp, UNC Whiteville, and the "college where 'U Niggers Can't Win.'"* While some participants joked about the racial homogeneity of the school, others expressed their discontent and sadness about the lack of racial and ethnic diversity at the university. Although some of these students were not

happy about the lack of racial diversity at the university, they chose to attend the university anyway.

At the start of each focus group session, I began by asking whether race is visible on campus. I left the question open-ended to allow for interpretation by participants, hoping to capture in their initial responses the most significant ways in which they see race affecting their college experiences (or not). As expected, most students observed lack of racial diversity was what stood out most out on campus. Karyn (22-year-old, mixed white/black/Dominican, female) expresses this obvious lack of racial diversity below:

> It's very noticeable that there are not many students of color, or there's not any diversity on campus at all. When I do see a person of color, they may be the only one on the room, if it's not me if I'm in the classroom.

When discussing how this overwhelming whiteness affects these students, most of these brown and black students explain that they would like for the university to have more racial and ethnic diversity among the student body. Many feel lonely and disconnected as racial minorities on campus. They report a desire to spend time with other students with whom they can identify, as members of oppressed groups who share a history of racism and marginalized statuses within the American social structure. Karyn expresses this sentiment below:

> It definitely affects me that there isn't diversity, great diversity, on this campus. There is a sense of loneliness. When you meet someone who's a person of color, you can identify with them, their experiences as being a

> student of color. And, for that commonality not to be there, it's like,
> "Yeah, you're my friends," but you don't see them in a way that maybe
> other students who share my ethnic background or identity would.

Whites typically are unable to empathize with the experiences of racial oppression of

people of color, even if they are not themselves overtly racist (Rankin and Reason 2005;

Grillo and Wildman 1991). They often do not understand the significance of racial

messages, prejudice, and other racialized experiences that brown and black people

undergo on a daily basis. When targets encounter racism, they are forced to reflect upon

their own racialized identity (Tatum 1997), whereas whites rarely engage in this self-

reflection. It is commonly the case that whites lack awareness of the impact of race

(Grillo and Wildman 1991) because they experience the world as part of the majority, so

they are not exposed to what it feels like to be a racial "other." It is their unacknowledged

or unrecognized privilege to simply exist, not to be a racialized being (Jones 2005) that is

most obvious in predominately white settings, like UNC Westfield. As Paulina (19-year-

old, bi-racial Mexican-American, poor/middle-class[1], female) remembers below, brown

and black students at UNC Westfield frequently encounter whites who lack awareness of

their privilege:

> I'm currently running for a position on the RHA exec board, and in my
> speech, a big thing that I made in my speech was bringing diversity to
> campus…and when I was done with my speech and people were asking
> questions to me- one girl was like, "I didn't think there was a problem
> (with a lack of diversity)." And I was like, "That's (whites' obliviousness
> about issues concerning race relations) the problem!" It was a white girl.

Self-Segregation for Support

As discussed above, not only are white students often unaware that race is a significant factor in the lives of racialized others, but they are also typically unprepared to respond in supportive ways to students who are not white. Consequently, students of color tend to turn to others like them for support (Tatum 1997), leading to what has been described as "why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?" Whites do not have to seek out others who are able to identify with them in important ways, and they also are not questioned when they are seen spending time with others of their race (Bivens 1995).

Minority students self-segregate for several reasons (Rankin and Reason 2005; Tatum 1997; Villalpando 2003). For one, it allows them to draw from their cultural resources to mitigate institutionalized racism in the university. In this sense, self-segregation acts as self-preservation for many minority racial and ethnic groups in white settings (Villalpando 2003; Rankin and Reason 2005). Research indicates that it is important to share feelings and experiences of frustration and maltreatment with others who also understand and experience racialization. This is consistent with extant research that suggests that within predominately white contexts, such as the university, racial and gendered identities become more salient and significant to individuals. Because they are immersed in multiple environments where racial identities are emphasized, race becomes a more important marker. It is a signifier they cannot escape in this white-centric setting. On the other hand, whites do not see their own race as important, and do not recognize that their numerical majority means a heightened significance of the race of "others." In turn, the desire of students of color to spend time with others who are also racialized and

who perceive themselves based on the way others in their environments view them, is

enhanced (Rankin and Reason 2005; Tatum 1997). This builds solidarity among

marginalized individuals, helping to cope with racism in the white university settings.

This is an outlet, in a sense, for marginalized individuals. Violeta (21-year-old, female,

naturalized US Citizen from Mexico), who immigrated to the US as a young child,

reveals this sentiment below:

> I've been to mostly white schools throughout, since I've been here, and I
> always end up with the minority community. And to me, it's more like a
> comfort, cause that's where I was raised, and I came here knowing
> nothing, not the language, not the culture, so finding that one person that
> knew who you were and understood you, it was like, 'yay, finally
> someone (of color).'

This search for other students of color in residential, academic, and social settings of the

university is a result of the isolation they face (Rankin and Reason 2005). Because they

are the dominant group, whites' race is not emphasized as an important marker of

difference. So, they are not ostracized based on their race, and they do not understand the

importance of self-segregation for others. They often evaluate self-segregating as

something threatening (Tatum 1997; Rankin and Reason 2005). And, this balkanization

can result in greater racial intolerance and ethnocentrism among whites, just as it does in

larger society (Antonio 2001).

Students of color report discomfort being around whites who potentially exhibit

discriminatory behaviors and judgment towards them, as Violeta explains below:

> I would say that, well in my case, it's mostly fear of being rejected by the
> way you look like, and my accent, or our accent, and being understood,

and so that's why we always end up hanging up with other Hispanics, so we understand each other….?

The solidarity built with similar others that often results from a fear of rejection is important in that the quality of interactions between diverse students directly affects learning, social outcomes, and satisfaction with collegiate experience (Milem 2003). Therefore, this ostracism and marginalization of brown and black students hinders various aspects of their academic and social well-being (Flowers and Pascarella 1999) placing an added burden for these students, even before they enter into the classroom. This emotional burden cannot be quantified or easily described, making it more bothersome for students of color, as they are unable to adequately express it to others (Smith et al. 2011). Similar to other manifestations of discrimination, racialized interpersonal experiences facing these students stem from and reinforce the structural racism historically pervading American institutions.

The self-segregation among these students not only provides a refuge from whiteness, but also a creation of solidarity among marginalized students. It can create and bolster group affinity, ethnic identity development, cultural pride, and support in academic, social, and professional realms (Duster 1991). On the other hand, although it may be effective in creating an emotional support for the brown and black students, self-segregation can reinforce racial divisions present in university settings that reflect the white-other distinction in society. That is, the majority of these students suggest that it is not necessarily crucial to find others of their *own* racial group, but finding others of *any* minority racial group would be adequate. In other words, it is important to find others

who are *not white* in this sea of whiteness, as opposed to finding others who are of their specific racial or ethnic group. This self-segregation acts as a defense against the race-based marginalization, and not a draw to their specific race that often brings racially diverse students of color together. Darian and Taleyah discuss this process below.

> Darian (19-year-old, Native American/Lumbee, female):
>
>> …...one of my suite-mates is like black and white, and me and her, we get along so well….so like we're the minorities in our suite. So, I feel like we had a bond, like right off the bat…Like if our suitemates are in the room, and then they say something, or if we're talking about something and we understand what each other are saying- they don't know what we're talking about, like, we're like, "they're white- they don't understand what we're talking about….
>
> Taleya (20-year-old black and white, poor/middle-class, female):
>
>> …Like, it's harder to talk to other people that's white than it is to someone more similar to you that's like, minority. Like when I first joined the dorms, like me and Darian automatically clicked, like we got each other- we just have that connection…..I just mean in like, just talking, communicating with them (other students of color). Like, it's easier to come out and just talk to someone that I guess looks more like you than more not like you. It's like a connection. I don't know. I feel like we just have a connection between- especially being at a PWI, like I feel like all the minorities all like kind of group together.

What these students are expressing is a divide between whites and others, a meaningful difference between these groups that affects interpersonal communication. This divide is based on the lived experiences each group faces- whites as the majority, and others as marginalized. The racialized experiences of these distinct groups affect the potential to connect in some ways and to understand others whose identity is differentially affected by their race.

In all, although some whites regard self-segregation among brown and black students as threatening, it is a positive coping strategy in response to an environmental stressor, racism and related feelings of ostracism (Tatum 1997). On the other hand, because whites are the numerical and social majority, their common self-segregation is not as noticed, and is not seen as suspicious, which whites can fail to recognize. Instead, there is a tendency for whites to criticize or to draw attention to those, especially black students, who self-segregate (JBHE 1997). That is, when whites self-segregate, it goes undetected, but when brown and black students do so, they are often accused of separatism and racial divisiveness. Below, Keisha (23-year-old, black female) describes the reaction, including, directed against black or brown student groupings on campus:

> I don't know if anyone else has noticed it, or if it's just me, but it seems that solidarity, or the grouping together when you do find someone of your same race, and you do start to connect, it's taken as hostility...... there's a climate shift when you see a bunch of black people walking together on Chancellor's, or a bunch of Hispanic people- it's like, "Oh, do we have a Hispanic event going on?" If you see like one, two, if you see three together, then you're ok, but if you see there's maybe like five, then you're like, "What's going on?" Not us, but it seems that if you watch, if you sit on Chancellor's and you watch, you'll see the climate shift if you see five black people walking together, then there's a look, like, "Is there an event going on? What are we looking for here?" So it's almost taken as hostility, or there has to be an event.

What Keisha recognizes seems to represent an unspoken white ownership of campus grounds and spaces, which induces resentment and defensiveness among whites who see a grouping of students of color as threatening the white spaces. This perception of inherent ownership of white settings, namely the campus, relates to Critical Race theory's tenet of whiteness as property (DeCuir and Dixson 2004). This property ownership works on various levels, including the right of possession of property, the right to use property,

and the right to exclude from property (DeCuir and Dixson 2004; Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995).

This historic system of ownership further reinforces and perpetuates white privilege because only whites benefit while others are excluded (DeCuir and Dixson 2004). But, as Keisha continues below, it is not only whites who notice brown and black students' groupings on campus. She admits that she has internalized criticisms of self-segregation because she finds herself questioning the behaviors of students of color congregating together on campus:

> And I guess because it doesn't happen often. There aren't many minorities on campus, and the sad part is I caught myself doing it, maybe like two days ago. Centro Hispano was out and they were passing out fliers for something that they were doing, or raising money for, or they have an event coming up, and I think it was maybe four of them standing out, and they had their t-shirts on, perfectly fine- they're right across the hall from the Upperman Center, and I know some of them, and I walk right past them, and I'm like, "Y'all got something going on? Like what's going on?" Like I caught myself doing it, and I was like, "this is crazy. They're just out here, just like everybody else."

Keisha goes on to reveal that she finds herself conversing with minority students on campus simply because they are not white. She states that she does not really understand her attraction to non-white groups because she believes that they are not meaningfully different than other groups, but she feels somehow compelled to interact with them on campus.

Racial Collectivities and Racial Privilege

It is not only whites who feel threatened or are critical of self-segregation among students of color on campus. It is typical to see a group of whites together on campus, but

because this is normative, students learn that an assemblage of others on campus is abnormal and curious. Interestingly Jenny and Tyler, both of whom have light skin, are of mixed race, and have many white friends, indicate that self-segregation among brown and black individuals may threaten their ability to integrate with whites. That is, the congregating of other students of color reinforces their supposed difference compared to whites. Therefore, these students hold different standards for the behaviors of whites than for their own group, students of color. This represents an internalization of racism, which works to their own detriment, even though Jenny and Tyler have each emphasized that they do not place much emphasis on race. They believe it to be divisive when students of color self-segregate or seek out others of their racial group.

>Tyler *(*21 year-old mixed black and white male)*:*

>>I think that, from what I've seen, especially other people of color, especially other African-Americans that I've noticed on campus, a few that I've met have put a big focus on them being of a different race, and just how they interact with each other. I experience like sometimes how they (black students) will kind of distance themselves from people of other races just to be in a certain group. I mean, personally, I don't really look at someone at their race first, it's just like another person, but I notice that like more so with people of color than any other race. That may be because they're the minorities on campus, so that's why they try to bring it out, but that's just what I notice.

>Jenny (20 year-old, mixed black and white, lower middle-class, female) confirms that other brown and black students self-segregate, stating that:

>>I notice pretty much the same thing, because we (she and Tyler) kind of had a similar group of friends, and it's kind of weird that they (black students) sometimes kinda go out of their way to make sure that people know they're established as what they are (black students), versus just kind of intertwining as a group of college students.

Extant research suggests that such critical evaluations of other brown and black students are not uncommon among lighter-skinned college students of color, like Jenny and Tyler. Because lighter-skinned students of color tend to experience less discrimination from whites, they often fail to notice and/or acknowledge any racial discrimination. They feel able to, and a desire to, fit into the white campus climate more so than their darker-skinned counterparts. They report feeling a part of the same social and academic world of their white counterparts (Morrison 2010). It is likely that these lighter-skinned students of color, Jenny and Tyler, disapprove of the racial distinctions on campus, as it would bring to light their own non-normative status, and degrade their whiteness that affords them relative social privilege. Like a lot of students of color who are partially white, these students seek to deemphasize their blackness. After all, historically, it is typical for people of mixed race to be considered members of the socially devalued race (Hunter 2013), so Jenny and Tyler perhaps recognize the risk of losing the social rewards associated with their white identity.

Such interpersonal expressions of racism affect individuals and groups in covert, daily, overlooked, and cumulative ways. This echoes a major theme of this research: inequities within the institution are not always based on academic and overt discrimination. It is imperative to consider the hidden, overlooked, and/or subtle inequities students of color face in social and academic spaces, and which threaten them cognitively, socially, academically, emotionally, and physically.

The Whiteness of Faculty and the Importance of Faculty Diversity

"Yeah, I think I've seen one." (Matt, 20-year-old, black track athlete, male), on seeing a black professor last year.

Not only is the homogeneity of the student body a major issue at the university, but the majority of students also commented on the lack of racial and ethnic diversity among faculty, as Matt described above. What's more, most of these students of color wished there were more professors of color. As Karyn (22-year-old, mixed white/black/Dominican, female) discusses below, students are affected by the racial homogeneity of the university faculty in numerous, complex ways:

> Yes. I've always been unsure of how to word how it affects me, but it definitely- I wish I had more of a diverse group of professors cause it brings a richness to their teaching and they also have these background experiences of working with people who are also diverse, or whom are diverse. I'm always at a loss of how to explain why, but I think it's so important that the faculty is diverse.

Professors are not only crucial in academic development, but they are also important agents of socialization. In fact, students and faculty are seen as the main agents of socialization in universities and colleges, and positive interactions across race and ethnicity contribute to greater learning and development among students (Kim 2010).

Student-faculty interaction is generally considered to be linked to an array of positive student educational outcomes in college. Some of these include academic achievement and persistence, educational goals and satisfaction, and self-perceptions and self-concepts (Astin 1977, 1993; Endo and Harpel 1982; Kuh 1995; Kuh and Hu 2001; Pascarella 1980, 1985; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991; Thompson 2001). Students are more likely to build professional and academic relationships with same-race professors;

racial diversity among the faculty is critical in the development of student social and cultural capital necessary to thrive in the university and in subsequent institutions.

There also seem to be added benefits of interactions among student and faculty within universities. For all students, interactions with faculty have strong associations with student learning, but this effect is strongest amongst students of color. Specifically, although Native American and black students report more frequent faculty interactions, they also report these interactions as less satisfying than those of white students (Lundberg and Schreiner 2004). Further, some have found that shared experiences of racism among students and professors of color enable these students to fare better in PWIs (Fleming 1984; Royal 1988).

Professors of color, then, provide social and emotional support for black and brown students in a largely white environment, where both groups are regularly marginalized and ostracized (Moore and Toliver 2010). When trust is established between students and professors, and when they share certain norms, they can establish important connections that make the university a more scholarly community for students (Clifton 1999). In addition to the knowledge and skills which a college education affords its students, contributing to their human capital, it is important to consider the social component of education.

For example, some racially marginalized professors report that students come to them during office hours to form relationships that are helpful in navigating an often unfriendly and unwelcoming academic environment. It is this shared minority status that enables students to confide in, and to feel comfortable with, faculty of color. This

relationship makes these students feel as if they are not totally isolated, as they have an understanding role model in an authority position in the institution (Reddy and TuSmith 2002; Zirkel 2002).

A lack of role models for students of color, females, sexual minorities, and other subordinated groups contributes to barriers to positive experiences and outcomes in the institution (Milkman, Akinola, and Chugh 2014). For instance, some students stated that if they see faculty of color, they, believe that they too, can be successful. Research finds that minority faculty lend credibility to, act as encouraging role models for, and provide social and emotional support in and out of class for brown and black students (Fleming 1984; Royal 1988; Moore and Toliver 2010). Kaja (22 year-old, mixed black and Hispanic, female) expresses this concern below:

> You look up to the people that are teaching you. They're teaching you what you're interested in, and you want to do what they're doing, and it's kind of disheartening that you don't see anybody that's come from your same background and culture teaching you what you're interested in. So it's like, you know- you like to see somebody that's like you, or similar to you, in a high authority position. And when you don't see anybody, it's like, it's hard to aspire to something you don't think you're going to get to, or it's going to be harder- so I feel like it's important to have professors that are diverse. And I feel like it might even raise the diversity at a school- start with the teachers, or students might feel comfortable coming to this school, and then it raises diversity, but I don't know.

Mikayla (20 year-old, black-Dominican female, track athlete) indicates that the lack of minority authority figures at PWIs makes it less likely that children of color will feel as if they can hold positions of authority and high status. She also suggests that increasing the number of minority teachers could increase the number of minority students, which would add to the school's diversity. Mikayla also explained that if she sees a professor of

color, she feels that they have "made it," and she is happy for them. Success of a member of her group means she, too, can succeed. This is an important aspect of student-professor relations that is often overlooked, but is significant in the development of the student's self-expectations and self-perceptions. To be able to relate to a "successful" other of one's racial group is important (Fleming 1984; Royal 1988; Moore and Toliver 2010), as studies suggest that having a professor of one's own racial group gives students of color a sense that there are opportunities for success open to them (Zirkel 2002).

Class disparities also interact with race to create even more disadvantages for brown and black students who seek to build relationships with their professors. Charles (23-year-old, half Peruvian/half white, poor/middle-class, male) explains that it is difficult to connect with white professors whom he hears talking with other, namely white middle and upper class, students about activities they enjoy in common. He says that his race, class, and culture make building the same types of relationships difficult.

Others have expressed this lack of commonalities with professors that they believe impinges on the possibility of building important connections with professors who can help them pursue other opportunities. Although the difficulty in connecting with these professors might be affected by class differences, students of color would be more likely to begin an informal conversation with a professor of color, making the class component a secondary barrier to their race-related social connection (Buerkle and Guseva 2002).

In this sense, colleges not only teach academic skills, but they also enable students to use and to learn social capital. But, social capital tends to varies by race and

class, and some forms are more effective in academic institutions, while others can hinder

students, thus contributing to inequalities in education (Buerkle and Guseva 2002). It is

an asset people gain or strengthen through participating in a set of social relations

(Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1990). Social capital can be obtained and enhanced, or even

lost, through schooling (Bourdieu 1986; Lareau 2002), but, the potential to participate in

important social relations are different, qualitatively and quantitatively, for students of

varying characteristics (Buerkle and Guseva 2002). And, for many students of color, the

presence of faculty of color enable them to learn and use important social capital to

navigate through the institution.

The social connections one accumulates while in school, and the opportunities

that these connections create for students, are commonly overlooked. In fact, social

capital attained in schooling plays a substantial role in distributing societal rewards,

which are not based on meritorious credentials and knowledge. For instance, it is argued

that social capital gained in school has an independent effect on individual income

(Buerkle and Guseva 2002). But, the likelihood of building social capital is limited for

black and brown students, whose access to faculty of color is limited in PWIs. Rachel

(23-year-old, Mexican-American, bisexual, female) discusses this issue below:

> So, it's not like I feel disconnected, well I do feel disconnected, but I also
> know that it's not necessarily people alienating me. It's just that there's
> not much we can connect on. Like when I go talk to my professors, I
> would notice how, like I remember one student in from of me my
> freshman year talked to her professor for like thirty minutes about white-
> water rafting in Michigan, and like I was born in Michigan, but I never
> went white-water rafting. I've never done those kind of sports, so it's just
> something- it's not like they were like trying to like, "oh, you know,
> you're Mexican…." It's just that I haven't done white-water rafting. I
> haven't gone on a yacht. I haven't done these things that they do. And, so,

> it's harder to be like, "Hey, you know, let's share these similarities." It's a lot easier to like hang out with my friend, Mary, who understands where I'm coming from with my opinions.

Rachel and other respondents report witnessing white students talking and personally connecting with white professors about activities they enjoy in common and places they have been. But my respondents indicate that they are not able to relate to these experiences, hindering their possibility to connect with faculty on this level. To these students, the race, class, and cultural differences among them and their faculty create this disconnect. Because race and class are so highly correlated in the United States (Costello, Keeler and Angold 2001; McNamee and Miller 2009), this type of intersecting inequality promotes further disadvantage of racial minority students.

Inadequate Cultural and Racial Awareness and Training of White Professors

Lack of faculty of color is troubling for other reasons. While the university under study claims to be making concerted efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity among students and faculty, it is important that faculty are prepared and educated sufficiently to be prepared for more diversity. While teachers often participate in the reproduction of racial inequality, they can mitigate the effects of racism if they are aware of the pedagogical and social strategies useful in this effort (Gay 2000; Beauboeuf-Lafontant 1999). Successful teachers are those who are culturally proficient, relevant and responsive (Gorski and Swalwell 2015).

This requires teachers to be able to examine their own racial privilege, and to teach in ways that counter racism (Hyland 2005). But, whites are typically uncomfortable

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confronting their own whiteness, and are resistant and resentful towards effective efforts

towards racial justice in the classroom (Feagin et al. 1996).

There is a lack of diversity training in many universities, even among programs

which state them among their goals and efforts (Reiter and Davis year). With most US

professors being white and the growing number of students of color enrolling in

American universities, the lack of preparedness and awareness among white professors is

troubling and dangerous. Darian (19-year-old, Native American/Lumbee, female) reveals

this concern below:

> ….talking about teachers, and like, ignorance on the teachers' part, well,
> last semester, when I was in my history class…whenever we started
> talking about Native Americans, and like my kind of history, like, my
> teacher (who was white), he was constantly saying, "Indians, Indians,
> Indians," and like, I was getting so upset. And one time somebody said
> something about teepees and, like stereotypical, "Indians live in teepees,"
> and I wanted to say it really bad, but I didn't want to like- the class was
> almost over, so I was like I'm not about to get into this with the teacher
> because he obviously doesn't know what he's talking about, and I know
> what I'm talking about. So, he said something about how all Native
> Americans live in teepees, and I was like (thinking this) "you're wrong-
> Native Americans lived in teepees in the plains. Native Americans that
> stayed on the coast lived in long houses." And it was just like, him
> speaking on something and teaching to others things that were wrong and
> incorrect about other peoples' history- it just really urked my nerves. I was
> like, "how did you get a degree in teaching something that you don't know
> what you're talking about?"

This lack of cultural training and sensitivity among teachers is frustrating to students and

not only spreads misinformation to students, but can also perpetuate ignorance (Gorski

and Swallwell 2015). Since students of color rely on their professors to promote racial,

ethnic, or cultural awareness it is critical to have culturally-aware professors. But, most

white students and professors resist a critical examination of race, making race a sensitive

topic in most classrooms (Lightfoot 2013). In addition, pre-service teachers sometimes resist opportunities to learn about racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of discriminatory behavior (Lightfoot 2013). Further, most white teachers have not had significant interaction with others racially and culturally different from them, and this can be disadvantageous for students of color (Milner 2008). This poses a problem in many colleges, such as the one under study, in which the majority of faculty are white. Lack of cultural awareness can lead to misinformation and perpetuation of ignorance among students, reinforcing stereotypical and racist beliefs already held among students.

Another danger of deficient cultural knowledge is that it not only misinforms students, but also allows the perpetuation of stereotypes that potentially create prejudices and maintain a sense of exoticism among students of color. Attending college is often the first time students are exposed to people unlike themselves demographically, and to viewpoints different from those of their families. Hence, learning these stereotypes, which are likely maintained by the students' families, perpetuates racism in an institution that is created for the purpose of opening minds and imparting knowledge. In fact, professors report that the most frequent form of classroom bias is the racial stereotype, even though overt racism is more infrequent (Boysen and Vogel 2003). This perpetuation of stereotypes and tendency for microaggressions in the form of subtle racist comments during discussions of race in the classroom oftentimes discourages brown and black students from attending class on those days to avoid confrontation and conflict. Darian and Paulina express this discomfort during class meetings focused on race.

Darian (19-year-old, Native American/Lumbee, female):

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> Oh- in my Sociology class, like ever since last Wednesday, I have not been wanting to go to class, but I have been (since last Wed) cause we've been talking about race, and gender, and poverty. And it's like one of the touchiest topics for me because I hate talking about- I mean I love talking about race, but I hate talking about it with people who have assumptions about it, like Paulina (19-year-old, bi-racial Mexican-American, poor/middle-class, female) was saying. And this one girl that sits in front of me- she's always commenting, and I'm like, 'girl if you don't be quiet, I'm going to hit you in the back of the head.'

Darian's comment above underscores the frustration and discomfort associated with classroom discussions about race in which most are ignorant about the topic. She even states that she would rather not attend class on days during which race is discussed, not because she dislikes talking about race, but because of ignorant and offensive comments made by others in the classroom.

The significance of cultural awareness and sensitivity of faculty to students of color is apparent to students. Students appreciate and remember when white faculty are culturally-sensitive and culturally-aware. They explain that a culturally and racially-aware professor is rare though. As Bri (19-year-old, black, female) discusses below, students appreciate when a professor is able to approach race and other possibly controversial topics in a respectful and appropriate manner:

> My Sociology professor last semester, speaking of that, we were learning about race, but it was the different races and their SAT scores, or something about how they differentiate across education, and a guy raised his hand and was like, for Asians, Chinese, Japanese- can we just label them all as Asians and know that percentage? And she was like, "No, they're different." (strict tone) And that really made me feel a lot better, cause she was like, "Native Americans and Indians are different. Chinese and Japanese are different." And even though it was more things to memorize, it made me want to memorize it because she actually noticed that there are distinctions between groups.

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Kaja (22 year-old, mixed black and Hispanic, female) also expresses her gratitude for her

professor's racial and cultural consciousness and her willingness to discuss race issues

with students, including uncomfortable histories and uncomfortable issues surrounding

race:

> …there was a student in there (in her class)- it was a white male…when you get on that topic of race, people think they know what they're talking about- especially when they're talking about another culture. And there was somebody in there who was always going to make a comment, and who was always wrong. And I remember one specific thing- the teacher, she was actually, she knew what she was talking about- and they were talking about how America was founded, and how it became so successful, and what made Americans thrive when they first came over here, and the guy was like, "Oh, it's the Constitution, and our Founding Fathers, I mean it was that doctrine that made it so successful." And I was just like, "Um, actually, it was the free labor from slaves that made all you guys profit." She went on to explain her relief that her professor corrected this student, explaining to the class that the nation was founded on racism and racial exploitation.

While Kaja was relieved when her teacher corrected the student and discussed the

importance of racism and exploitation in the founding of the U.S., unfortunately, this sort

of cultural and racial awareness seems to be the exception rather than a common

occurrence in the classroom.

Given the nuances and reality surrounding race, professors of color are typically

more sensitive to and more aware of the difficulties in discussing issues of race in the

classroom. Oftentimes, discussions of race create fear, confusion, and anxiety among

professors who recognize the risk for students to become uncomfortable and even

agitated and defensive during open and honest discussions (Cho 2011). Students of color

tend to recognize greater racial awareness among faculty who are not white. These students report feeling more comfortable when race issues come up in a professor of color's classroom. They also report feeling less worried about the possibility that race might be an issue, which is a concern that white students do not typically face. This comfort in the classroom is important for students, as they do not have to worry about any tension or awkwardness that might arise. Bri 19-year-old, black, female expresses this below:

> I feel like if you have like more minority professors, that if something happened in class or outside of class, maybe like a race problem, or something, I feel like if we were targeted in any way, we would feel more comfortable going to them, and talking to them because they would understand. For example, my teacher last semester, she's Asian, and she brings it up all the time- she thinks it's really funny how she's the only Asian person here, and so, she'll be like, "well I'm Asian, but they don't know- my eyes are closed half the time, so they don't think I see them." She'll say things like that, so she understands, so whenever I have a problem, I go to her….

This seeking out of brown and black professors is a common sentiment among minority students (Loo and Rolison 1986; Watson 2002).

There does seem to be a drawback of having a minority teacher in a predominately white college. Some of the students have indicated that when they achieve high grades, some of the white students remark that these high scores are due to favoritism towards them due to their shard minority race status. In fact, others have found that accolades and praise towards brown and black students are also often explained by whites as resulting from favoritism by minority professors. Some of them have explained that they have heard from white students that racial minorities receive a sort of

affirmative action in grading and treatment by professors of color (Solórzano et al. 2000). This negates real accomplishments of these students.

By contrast, when whites receive good grades, this accusation of race-based preferential treatment is not as likely. And, whites are typically expected to do well in school, so when they succeed in a class with a white professor, their achievement is hardly questioned. Therefore, students of color who succeed face an added burden related to their numerical minority status and the lower expectations imposed upon them by whites. This is yet another frustration of being a student of color in a PWI.

This experience of others questioning their good grades is common among my respondents. Even with evidence of academic success, such as Bri's good grades, whites continue to have lower expectations, (Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000). This reveals an assumption that the only way these students could have succeeded is from unfair preferential treatment by a professor who is also subordinated by their status.

Lack of Diversity's Effects on Faculty of Color

It is not just the students of color for whom race affects the classroom climate. Minority professors have reported that white students frequently challenge their expertise and legitimacy as professors (Cho 2011; Reddy and TuSmith 2002). This often occurs in open confrontations, especially when the topic of race comes up. Some professors assert that teaching about race can be a struggle, especially when met with resistance from white students. In fact, challenges of student grades are more common for professors of color, which come from white males (Cho 2011).

Further, the race of professor also affects student receptiveness to learning about particular race-related topics. For example, some report that when teaching about black experiences, there is a hierarchy based on professor's race and sex. Authority to teach on black studies moves in descending order from visible black males to black females, to white female, to white male. Those viewed as least adept to teach this topic are Asian American or Native American males and females. Based on this logic, students perceive the legitimacy of what their professors can teach on the basis of their race. Black professors are thought to automatically know more about this topic, while whites are considered to be more legitimate experts and authorities in education in general.

There seems to be an unspoken understanding that racially and ethnically identified courses are best taught by professors of color. But, whites are sometimes exempt from this requirement, while non-ethnic and not-racialized courses are typically considered best served by white professors. Again, this shows an often unnoticed or unacknowledged expression of institutional racism (Reddy and TuSmith 2002).

While some professors of color have found their expertise is challenged by students, others have more positive experiences discussing race in the classroom. For example, black professors' experiences in the classroom differ qualitatively from those of their white counterparts, with regards to the role of conflict, isolation, and respect related to racial issues (Aguirre 2010; Harlow 2003). That is, black professors regularly find themselves managing racial stigma in the classroom as part of classroom emotion management (Harlow 2003). White professors tend to lack expertise, or are thought to be unable to adequately discuss racial topics.

Female professors of color face an added difficulty as they are often not only questioned by students when dealing with the topic of race, but white students sometimes challenge and even degrade their professors of color in non-racialized courses. Kaja (22-year-old, mixed black and Hispanic, female) recalls such an incident below:

> And, I know an instance with one of my friends, she was in – I forgot what kind of class it was, but they had a test- half of it was multiple choice, half of it was a written essay, and the student did, you know, not very well on the multiple choice, and didn't do good on the essay, and fussed the (female Asian) teacher out in front of everybody in the class, and was like, "You can't even speak English. Go back to your country." The student said that to the teacher…..but it was a white student. The teacher actually contacted the Dean, and was like, felt threatened, and wouldn't return to the class unless the Dean was there. And I don't know what happened in that situation. I don't know how that got resolved, but I told the girl, I was like, "If I would have been there"- like that's a pet peeve of mine for someone to tell someone to "go back to their country, or to, you know, learn how to speak English…."

This not only makes the professor feel threatened, but it also conveys to students the lack of respect that some white students have for their professors of color. Students color can feel as if they are not respected if their professors of color are not even respected. This can negate the benefits of the seeming success of having a racial minority who has "made it." This success is potentially overshadowed by demeaning and derogatory treatment by white students whose privileged (white) status is threatened by a professor of color. This white student's low grade can incite her to attack her professor in a racialized way, which shows the importance of race, the privilege of whiteness, and the meaning of a racial identity in this white institution.

Chapter Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the effects of white racial homogeneity among students and faculty at the UNC Westfield on black and brown students there. Overall, the participating students recognize a need for a more racially-diverse student body, and believe the effects of this racial homogeneity to be diverse and troublesome. For one, whiteness is normative, and this normativity is internalized by some of the brown and black students. This results in the othering of students of color, making it difficult for them to simply fit in as typical college students. This marginalization causes these students to develop defense mechanisms, such as self-segregation. Whites are sometimes threatened by this self-segregation, so this defense mechanism can actually exacerbate race relations on campus. Further, the whiteness of faculty impedes the development of social capital among students of color, and can worsen racial relations. Many white faculty are not prepared to deal with, nor are they sensitive to, race and cultural issues. This makes class discussion isolating for students of color who are immersed in a sea of whiteness at this university. This is frustrating for students who desire a more fruitful discussion of race that would benefit whites and students of color. Overall, brown and black students lack support and feel isolated as atypical college students at this PWI, and the lack of helpful classroom discussion and faculty awareness makes their experience even more troubling. These students point out that faculty diversity and racial awareness would improve university race relations, enhance the overall college experience of brown and black students, and even benefit white students who lack exposure and understanding of racial and cultural variations.

CHAPTER FIVE | ESSENTIALIZATION AND EXOTICIZATION: RACE AS A SIGNIFICANT IDENTITY MARKER

> *"…..I'll say something, and they (whites) don't understand what I'm saying, and then they'll be like, 'Oh, it must be a Mexican* thing,*' or something."*

Essentialization By Whites

As discussed in Chapter Four, white normativity pervades the classrooms, grounds, dorms, and other settings on campus, and it reflects and reinforces white supremacy (Grillo and Wildman 1991). Racial essentialism is another theme common at the university that also works towards this end. Racial essentialism was discussed frequently in the focus group meetings, and is made possible by, and is inextricably connected to, the white as normative ideology within the institution under study, as it is in the larger US society.

The essentialist view of race assumes that there is a monolithic black, Hispanic, and Asian experience (Grillo and Wildman 1991), and is typically supported by the related belief that racial categorizations are based on underlying essences (Chao, Chen, Roisman, and Hong 2007). Since American slavery, racial essentialist thinking has continued to hierarchically and unfairly arrange members of society. This belief, which has benefited whites for years, is found in all American social institutions, including the university under study. This is of utmost significance, as racial essentialist theory insists that those who hold essentialist views of race are likely to hold stereotypical and prejudiced views of racial groups (Jayaratne et al. 2006; Keller 2005).

By holding race as a meaningful entity, essentialism elevates the importance of racial criteria in making judgments about people (Chao, Hong, and Chiu 2013). For example, it might be believed that white men cannot play basketball well simply because they are white. Specifically, research finds a positive relationship between essentialist views and negative beliefs about racial minority groups (Hewstone, 1990; Jayaratne et al. 2006; Keller 2005), such as the belief that black men are criminals (Collins 2009). As bell hooks (1990) asserts, such essentialist thinking leads to racism as it fails to recognize the diversity among racial identities. It enables whites to utilize a single black identity to represent all blacks, neglecting the array of experiences of black identities and preventing the questioning of cultural stereotypes of blackness. This logic is faulty as there is no single black community, and a single voice cannot speak for all members of a social group (Farber and Sherry 1993). Much of the insidiousness of this ideology stems from the difficulty of exposing and opposing it because people are often unaware they hold these beliefs. For these reasons, Critical Race Theory advocates for anti-essentialism in conceptualizations of race (Cammarota 2004; Bernal 2002).

Racial essentialization occurs in virtually all settings of university life, including social settings. It reduces students' desires to interact with members of other racial groups, which is possibly why students of color tend to seek out members of their own racial group in the university (Williams and Eberhardt 2008). The effects of racial essentialism reach into academic settings as well, which is unfortunate, considering that social inclusion and meaningful social interactions are important in the overall development of a student (Tinto 1987, 1993).

Othering and Tokenism

The most common manifestations, and results of, racial essentialism in the university are *othering* and *tokenism*. Tokenism can be described as the inclusion of racial minorities, or tokens, in a group or setting, simply to create the appearance that one is fair and inclusive when this is not necessarily the case (Macmillan Dictionary 2016). Tokenism involves a mere symbolic, superficial effort to advance the appearance of inclusion and diversity among a group (Merriam-Webster 2015). Despite the university's efforts to appear more racially and ethnically diverse and inclusive than it actually is, at UNC "Whiteville[4]," tokenism plagues this predominately white university. Because tokenism more often occurs when the numerical representation of a particular group is sparse (Turco 2010), the lack of racial diversity at the university means that many of the brown and black students experience tokenism in their classrooms.

Tokenism results in the highlighting of the individual's minority status, and the inclusion of the individual so that the group or leader seems liberal or inclusive. So, the salient minority characteristic of the individual is highlighted over all other characteristics. These students report that their professors and fellow students insist that, and treat them as if, their race or ethnicity is a salient characteristic and aspects of their identity. As research suggests, brown and black students are more visible, as racial

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[4] As many of the respondents pointed out, "UNC Whiteville" is a commonly used nickname for the university due to its overwhelming white student and faculty population, and the white culture prevalent there.

difference is what people notice before they notice anything else in white settings

(Cognard-Black 2004).

In some cases, this minority aspect of their identity is made part of the classroom

experience for all students. For example, for Violeta (21-year-old, female, naturalized US

Citizen from Mexico), as the only native Spanish speaker in her Spanish classes, she is

asked to pronounce words correctly for the class. She explains this below:

> I would say that in my case, I'm a double majoring in Spanish, and I'm
> usually the only Hispanic in most of my Spanish classes, so the professor
> is always asking me to like, read things in Spanish, so they can hear how a
> native speaks. So, I guess I'm like helping, and that's always a good
> feeling to know that you're there for that. And they're always, 'can I
> interview you for this and that?' So in that way, I guess it's positive for
> both parties.

While Violeta considers this emphasis on her minority status (being a native Spanish

speaker) to be somewhat positive, others view this othering effectively differently. Alicia

(21-year-old, black, bisexual female) remembers below:

> I have one instance where I missed a class, and I went to my professor to kind of
> like talk about what happened that day, and as soon as I went in, she was like,
> 'Alicia! You weren't in class the other day…..You're my only black student, you
> know I've got to keep up with you!' And I was like, 'Okay…' Like she's the
> nicest person in the world, so I know she didn't mean it like that, but it's kind of
> hard not to notice that one black person in a sea of white people.

While Alicia's professor privately remarked about her status as the only black student in

the class, Amber remembers her professor drawing attention to her racial minority status

in front of the whole class. Amber's professor also tied her race to several social issues

that have been stereotyped as "black," as she did when she assumed that Amber was from

a single-parent home. This stereotyping by her professor, frequently in front of the class,

made Amber feel marginalized and stigmatized. Amber commented that she would rather be able to simply exist in class rather than serving as a racialized example and source of knowledge for white students. On the other hand, Amber states that none of the white students were ever made to represent their race in class, as they were seen as non-raced individuals with diverse individual perspectives.

Amber acknowledged that her professor did not intentionally highlight her minority status, nor did she mean to stereotype her. Yet, even among faculty members who are well-meaning, they are often unaware of their own racism. Even still, such acts and insinuations can create an uncomfortable climate in the university for students of color. Tokenism, thus offers no benefits, as these individuals have high visibility due to their exotic or *othered* status, and no real power or autonomy. Tokenism within the university reflects their devalued and scarce representation in there, which mirrors their othered status within larger society (Turco 2010).

Such tokenism and objectification imposes an exoticization on students of color, placing them in non-normative, intrinsically atypical, and strange category. This can be frustrating to students who seek to be seen simply as students, not some exotic outsider (Robinson 2012), leaving the objectified person feeling out of place and frustrated.

For example, Karyn (22-year-old, mixed white/black/Dominican, female) reveals that when white students are fascinated by her multiple identities, she thinks to herself: "Like, I was born here. Like for the most part, I'm not other-worldy, or from another nation."

Through tokenism, the targets learn that their racial difference is noticed and significant to others, causing them to feel different and stripping them of their sense of belonging. This imposition of an exaggerated, marginalized identity upon students of color further throws into question their place in the academy. It is not merely a *difference* that is forced upon their identity, but an exotic, sometimes mysterious, identity (Nadal 2011; Sue 2007). This can create anxiety, self-doubt, and an added emotional and psychological burden for students, forcing them to negotiate their own identities as they compete with others in the classroom (Nadal 2011). Exoticized individuals are denied the type of social and academic participation other students enjoy.

A major aspect of being a racial token in a classroom of white students is that these students are typically expected to represent their race or to speak on behalf of the entire Black community. In this sense, these tokenized students are provided with essentialized identities based around their race, turning them into *others,* and objects of study (Robinson 2012; Winkle-Wagner 2009), as well as "spoketokens" (Robinson 2012). What's more, these students face the burden of deciding whether to speak or not to speak, for whom to speak, and for what purposes (Robinson 2012; Winkle-Wagner 2009). Asking individuals of a social group to speak on behalf of that group indicates the believed homogeneity of that group, further stripping them of their subjectivity.

Spoketokenism fosters a false sense of inclusion, as well as a false sense of homogeneity of the typically silenced token's group and its members (Robinson 2012). Typically, once a marginalized student has been asked to speak on a matter, the guise of inclusion is upheld, while their marginalization is overlooked. So, this group continues to

be denied routine expression, as their voices seem sufficient and relevant for the entire group, reinforcing the notion that some people's ideas matter and are heard more than others (Collins 2009). Furthermore, it is not as if tokenized students are consistently asked to express their views, as they are usually only asked to speak on matters which whites might not understand, and in a way that fosters superficial multiculturalism. White professors sometimes ask a student of color to contribute in a non-threatening and arbitrary way, and in a way in which the classroom dynamic will not be upset. This exchange gives the impression of inclusion and genuine interest, which may be the case for some, however it is often the case that after a student of color contributes to discussion, their views are co-opted and ignored since their role of spoketoken has been served (Robinson 2012).

For example, a few of the black students expressed frustration remembering occasions when their white professors turned to them, as the token blacks in the class, when discussing racism, American slavery and Black History Month. This type of tokenism is annoying to many of the students, including Tomasina (22-year-old, poor, black, female), who explains that whites tend to think she should know everything about blacks and black history. She explains that,"……. people are more surprised if I don't know something, specifically about black people and black culture- I get that a lot."

Some have also described the pressure placed on them to represent "diversity" on campus to enhance the school's image or to advance their often superficial efforts to achieve of "multiculturalism." For instance, in addition to attending to their academic duties as college students, these students face an additional burden of engaging in

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activities and efforts to promote racial awareness on campus. It seems as if this is a

responsibility that the university and administration have simply given lip service while

making no commitments to recruit minority administrators and faculty or to establish

curriculum or programs and activities that enhance racial understanding and genuine

inclusion. Tomasina (22-year-old, poor, black, female) explains that it is frequently the

students of color who are burdened with this responsibility:

> I know, for me, it seems like I'm expected to be more than the average
> student- to represent black people more, and certain situations- I wouldn't
> say academically, but just around campus at like events and things, I think
> that especially at a predominantly white university, people expect black
> students to show up to pretty much any black event (laughs)- whether it be
> a black speaker on campus, or if you don't show up, people assume that
> there are not black people on campus, and therefore they don't want to
> bring any person who sort of talks about race issues and stuff like that, and
> so that just puts a lot of pressure on students to sort of go to a lot of things,
> and not focus as much time on like their studies, but they're, I don't
> know………. Yeah, it's sort of up to the students- their responsibility to
> make the African-American presence known and active…..

Kaja (22-year-old, female, mixed black and Hispanic) explains that it is not just the

university or faculty that expect this of them. In fact, other students of color also pressure

students to represent their race and to make their presence known on campus. Kaja

mentions a black student who articulates frustration about the paucity of black students

enrolled in African-American studies classes. Kaja understands her point, but explains

that this pressure should not be forced upon students of color, just because of their race.

And, she reveals that she is disappointed that other marginalized students take part in the

tokenization of others.

It is typical that tokenized students to be pressured by members of their own

group to make changes within the racialized, unjust system, in which they are

subordinated. This adds an unfair and impossible burden on these students because they generally lack the voices, power, and support systems in PWIs to initiate necessary changes (Pharr 1988). Further, when tokenized students attempt to bring changes, such as breaking down racialized stereotypes, they are often expected to display an exaggerated version of white attributes and behaviors in order to be taken seriously (Fiske and Ruscher 1993). This can be problematic because others in their group tend to feel as if this is a form of disloyalty to their own racial group (Tatum 1997).

"Racialized Ideal" Microaggressions

The expectation that brown and black students are the representatives of their race, and that they should be used to promote diversity and positive race relations is commonly achieved through a "racialized ideal" microaggression. This is another subtheme of Johnston and Nadal's (2010) essentialization microaggressions, and it imposes a "racialized ideal" or the "poster child" for positive race relations on the target. Here, the offender uses the target give the appearance of inclusion, or to make themselves seem more liberal and cosmopolitan.

These microaggressions are often seen as complimentary or positive, but they reinforce the exotic status of these targets. And, this degradation of targets is sometimes achieved for the status enhancement of the offender. Karyn (22-year-old, mixed white/black/Dominican, female) describes how she feels when whites find out she is part-Dominican, as if it enhances their status to know an exotic other: "Oh cool, like I talked to a Dominican girl."

While this form of microaggression is sometimes thought to be well-meaning and even complimentary, once again, whites often let others know that they are outside of the norm, offending and annoying targets. These racialized ideal attacks are ultimately and effectually discriminatory, making targets feel atypical, as if they are not just college students, but college students *of color*. Their race trumps other potential commonalities they might have with whites, and they can even serve as objects of white status enhancement. Overall, although they are in fact degrading and racist, racialized ideal attacks are distinct in that they appear to be complimentary, and often the offender is ignorant of their effect.

For instance, Darian (19-year-old, Native American/Lumbee, female) mentioned that one of her friends, a white male, commonly introduces her to others as his "little Indian girlfriend." Taleya (20-year-old black and white, poor/middle-class, female) shares a similar experience: "I have this friend on our floor. He takes pride in calling me his black girlfriend, and I don't know, he just introduces me as his black girlfriend to everyone."

Not only does this leave Taleya feeling othered and racialized, but she recognizes that she is also being used to satisfy her friend's racial curiosity and perhaps his desire to appear more liberal. As Taleya remarks, this is not rare among whites at the university. She goes on to say that another male friend seems to appreciate her racial otherness in a similar way: "….he's happy to know someone who's part black, and to get interest into that culture, especially with like dancing. He always wants me to go out with him."

Taleya is aware that a likely reason that some of her white friends enjoy her company is because she enhances their social status, making them appear tolerant and even cosmopolitan. Taleya is not alone in this, as other respondents report experiencing this form of objectification and exploitation. This sort of exotic objectification strips targets of their agency, and emphasizes the supremacy of whites in maintaining the social and racial order of the university, as well as in the society at large.

Through these microaggressions, these students of color learn that they function as props, as status symbols for whites, as superficial indicators of a post-racial and colorblind society. Because these white students specify the race of their mock "girlfriends," for example, it is clear that the race of these women is an important aspect of their relationship with them. And, these students indicate that it is usually in a joking manner that whites would refer to them in this way. This lets them know that their "girlfriend" status is contingent upon their race. This tokenization and degradation is explored further in the following section.

Microaggressions: Commonplace Racism

Exoticism and Assumptions of Similarity

Most of the exoticization and essentialization these students experience is achieved through a type of microaggression that Nadal (2011) has termed the *Exoticization/ Assumptions of Similarity microaggression*. This type of attack conveys the assumption that, based solely on their racial group membership, the target is qualitatively the same as others of that group. This is an expression of racial essentialism,

and it effectively strips targets of their individuality. Not only do these microaggressions point out the similarity of individuals within that group, but they also exaggerate supposed difference between whites and minorities.

Amber (20-year-old, black, poor/lower-middle class, female) remembers an incident in the classroom, in which her professor assumed that Amber and her family fulfilled a cultural stereotype of black families:

> ….if there were stereotypes about black people, such as having a one-parent home, she would ask me, 'Amber, what do you think about that?', assuming that I'm from a one-parent home, and just assuming a lot of other things that happened multiple times across the course. And it definitely made me more aware that I was the only black person in the class, and that I was definitely a minority in that school……. you shouldn't really stereotype me in this way, and you shouldn't always spotlight me in this way, because it definitely made me feel- I don't want to say 'outcasted,' but I was just aware of it, if that makes sense.

Here while seemingly innocent and innocuous, Amber's professor revealed her prejudices to the entire class, letting them know that she perceived Amber's race to be a significant factor in her identity while white students were spared of such treatment. Further, the professor based assumptions of Amber's life on her race, while also reinforcing race-based stereotypes embedded in American culture.

John (27-year-old, middle-class, black male) discloses that this exoticization and assumption of similarity occurs in all campus settings, revealing that these students cannot escape this ideology at the university. He explains an experience at the college's dining all:

> So, I'm walking in and he (a white dining hall server, who many of the students know and agree that his is often unpredictable) goes, "If you're expecting fried chicken, we ain't got any." And I'm just like, "What? What?" And I was trying to think, like is he actually like, "They're out of

fried chicken?" or is he saying, "We ain't got no chicken?" you know, like what was he doing?

Mike (30-year-old, lower-middle-class, black male) follows John's description:

> That has happened a few times on this campus, so, they assume cause you roll up in there, "Oh, we're out of fried chicken." "Honey, maybe I don't want fried chicken. ….Maybe I want the grilled chicken." "We're out of friend chicken." "Well, thank you. I'm gonna turn around and go away now cause you're out of fried chicken- No, I'm going to eat the grilled chicken today, stupid.

Although some of the students can find humor in the use of racist stereotypes, these comments are dangerous in that they essentialize groups, denying any room for challenging cultural stereotypes. They expose the assumption that many have of racial minorities, namely that people of color share a monolithic experience and are all alike. What's more, the students say that this type of exoticization has been institutionalized, as the university actually served fried chicken in honor of Black History Month the previous year. Because this overt racism is very irresponsible, and too outlandish to believe, it might be that the officials who decided to do this are ignorant of the offense that might occur. This institutionalized racism is especially troubling. It colors the school climate, letting students know that the school holds these stereotypes, and that administrators will tolerate, and possibly even endorse, racism from students and faculty. Once again, whites tend to be unaware of what constitutes racism, as well as the possible damaging effects it can have (Nadal 2011).

Sexual Objectification Microaggressions

Race and gender intersect to produce another type of inequality for targets, which is commonly perpetuated through sexual objectification microaggressions (Johnson and Nadal 2010). This common form of racism intersects with other oppressions for students of color (Collins 2009), and occurs more often for some than others.

A large portion of the participants discussed the various racialized stereotypes associated with sexuality and sexual orientation that affect them socially and emotionally. The imposed racialized and gendered sexualization brings the targets discomfort, isolation, embarrassment, and frustration when they attend parties or social gatherings, or even interact with others on campus. This form of objectification perpetuates an image discrepant with that of a serious college student, as they must contend with this sexualized identity while carving out their own academic identity.

The most frequently discussed types of sexualization are the sexual objectification and assumed hypersexuality of Hispanic females. As is revealed by Violeta (21-year-old, female, naturalized US Citizen from Mexico), Hispanic women frequently experience hypersexualization at social events on or near campus. They are expected to enjoy flirting, dressing and acting provocatively, and they are considered sexually easy. As some of the students point out, this is typically discordant with the self-perceptions of the Hispanic women in the study, who express frustration that these assumptions are made about them. Violeta explains:

> I feel like in ….Latina's case, they perceive us as the sexual Hispanics, and whenever we go out to the club or like parties, and you're like the one minority, and you happen to be female and you happen to be Hispanic, they're gonna be like oh, well you can pretty much pick one (to go home with), and it's definitely not like that.

Rachel (23-year-old, Mexican-American, bisexual, female) also recognizes the stereotypes people hold of Hispanic women as hypersexual, but she is not necessarily annoyed by the sexualization and unwanted microaggressions these women face. This is because she also believes these hyper-sexual stereotypes about her group, although she remarks that she is not like the typical Hispanic woman. Not only do these stereotypes mark Latinas with an identity distinct from that of serious student, which Rachel exclaims she is proud to be, but these stereotypes socially distance her from other Hispanic students. And, she makes efforts to ensure that she is not seen as a typical Hispanic woman, as she spends much time alone to avoid being grouped with them. Therefore, the stereotypes associated with being Hispanic and female are effective in creating a division among this group. This hypersexualization is another way in which race and the assumption of similarity, are divisive constructions that color the experiences of students of color in ways not often recognized.

This perception that many Americans view Hispanic women as sexually available and easy is consistent with research on the matter. The experiences facing the Hispanic women in my study reflect broader stereotypes embedded in American culture of US Hispanic women as "Hot Tamales" (Ortiz Cofer 1993), sexual, exotic, and readily available. Such stereotypes are costly for Hispanic women, as not only are they likely to receive unwanted attention and harassment from men of all races,(McCabe 2009), but

such stereotypes can drain them emotionally. These sexualizing gendered and racialized microaggressions are more likely to affect women of color (McCabe 2009). These attacks further marginalize women of color, create emotional distress, and can even be dangerous for these women if males believe that they always want sex and are sexually easy. This perception can induce unwanted advances and promote sexual attention that might be difficult to fend off.

By contrast, this sexualization manifests a bit differently for males of color, namely black males. Black and Hispanic males face hypersexualization that colors them as aggressive, sexually provocative, dangerous, and even predatorial. Contemporary American sexual politics impose a burden upon black men and women: Western thought assumes their nature to be sexually wild, untamed, and savage. For black men in particular, racial difference is constructed around ideas about their sexuality and aggression and violence (Collins 2004). Several of the black males in the study reported being hypersexualized by whites in various settings. These males experience microaggressions that let them know that they are expected to always want sex, and that they pursue it in dangerous, violent, and aggressive ways.

Tyler (21 year-old mixed black and white male) recounts that:

> .…I've been to a few parties a few times where people of different races have come up to me, and like, 'Oh, you're the black guy, you're supposed to get all the girls at the party or whatever, you're supposed to be 'that guy',' when really I'm just like I've really only had like one girlfriend ever, so I'm not like this player or whatever, but that's kind of like to some people, that's what they see. I get this from not just white people or other black people, but like a mixture of all that together.

Alicia (21-year-old, black, bisexual female) recounts:

I've actually seen first-hand how people feel like black men are more sexual than white men. Like we were at a party and like, you know, one of my friends just made a comment that, you know, 'I don't think I'm going to dance with him, because, you know, he might try to do something with me, or something extra.' And I was like, 'why, cause he's black? I mean you were dancing with white guys all night.' So, I was kind of offended with that.

Alicia was offended by the assumption that black males are hypersexual, and she explained that, like Tyler, her black male friends are often annoyed by these assumptions made about them. As Tyler reveals, this hypersexualization of black and brown men is not just found among whites, but among other racial groups as well. This indicates an internalization of racial stereotypes which once again, degrade, demean, and demoralize targets.

Research finds that the expectation that black males are sexual predators can affect the ways in which others view their actions. Consistent with the experiences of the males in the study, there is a constant emphasis on black male bodies as innately aggressive, hypersexual, and violent, which need to be kept under control. This ideology helps to naturalize and maintain white male superiority and power (Ferber 2007). As Collins (2004) explains, constructions and stereotypes of black sexuality are used effectively to maintain the color line and racial order.

Kevin (38-year-old, poor/middle-class, black male) indicates that because he is a black male on a white campus, and because the referee was a white female, his actions and comments made while playing basketball were perceived as sexually threatening. But he maintains that there was nothing sexual, not to mention sexually offensive, about the events that unfolded. As revealed below, Kevin had a verbal altercation with a white

basketball player, and the referee who came to intervene was a white female. He goes on

to explain that his reactions were typical for this situation, but were exaggerated,

sexualized, and racialized, making him look like the predator.

When speaking in front of the Conduct Board concerning this event, Kevin says*:*

> Ok, I'm here. Did I cuss him out? Yes. Did I say- And it was- they said-
> cause the referee was female- they said that I told her when I was walking
> out that if the whistle was a dick, she would have blown it. The story got
> around later that, I said when I was walking out that, 'you're making my
> dick hard.' So, if I made the conduct board for cussing him out, then yeah,
> I will agree to that. If you're saying that I said something sexual to this
> white girl on this white campus- No. Hell no.

So, not only are black males seen as hypersexual, but they are often criminalized as

sexual predators. Mike (30-year-old, lower-middle-class, black male) also speaks about

the sexual criminalization of black males on campus, while white males are subject to a

completely different set of expectations concerning sex and aggression:

> That is so true because I have heard incidences where you could be at a
> certain place, and like someone's doing something to a white person, and
> next thing you know, a black person's getting accused of it. Even if they
> didn't do anything- they were just there, like you're chillin' in the living
> room on campus, and your friend that's white, who's having sex with a
> white girl, and she says no, this and that, next thing you now, a black
> person's getting charged.

This hypersexualization of black males is by no means exclusive to the university as it is

part of the contemporary stigmatization of black masculinity that works to justify color-

blind racism and racial inequality (Collins 2004). As for all affected negatively by this

ideology, this hypersexualization of these students of color minimizes their status as

students, making it secondary to their status as members of a minority racial group. As

their self is fragmented, race becomes their master status, a defining, extremely salient

characteristic of their identity, which frustrates some participants who desire to be taken seriously as college students.

Hypersexualization of Black Males

Contemporary sexual politics in the US create a complicated problem for black men and women. As discussed in the previous section, black and Hispanic females report feeling sexually objectified through microaggressions. Black and Hispanic males also face similar types of hypersexualization, one that colors them as aggressive, sexually provocative, dangerous, and even predatorial. Western thought characterizes their nature to be "sexually wild, untamed, and savage." For black men in particular, racial difference is constructed around ideas about their precarious sexuality and hyper-aggressive and violent tendencies (Collins 2004).

Fear of black male sexuality and maintaining the racial purity of white women have a long history and have resulted in lynchings, riots, and anti-miscegenation laws in the US (Staples 1978; Collins 2004). In light of such legacies and efforts to still police interracial unions, along with pervasive negative media depictions, it is not surprising that the hypersexualization of black males is a common occurrence.

Several of the black males in my study reported being hypersexualized by whites on campus. Through microaggressions, it is conveyed to these students that they are expected to be very sexual, and to always desire to have sex.

For example, Tyler (21-year-old mixed black and white male) recounts that:

> I've been to a few parties a few times where people of different races have come up to me, and like, 'Oh, you're the black guy, you're supposed to get all the girls at the party or whatever, you're supposed to be 'that guy',' when really I'm just like I've really only had like one girlfriend ever, so

> I'm not like this player or whatever, but that's kind of like to some people, that's what they see. I get this from not just white people or other black people, but like a mixture of all that together.

In addition, these male students of color are told through microaggressions that they are expected to seek sex in dangerous, violent, and aggressive ways, affecting how others evaluate their actions.

Alicia (21-year-old, black, bisexual female) recounts a situation in which a white student interpreted the behavior of a black male as sexual and aggressive:

> I've actually seen first-hand how people feel like black men are more sexual than white men. Like we were at a party and like, you know, one of my friends just made a comment that, you know, 'I don't think I'm going to dance with him, because, you know, he might try to do something with me, or something extra.' And I was like, 'why, cause he's black? I mean you were dancing with white guys all night.' So, and I was kind of offended with that.

Consistent with the experiences of the male students in the study, there is a constant emphasis on black male bodies as innately aggressive, hypersexual, and violent, and a need for these men to be policed and controlled. This ideology works to establish and to maintain white male superiority and power (Ferber 2007). As Collins (2004) explains, constructions and stereotypes of black sexuality are used effectively to maintain the color line and racial order.

As Tyler reveals, this hypersexualization of black and brown men is not just found among whites, but among other racial groups as well. Again, the internalization of racial stereotypes amongst black and Hispanic individuals is not surprising because they are also subjected to the cultural stereotypes of their group that pervade the media and

other institutions. Nevertheless, these stereotypes degrade, demean, and demoralize the targets, while buttressing the presumed natural superiority and morality of white males.

For instance, Kevin (38-year-old, poor/middle-class, black male) remembers a verbal altercation that he had with a white basketball player, and because the referee who came to intervene was a white female, his reactions were misconstrued. When they were recounted by others, his behaviors were exaggerated and sexualized, making him look like a hypersexual predator. But, he maintains that there was nothing sexual, not to mention sexually offensive, about the events that unfolded.

When speaking in front of the Conduct Board, Kevin says:

> Ok, I'm here. Did I cuss him (another basketball player) out? Yes…And it was…cause the referee was female- they said that I told her when I was walking out that if the whistle was a dick, she would have blown it. The story got around later that, I said when I was walking out that, 'you're making my dick hard.' So, if I made the conduct board for cussing him out, then yeah, I will agree to that. If you're saying that I said something sexual to this white girl on this white campus- No. Hell no.

Mike (30-year-old, lower-middle-class, black male) also speaks about the sexual criminalization of black males on campus, while white males are subjected to a completely different set of expectations concerning sex and aggression. He explains that black males are even assumed to be responsible and accused for crimes with which they have absolutely no connection. He explains:

> That is so true because I have heard incidences where you could be at a certain place, and like someone's doing something to a white person, and next thing you know, a black person's getting accused of it. Even if they didn't do anything- they were just there, like you're chillin in the living room on campus, and your friend that's white, who's having sex with a white girl, and she says no, this and that, next thing you now, a black person's getting charged (for the rape of the white young woman).

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The hypersexualization of black males is by no means exclusive to the university. It is part of the contemporary construction of black masculinity that works to justify color-blind racism and racial inequality (Collins 2004). The pervasiveness and effectiveness of this criminalization makes it difficult to escape. As for all affected negatively by this ideology, this hypersexualization minimizes their status as students, with race becoming a defining characteristic that trumps other characteristics.

White Fascination with "Exotic" Physicalities, and Body Monitoring

The sexualization and objectification of students of color imposes an emphasis on and fascination with their bodies. For example, many of the brown and black students report that white students make comments and assumptions about their ability to dance, specifically in sexually provocative ways. And, these dances typically are those which showcase certain body parts, namely the buttocks and hips. They report that whites seem to think that, because of their blackness they are able to shake their buttocks rhythmically, making them more self-conscious of their bodies. Typically, the black female respondents report that their bodies are many times viewed as sexual by nature, reinforcing an exoticism, even savagery, among these young women, compared to the implicit civility of whites.

Alicia (21-year-old, black, bisexual female) reports that it bothers her that her white friends constantly say to her, "Alicia, teach us how to twerk," to which she replies "like, why, why would I know how to do that? And, it's only because I'm black that I'm supposed to know how to do that."

It is common for these students to be chosen for dances and to be asked to instruct whites on how to dance "black" dances. These requests make them feel as if their Blackness automatically translates into an appreciation for, and also know how to dance to, hip-hop or other popular stereotypically "black dances." This commodification of the buttocks and hips of women of color is not new, and has been part of the social construction of sexuality and race in Western culture for years (Collins 2004). This commodification effectively turning them into (exotic) sexualized objects for amusement.

These experiences of these brown and black women are commensurate with research on the matter, and reflect a related theme. In contemporary US, femininity is closely associated with the female body's degree of culturally-perceived attractiveness. So, the hypersexualization and emphasis on the bodies of these brown and black women makes them excessively open for scrutiny, and demands that their attractiveness is tied to their sexuality. This hypersexualization of black women also works to perpetuate the stereotype that they are sexually loose, wild, and savage (Collins 2004). Collins (2004) observes that within contemporary black politics, there is an ever-present association of black women with an animalistic, untamed sexuality. This assemblage of sexual stereotypes creates ideas about racial differences rooted in essentialism and exoticism.

The women of color in my study experience this sort of objectification quite often, which works to degrade them into sexual spectacles that conjure sexual meanings.

Bri (19-year-old, black, female) described such an experience during a dorm activity, in which her white teammates assumed she could dance, specifically in ways that involve shaking her hips and buttocks, because she is part black*:*

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> …..So we're all a team, and one of the events- we had to get a tissue box and take all the tissues out….and we use that empty tissue box, and it has a ribbon around it, and you put like little whiffle balls in the box, and you tie it around your waist, and you put it right above your box. And they say whoever can get it out the fastest by shaking your butt wins- they all looked at me. I was like, first of all, I know I'm black but that doesn't mean I can dance. Second of all, I have no clue what twerking it. I have no clue- don't tell me that I can move because I'm black….

These views of black females as naturally able to dance well, and to do so in sexual ways, promote racism, sexism, and heterosexism, which Collins explains, makes it difficult for women of color to develop agency and a positive self-definition (Collins 2004). Being women, they are more likely to be objectified, as women have always been subjected to unwanted scrutiny of body parts and comments on physical attractiveness. On the other hand, men are typically those perpetrating these offenses.

This objectification of students of color pervades all of society, including in the social and residential areas of the university, making the sexual objectification and degradation of people of color part of their college experience. This added gendered and racialized burden creates an experience ridden with judgment, self-consciousness, and degradation among these women that is not as common among white women.

Hair

One of the most common exoticizing and objectifying microaggressions associated with the body reported by my female participants revolve around comments, behaviors, fascination, and questions regarding their hair.

MiKayla (20 year-old, black-Dominican female, track athlete) explains that whites are fascinated with her hair, and the hair of other brown and black students. She

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exclaims, "…like the white person's biggest questions, is like, 'Oh my gosh, is that your hair?' or, like 'How is your hair like that?'"

Whites on campus and in related spaces constantly remark about, touch, stare at, and awe at their hair, highlighting the physical otherness and exoticism of students of color. This objectification and fascination is more than just an annoyance to targets. It can have psychological and emotional consequences. In fact, such everyday occurrences that seem harmless are typically delivered by well-intended or oblivious individuals unaware of their transgression. Nevertheless, these seemingly innocent aggressions are among the most powerful types in affecting the psychological well-being of marginalized groups (Szymanski, Kashubeck-West, and Meyer 2008). Such subtle objectification of brown and black individuals contributes to an internalization of the observer's perspective of the self, a constant sense of anxiety and focus about the body. Hair comments, along with those which emphasize the buttocks and hips, often demand continual body monitoring by these women. This begins in early childhood, as Bri remembers an incident in high school which shapes how she continues to feel about her appearance today. She is still particularly conscious of her physical appearance, and takes extra time to avoid comments that spotlight her race, namely her hair.

Bri (19-year-old, black, female) discusses the impact of the constant fascination and emphasis placed on her hair:

> I totally agree with the whole hair thing. I- my hair is naturally really, really curly, so my hair is like this length (long), and then it goes up here (shorter), cause it's curly. So, I wore it to school, high school one day curly, and I realized I'm probably never gonna do it again- only because a kid came up to me and was like, 'wow, you actually are black, aren't you?' And I was so- I had no way to respond. It just shot me down so bad

cause it took a lot of courage to just go out there and do it, in general. And, I was like, yep, I'm not doing that again. I just couldn't like take it

When Bri straightened her hair, it looked more like "white hair," and allowed her race to be less visible. Bri was able to avoid such attention to her racial minority status by, even if inadvertently, conforming to white standards of beauty and normalcy. And, her remark that it took courage to wear her hair curly points to the stigma attached to deviating from white standards of normalcy.

This increased awareness and attention to the body potentially decreases the targets' opportunities to experience self-actualization (McKinley and Hyde 1996). It also contributes to black and brown female student's preoccupation with their sexual appeal and physical appearance over their academic achievement (Majied 2010). In essence, through such fascination, these students are reminded of their race, and that race matters.

In contrast, whites are not forced to see themselves through a racialized lens, as the norm of whiteness allows them the privilege of ignoring race until someone else's race intrudes upon their lives (Grillo and Wildman 1991). But, for these students of color, their biology and race are reinforced as essential aspects of their identity, reinforcing white standards of beauty (Grillo and Wildman 1991). For example, Bri discussed that it took courage to leave her home without straightening her hair, as if it were unacceptable and embarrassing to be seen with her hair the way it naturally is.

This logic is consistent with ideology surrounding hair during the time of American slavery, in which, in the new land dominated by whites, African hair was deemed unattractive and inferior by Europeans (Byrd and Tharpe 2002). The slave owners sought to pathologize black features, particularly hair, to subdue slaves,

reinforcing the value of light-skin and straighter hair. In essence, white slave owners

maintained social and cultural superiority by pathologizing physical features, including

kinky hair, of their African slaves, especially the women. Because these women were

under the impression that they were naturally inferior and unattractive, they were easier

to control (Byrd and Tharpe 2002). Those slaves with European features were sold for

more in auctions, or were usually kept as house slaves and were provided more material

comforts over field slaves. Even runaway slaves often attempted to style their hair to

appear more like white hair in order to avoid getting caught.

Similarly to how this ideology was effective in brainwashing slaves, even in

contemporary US, typical white physical standards are considered preferable. Kaja (22-

year-old, mixed black and Hispanic, female) states that she has been socialized to a

cultural belief that "untamed hair" is unprofessional, even less civilized. This can be

compared to the ideology that describes African slave hair as "animalistic, even likened

to wool" (Byrd and Tharpe 2002). As a Business major, Kaja is taught that her

appearance, including her hair, must be "tamed" to be considered civilized and

professional. Kaja admits that she spends time and energy trying to imitate "white hair."

She has learned that her natural hair is not considered "professional," and that she must

attempt a more European look in order to be taken seriously in the business world. She

explains:

> And it goes with everything, especially business cause you have to have
> your hair straight, or in a bun, or in a ponytail to look professional. And
> your natural curly hair is seen as unprofessional and wild. I don't think it's
> fair. I hate to decide how to wear my hair- do I have to straighten my hair?
> I like straightening my hair sometimes, it's easy to, you know, roll out of
> bed, but it's also putting heat in it, so I don't like to do it a lot, but I feel

> like, you know, business-wise, there's that whole thing, like, "wear straight hair- it's professional. Wear straight hair cause whites can't handle when it's curly, so….

Some of the students say that white students think that their stated approval of their hair should be flattering, as if it is a compliment. Further, the targets of this "approval" are annoyed, as these whites seem to assume that their judgment somehow matters to these students of color. These whites feel free to express their opinions, which reveals a subconscious indication that white standards matter, and that others should seek their approval.

Darien (19-year-old, Native American/Lumbee, female) reveals her frustration with this ideology. She remembers comments from whites, like:

> "You don't need to cut your hair. You don't need to straighten your hair- it's so beautiful. It's so this, and it's so that." And I'm like, just because you feel that way doesn't mean I feel that way. And just because you may feel comfortable saying one thing to me, doesn't mean I'm OK with you saying it.

The further one's hair departs from the standard "white hair," the more whites seem interested and comment on it. Karyn (22-year-old, mixed white/black/Dominican, female) explains:

> If I don't straighten it, and I do wear it curly, I can run the risk of it being called wild, like, 'Why does your hair look like that? It's out of control.' (Others agree) "Like what are you doing? (I'm) Sorry, like, (no, I'm) not sorry.

What's more, white students seem to feel it is appropriate or acceptable to touch or examine their hair, usually without asking for permission. It is usually white females who are the unsolicited, intrusive, hair-prodding offenders. Steve (27-year-old, black, white, and Dominican, middle class, male) explains that female students typically comment on

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his hair, and often touch it at social gatherings on campus, as if they have the implicit right to touch him without asking. Some suggest that this intrusion and fascination of whites with black and brown hair not only degrades them, but also dehumanizes them. As Martin (2008) describes, whites treat people of color like animals in a petting zoo. The unapproved hair prodding and probing by whites usually leaves these women feeling as if they are objects for white amusement, learning, and discussion.

Although some suggest that it is merely innocent curiosity for an "exotic" physical feature that prompts this unsolicited hair touching, some suggest that it goes beyond that. This type of behavior negates the agency of brown and black individuals, including the rights to control their own bodies. Touching one's hair, especially without asking, is demeaning and debasing. As with the cultural preference for "tamed" hair, some liken this touching to the historical owning of black slave bodies by whites, and an undying mindset that people of color are still the property of whites (Dwyer 2009). Martin (2008) explains that whites have a subconscious belief that they have a natural right to possess blacks, including policing their hair. In this sense, the hair is not necessarily the issue, but what this uninvited, dehumanizing touching represents that really matters. It indicates that whites perceive an implicit ownership over blacks (Martin 2008). Even though brown and black people might seem fascinated with and touch white hair, the connotation seems different due to the particular history of racial relations of the US. This is reminiscent of the approval and privileges bestowed upon lighter-skinned American slaves by slave owners who decided the preferred and superior physicalities, and allocated social and material privileges based on their relative approval.

Making matters worse, the offenders tend to laugh or gawk at the "untamed" hair, and try to get other whites involved in the inspection by calling others over to look and to touch. This collective white fascination with the hair of students of color occurs frequently at the university, mainly in dorms and apartments, and during social gatherings and events.

Paulina (19-year-old, bi-racial Mexican-American, poor/middle-class, female) feels very offended because her personal space has been invaded. When discussing the collective and intrusive questioning and probing about her hair, Paulina states what she would like to say to the white offenders: "It's just like, let me live my life (all laughing). Stop questioning about what I'm doing, and reevaluate yourself."

Karyn (22-year-old, mixed white/black/Dominican, female) also reacts negatively to the hair comments and questions:

> Can I touch your hair? What does your hair feel like? That question is so- I get so mad. I usually just freak out when somebody asks me that, like why you would ask that? But, it's the first question, usually when people meet me, or when they don't even say a word to me, and somebody's staring at me for a long time.

Steph (23-year-old, female, naturalized citizen from Colombia) described a common experience, in which her black roommate was probed about her hair and observed by fascinated whites as she was trying to get read in the morning:

> She was amazed- like my roommate, she's black, and like one day she was doing her hair, and the same girl, her and another roommate they come in, and they're just like, "oh my god, can I touch your hair?" and at first my friend was like, "OK, sure," but then it got to a point, well they asked her, "they were like is this real?" and they started like pulling on it. And, like her hair is real, and so she was like, "yeah it's real, but it hurts, like stop." And they were like so surprised. They were like, "no, but like black girls

are like supposed to have like weaves," so it's just like little things that just like happen.

This imposition by whites also reflects their lack of exposure to racial and ethnic others, and expresses their ignorance in the belief that they have the unstated right to examine and analyze the "others."

All the while, many brown and black women enjoy their "audacious" locks (Martin 2008), and resent the white standards to which they are compared, and which they are expected to achieve (Martin 2008). All in all, the white standard of normalcy and acceptance imposed upon these students of color is just another added burden, a form of gendered racism that lets them know that they are not acceptable. And, this is another example of white privilege that is often overlooked, but that can affect the self-esteem and success of students of color.

Interestingly, while these students report feeling frustrated about white fascination with their bodies, some report experiencing a similar fascination from other members of minority racial groups. Given the pervasiveness of the white standard of beauty, it is not surprising that other racial minority group also uphold or subscribe to this ideal.

Astin (19-year-old, black male) reveals that he has experienced multiple manifestations of self-hating by students of color who favor white standards of normalcy and beauty:

> The whole hair thing, like I have naturally really curly hair, and I have friends whose hair texture is thicker, so they'll say," Oh, my hair's nappy, and you got that good hair cause it's nice and curly," and I'm just like, you know, that's self-hating, and it's not a positive attribute that you want to have, whatsoever.

Kaja (22-year-old, mixed black and Hispanic, female) also gets frustrated when other brown and black students subscribe to their hierarchy of hair standards, which favors the typical white hair over others. She explains that others compliment her naturally more "tame" hair by calling it "good hair," insinuating that other types of hair are not good. She recognizes the self-hating expressed in these comments, which bothers her. So, when others make comments about her "good hair," Kaja often explains to them that this is not a compliment, but it is actually degrading and racist. She describes:

> That is one thing that I have to put whoever in their place, right then and there. I don't have white people hair. I have Kaja people hair. I have my hair. It's like ugghh. It just irritates the crap out of me. And also, with white people hair…….that kills me every time. "Oh, you got that good hair." And, it's like I have to speak up with that. It's like there's no such thing as 'good hair'- your hair is good if you know how to take care of it- if it looks healthy, if it is healthy- that is good hair. And I get that all the time, and I get it from both, like non-minority and minority. And, I hate when it comes from minority students, cause I do get it a lot, and the high school I went to was predominately black, and every day, it was like, "Oh you go that good hair," coming from a black student, and it just hurt me inside cause it makes me feel like you're putting yourself down, like you're telling me that you have shitty hair (all laugh)- you have bad hair and I have good hair, and it's just, it irritates me cause it's that- it's idolizing, it's the white majority saying that this is what you need to aspire to.

Here, Kaja recognizes the internalization of white normativity among her peers that is expressed in the good hair/bad hair distinctions, and is frustrated by it. This form of internalized oppression is common in the US. The constant messages that white is normal and white standards of beauty are universally preferred make internalized racism practically unavoidable (Grillo and Wildman 1991). Through exoticizing microaggressions, students of color are continuously reminded that their physical features, including hair, are preferable if they approximate the white ideal.

Colorism and Stratification

The internalization of white normalcy expressed in the hair fascination discussed above is inextricably related to other variations of white normalcy and white standards of beauty. Another interrelated system of discrimination explored in the focus group meetings is colorism. This is a ranking system based on skin tone within racial groups (Hunter 2007; Hall 2005) that race scholars have long recognized as a significant source of internal differentiation and inequality among people of color (Hall 2005). In fact, this subjugation is just as common among people of color as it is among whites in the US (Hunter 2007).

In general, similar to her classmates' reaction to Bri's curly hair in high school, the lighter one's skin, and the more physical characteristics approximate typical white features, the more accepted the individual is by larger society. Essentially, colorism is a manifestation of the larger, social and systemic process of racism (Hunter 2007). Colorism, or skin color stratification, privileges lighter-skinned people of color over their darker-skinned counterparts in important social structures that provide resources, giving them an advantage in income, occupation, education, and the marital market (Hunter 2007; Hall 2005). In fact, research finds that in the US, light-skinned people of all racial groups have definite institutional and interpersonal advantages, even when controlling for other background variables. The students in my study recognized and discussed the oppression associated with colorism.

Bri (19-year-old, black, female) discusses the internalized oppression and colorism among black college women:

> Oh, you're light-skinned- you're so much prettier than everyone else." And I'm like, no, I've seen beautiful dark-skinned people, all over, from different races and everything. It's just crazy, and you know they just think the lighter you are, the closer to white you are, the cleaner you are, the better you are. And it's just, it's crazy to think about that, that they would do that, you know?

Kaja (22-year-old, female, mixed black and Hispanic) woman also remembers encounters with colorism on campus:

> I get that, too, like, "you're light-skinned," and blah, blah, blah, or I don't know. It's like you get, "I bet it's easy for you to get guys," or, "I bet you only date dark-skinned guys, or light-skinned guys," or just all these stereotypes that happen to be related to me being light-skinned, and it's unfair, and I don't like it.

These students recognize the internalized oppression and self-loathing that colorism commonly incites, but as they report, not all brown and black students recognize their own internalization of white normativity and standards of beauty. Further, these students fail to recognize the effects of this internalization on their self-perceptions and their self-esteem. As opposed to the typically more favorable perceptions of light-skinned individuals in American culture, dark-skinned individuals are normally regarded as more ethnically "authentic" or "legitimate" than light-skinned people. This further reinforces an exoticized, non-normative, and racialized identity among these darker-skinned individuals (Hunter 2007).

Race on Display Microaggressions

Exoticization and marginalization of students of color are achieved in other ways as well. Fascination with the body, the hair, and skin tone are accompanied by other

objectifying and exotifying techniques. As discussed by the students, many brown and black students face "race on display" microaggressions. These are a subtype of the exoticization microaggressions, as introduced by Nadal and Johnston (2008). These attacks explicitly *other* and exoticize the target through demands or requests to explain their race to others, including the common question of, "what are you?"

Although Nadal and Johnston (2010) insist that this occurs predominately among multiracial individuals, my participants report that this occurs just about as much for monoracial students at the university. It is likely that this is because whites at the university have little to no exposure to racial and ethnic others, making it difficult for them to classify even monoracial individuals. This is another manifestation of the normativity of whiteness at the university and of the larger society, and several of the students have experienced this form of othering in the classroom, social, residential, and recreational campus settings. And they usually find these probes and questions offensive and rude. Paulina (19-year-old, bi-racial Mexican-American, poor/middle-class, female) provides a frustrating example below:

> Going back to the "what are you" question, I get asked that probably at least once a week by somebody in my classes. At the beginning of the year when I moved in, people were afraid to ask me what I was. They were like going around the hall, discussing with each other, "What is she?" you know? "She doesn't look like this, but she doesn't look like this, but she could possibly be this and this." And then I had somebody come up to me and be like, "we've all been wondering what your ethnicity is."

Perhaps even more insulting, some students even said that whites often act as if guessing their race is a game, which further denigrates their status from student to objects of amusement. These students are often annoyed by this distraction from their individuality

and other aspects of their identity. Bri (19-year-old, black, female) provides an example

of the fascination with her race she experiences:

> It was like an orientation thing at the end of the summer- we were in a
> group talking about ourselves, and I forgot to say my race cause I wasn't
> thinking, and someone goes, "Oh, so you want us to guess!" I totally
> forgot what we were talking about, and like (they said), "Ok, black,
> Indian." And they were like naming off things, trying to figure out what I
> am, and I didn't understand what was going on, and then I was like, "wait
> you're trying to tell me what I am?" and they were like, yeah, tell us if we
> get it right. And I'm like, I'm not- why, like why does it matter?

Taleya (20-year-old black and white, poor/middle-class, female) experiences this type of

inquiry and guessing. She recalled one incident in which she explained that, "I was like,

'black and white,' and she (the young woman who asked about her racial identity) like

turned to the boy, and was like, "See I told you." Taleya explained that, for whites

guessing her racial identity, "Like, it's a game (to them)."

From speaking with the students about this, it is clear that this exchange is an

annoyance, to say the least. It works as a type of exclusionary mechanism that effectively

others them and emphasizes their (racialized) difference. These brown and black students

do not enjoy having their racial identity highlighted as a characteristic that is of primary

importance. Further, they express frustration that the white students who partake in this

guessing game are ignorant to the effects and insinuations of their behaviors. This colors

their college experience, making them racialized students in white settings.

Not only is this guessing game an annoying aspect of interpersonal life at the

university, but it also contributes to structural racism and inequality. CRT scholars have

argued that race (and racism) is in fact an oppressive structure (Shilliam 2011) endemic

to US society (Dixson and Rousseau 2006). The question, "What are you?" upon meeting

a person of color reveals that race is of central importance in everyday life and in the identity of the target and the offenders. This speaks to the importance placed on race and racial identity in the US. This racial primacy is a critical component of Critical Race Theory (Solórzano and Yosso 2002), and is seen in the experiences of these students. Racial primacy demands that the focus of the individual's identity, behaviors, and expressions are manifestations of their racial identity, which is of primary importance. While the behaviors of people of color are racialized, those of whites are not. This means that whites are allowed to simply *be*, while people of color are always seen in light of, and as a product of, their skin color (Helms 1993).

Many of the respondents express the import placed on their race by others at the university. For example, Sand (49-year-old, poor, female, naturalized citizen from Jamaica) indicates that being a woman is, to her, her most significant status characteristic, but, "however in this town, I am treated and acknowledged as a black woman." Karyn (22-year-old, mixed white/black/Dominican, female) also expresses her disgust at the "what are you?" question and guessing game by whites, "What are you? Are you mixed?" …. That is dehumanizing in a way, like I'm more than my appearance. ….Like is it your business? What is you knowing my ethnicity going to do for your life?

According to these students, whites not only emphasize their race by asking or guessing their racial classification, but they also suggest that it is a characteristic that is crucial to know in order to discern who they are. But, because whites are not racialized beings, their race is not considered a salient identity characteristic. This allows other aspects, such as individual personality and expressions, to become important in

identifying and defining them. The question of "what are you?" that is commonly demanded of brown and black students represents the significance of their racial otherness in the white institution, letting these students know they are not of the numerical or racial majority. They are forced to think of themselves as a "them," not an "us."

O'Brien (2008) writes that this form of racial othering is common among Korean and Asian Americans, who are routinely asked, "Where are you from?" She explains that when strangers who are unable, or even unwilling, to determine the ethnic origin of Korean and Asian Americans, they probe the targets. The reactions among these targets vary, depending on whether they feel the question stems from innocent curiosity or whether the offender is intentionally offensive (O'Brien 2008). Kim (2013) also finds that if the "where are you from?" question is seen as innocent ignorance and/or genuine interest, the target is not likely to become offended. This is because many targets of this probing suggest that it is natural to want to know the ethnic background of groups in the US (Kim 2013), so whites are apt to ponder the racial classification of others. Wu (2002a) asserts that oftentimes, the "where are you from?" question is a roundabout way of asking the person's race, letting them know that they are an other, and that one is not truly American.

But, the students in my study discuss their desires to defy this racialization, and to live as non-raced individuals. As Gloria Ladson-Billings (2013) asserts, while racism is actually a very normal aspect of American life, most people outside of CRT do not recognize this. In fact, racist expressions are regular occurrences, not the anomalies they

are commonly thought to be (Ladson-Billings 2013). People of color are more aware of this type of racial othering, as they are the most negatively and significantly affected by this system.

Racial Ignorance and Misclassification

While the emphasis placed on racial classification is annoying to the participants, what seems equally, or maybe even more disturbing to them, are when whites classify them inaccurately. Whites not only demand to know the race of these students, but they also tend to make inaccurate presumptions about their racial classification. Darian (19-year-old, Native American/Lumbee, female) discusses a common such occurrence below:

> This man just started speaking Spanish to me, and I was like, "Ohhhh, no hablo Espanol." He was like, "Oh, you're not Hispanic?" and I was like, "No, sir." He was like, "What are you?" I was like, "Native American." He was like, "Ohhh. That's interesting." I was like, "not really, but OK."

Others have expressed their frustrations with racial and ethnic misinformation among whites, as Steph (a 23 year-old, female, naturalized citizen from Colombia) states:

> Yeah, and it's just like, I've had so many instances where, you know, just because I'm Hispanic, they or, like, if I start speaking Spanish, and they just like, "Stop speaking Mexican," And, I'm like, "really? Like Spanish is a language, and Mexico is a country, like come on, they teach you this in school." It seriously is white people, at least for me, that I've experienced it. Or, they ask me what part of Mexico am I from. For me, it's seriously has been only white people who have like made those little comments to me.

Here, Steph describes her perception of white racial/ethnic ignorance, and is unclear why whites sometimes think that "Mexican" is a language. This is an indication of the racial

and cultural ignorance of a lot of whites, and their lack of etiquette and care about the

implications of their statements to others.

Other students tend to blame the inability of white students and white faculty to

determine their race on their lack of exposure to brown and black individuals, and to their

related ignorance. As Kaja (22-year-old, female, mixed black and Hispanic) explains,

"They're doing it because they're ignorant to the fact that just because you're of this skin

tone, you have to be this specific race. And it is not OK, and it is ignorant ….."

Violeta also explains:

> They'll come up to me and be like, "Where are you from?" And, I'm like,
> "I'm Mexican," and they're like, "Well, you don't look Mexican, why
> isn't your skin darker, why aren't you shorter, why aren't you this?" And,
> I guess they're trying to say it in a compliment way, but I'm like, "You
> need to know that Mexico is not your typical indigenous, and I'm proud of
> all of them, but we are such a, like every country is diverse in the way we
> look. And, I've had someone come up to me and go, like are you
> Hispanic? And, I'm like yeah, and they're like oh I can tell, and I'm like
> what do I say to that, you know? So, I guess it's part of like being
> ignorant, and informing yourself.

Kaja (22-year-old, female, mixed black and Hispanic) conjectures why it bothers

individuals so much when they are misidentified by whites, which is something she must

endure often as a mixed-race individual:

> I think it is annoying when someone identifies you as something you're
> not. And I think it is because you have a culture behind your race. You
> were raised in that culture. You learned all the ins and outs, all the, you
> know, what it means to be a person of that race. So, if somebody identifies
> you as something else, it's not like it shouldn't bother you……I think
> people need just need to ask and not assume, but then there's a certain way
> you have to ask, too. I hate the, "What are you?" Or, "Are you Spanish?"
> Or, you know, so there's a way to ask appropriately what your ethnic
> background is, even it is just, "What is your ethnic background?

It is likely that a binary American racial classification system is a critical factor in misclassification and deficiency of racial awareness among whites. An emphasis on white exclusivity is maintained by a distinct "white" and "other" categorization (Wimmer 2008), and this binary shpws little regard for the delineations within the "other" groups. Knowing who is "white" matters, and knowing who is an "other" also matters, but for the purpose of maintaining power, the differences among brown and black individuals might not be as important (Wimmer 2008). This is why people of color are often lumped into a pan-ethnic classification of "black," which supports the ultimate goal of white purity and white privilege (Alcoff 2003). This racial classification system is inherently racist, privileging whites and marginalizing and subordinating others.

The exclusiveness of whiteness has maintained power among their group, and this racial binary seems to have found its way into the university. The dominant (white) group defines the racial classification system, establishes the racial binary, and their positions within it, as well as what these groupings mean, and who belongs in each group. And, these criteria for inclusion and exclusion change with the social, political, and economic needs of the dominant group (Omi and Winant 1994). Even standards of beauty and expression are determined by whites, based on whites, and imposed upon others, as the respondents have observed.

Because those among the othered group have varied, and because the US is becoming more multiracial, it makes sense that whites are unsure, or have not taken care to discern among various "others." It is the "us" and "them" distinction that has traditionally been most crucial (Wimmer 2008). These respondents have experienced

their misclassification based on the white-other dichotomy in various settings on campus, which shows white dominance, both physically and socially.

Those who report experiencing this type of classification from whites feel slighted and marginalized, as they recognize the racism inherent in this classificatory binary. The willful and complacent ignorance surrounding race and ethnicity among whites is not atypical of many Americans. As with the black/white binary, this racial binary is one of the most rigid constructs that maintains systemic racism and white privilege (Parea 1997).

Students of color must deal with this racial binary and often subsequent racial misclassification at the university. Coping with racial misclassification requires developing strategies to mitigate effects of racial ignorance. For example, some cope by asking the person to guess their race before the misclassification begins. But, this type of racial guessing game can further complicate interactions. For example, although she was attempting to make light of and to control the often awkward and frustrating racialization she suffers, Rachel explains below that this strategy can be counterproductive. Rachel (23-year-old, Mexican-American, bisexual, female) even asks whites to guess her race if they seem confused and interested:

> People ask me where I'm from, and I'm sometimes like, "guess," and they go through everything but Hispanic. They just like, not even anything related to Hispanic. They're like, "Indian, Pakistanian, South East Asian," and I'm just like- my dad's side of the family is from Spain, like Spain-Mexican, and then my mom's side is like Aztec, so I don't know where this comes from. But like, my family is all Mexican, like pretty much all down the line.

It seems that there is not much these students of color can do to effectively counter or to prevent racist comments concerning lack of racial awareness. But, if they ignore the offender's misclassifications, these students worry that the misinformation and ignorance will continue.

In addition to being misclassified, several of the respondents report being perceived as if they are of a single race. This can leave targets feeling as if their identity is invalidated, as if their true identity is not being honored or recognized. Taleya (20-year-old black and white, poor/middle-class, female) explains, proudly, "I embrace my mixed-ness. Actually I'm mixed."

Another related trend among whites is that they often assume that multiracial students are Hispanic. And, once this assumption is made, they also tend to assume that because they are Hispanic, they are Mexican. Although Mexicans account for almost two thirds of the Hispanic population in the US, and therefore, most Hispanics identify as Mexican, non-Mexican Hispanics are regularly lumped into a Mexican category, ignoring ethnic differences among Hispanics is not considered. This is similar to those Asians who belong to smaller Asian groups being lumped into one of the larger Asian categories, such as Japanese or Chinese (Kim 2013).

Kaja (22-year-old, female, mixed black and Hispanic) explains, "I get a lot of, 'Oh, you Mexican?' That's always the first thing. Why do I have to be Mexican, because of my skin tone, or like my hair? It's not ok for someone to say that."

It is likely that because racial classification in the US has typically reflected an "us," or white, and a "them," or black and/or other, division, the particular variations

within the "them" group have not been as important among whites. The changing

demographics of the US South, including the region in which the university is located,

have seen a large influx of Hispanics, mainly Mexicans. This makes the classification of

Mexican cognitively accessible for whites (Marrow 2009). With scarce exposure to

minority racial groups other than black Americans, whites lack knowledge of the variety

of racial classifications.

"Alien in Own Land" Microaggressions

The "us" and "them" ideology is commonly conveyed through a type of

microaggression that lets the target know that she or he is perceived as a foreigner, which

can include the assumption that the target does not speak English. This form of

microaggression has been labeled "alien in own land," by Sue et al. (2007), and is

effectively similar to Nadal's "race on display" attacks (Nadal 2011). This type of

microaggression imposes an identity upon the individual which is discordant with their

actual identity. This also marginalizes them further from a normative identity, namely the

identity of the typical American college student, as well as the identity of an average

American (Sue et al. 2007; Nadal 2011).

Darian (19-year-old, Native American/Lumbee, female) provides an example of

this kind of microaggression she commonly faces, which makes her feel as if she does not

belong. She is routinely asked whether or not her tribe has an "Indian call." She explains:

> We don't, I mean, the Indian call is just like a noise you make. And, I'll do
> it sometimes just so they'll leave me alone. But, it's just like stereotyping,
> and it's assuming somebody can do it, cause like not all Native Americans
> can do it…. They're like it's in your race, your ethnicity, your culture.

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This assumption that Darian uses a language other than English is common among the students who appear not to be white. These targets are made to feel exotic based on this presumption, which is often conveyed to them through microaggressions, like the one Darian reported. A more common manifestation of this type of microaggression reported among the respondents is the request for them to speak Spanish. Such requests make the targets feel as if they are put on display for the purpose of white amusement or learning. Paulina (19-year-old, bi-racial US-born Mexican-American, poor/middle-class, female) has this type of experience relatively often:

> The first question people ask me is like, "Speak Spanish. Can you speak Spanish? Speak something for me right now." And I'm like, "it's not like something you're naturally born with- the talent to speak another language- you have to learn it…It's not a thing that was implanted into my DNA."

Even before entering the university, some of these students experience this form of microaggression and racial classification, in which, based on their skin tone, their assumed foreignness is emphasized, and subsequently, their otherness is reinforced. Thomas Jimenez refers to continual Mexican immigration into the US as "immigrant replenishment." Because of the constant immigration of Mexicans into the US, Mexican culture is visible and integrated into the interactions and institutions of long-time and recent Mexican immigrants. Because of the presence of Mexican culture in the US, Mexican-Americans are able to feel connected to their Mexican identity (Jimenez 2009).

Not only does the constant influx of Mexicans into the US enable a closer identification with Mexican culture, but it also makes it more difficult and less likely that other Americans will be able to distinguish between new immigrants and second- and

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third- generation Mexican Americans. The immigrant aspect of their identity is illuminated, and they feel as if they are always an alien in their own land of origin (Jimenez 2009). For example, some second- and third- generation Mexican students often get asked by teachers and administrators in middle and high school, and from others in various institutions prior to entering the university, if they speak English. Through such microaggressions, various institutions of education reinforce perceived differences among students, further othering some students of color (Collins 2009).

Family Visits and "Othering" Through Language

Even though many students acknowledge that the othering they face is not fair, they often are embarrassed by the "otherness" of their family members who visit them. For example, when their families speak Spanish at the university or around town, some of these students report feeling embarrassed. Charles (23-year-old, half Peruvian/half white, poor/middle-class, male) divulges that he is uncomfortable and self-conscious when his mother comes to visit him and speaks Spanish in front of other students. He explains that he typically speaks Spanish with his mother, but when he is around others, he finds himself speaking English to her. He is self-conscious because everyone else is speaking English, and he does not want to appear different in front of others.

Others have also commented that when their parents visit them at college, they also feel uncomfortable, even embarrassed, when they draw attention to their otherness by speaking a language other than English. These students are aware that whites stereotype those who speak Spanish or other languages aside from English, reinforcing

cultural differences and exoticism that these students try to minimize or avoid. This can

be taxing and further marginalizing for students, exacerbating the differences among

whites and others.

<u>Immigrant Status and Stereotypes</u>

While most of the students expressed a connection with other marginalized

groups, there seems to be a different type of oppression imposed upon members of

immigrant groups. That is, the subordination and stereotypes associated with students of

color who are immigrants are sometimes qualitatively distinct from the assumptions

made of those thought to be native to the US. This suggests an intersection of

oppressions, with nativity adding another layer to the complexity of white privilege on

campus.

Darian (19-year-old, Native American/Lumbee, female) describes a distinction

between the types of profiling associated with black students at the university and those

suspected of being (usually) from Mexico:

> Like another thing, talking about Mexican-Americans, and like
> immigration, and stuff, going off of what Ne'Dra was saying, how like
> black people might be like sitting out in the car, and they're like listening
> to music loud, and somebody comes over and tells them to turn it down,
> like they're probably also thinking like, gang affiliation, and like Mexican-
> Americans, they also face that too, with um music, and listening to it loud.
> And, "oh, do you have a gun in your car? Do you have tattoos? Are you in
> a gang?"……And also going back to the naturalization- like whenever
> you're trying to get naturalized, people in American don't understand how
> hard the process is, and how like long and tedious it is, so like they don't
> understand like, why it's taking so long to get papers and things like that-
> and, if people weren't so lazy, and get off their asses and actually do
> something, whenever it comes to like working, they wouldn't be so quick
> to jump on people who are immigrants and trying to get their papers to

become naturalized whenever it comes to jobs, because they're too lazy to like go out and like work in the field, and do like actual hard labor. They'd rather sit in an office and make all this money.

This differential racism has been documented in other educational institutions, namely in the US South. Some have suggested that this white racism and related treatment towards immigrants are typically motivated by job competition, fear of possible violence stemming from racist stereotypes, fear of crime, and the desire to maintain academic advantage by reducing competition from immigrants. Immigrant students learn their marginalized status through the behaviors and treatment from their white counterparts, effectually forcing them to experience academic life as outsiders. After all, it is often in the interests and motivations of the dominant group that structure the power dynamics of heterogeneous groups. By excluding this group, the majority group further advances their interests by maintaining resources and privilege among its members (Gitlin, Buendia, Crosland and Doumbia 2003). It is not sufficient to understand and to combat one type of racism, as various manifestations exist and stem from fear and political agendas.

Racialization and Essentialization by Students of Color

Even though racism overwhelmingly serves majoritarian, or white, interests, all members of American society can internalize dominant American ideologies. Because of this, whites are not the only ones who make race-based assumptions of similarity. Brown and black individuals also participate in essentialization of race that buttresses a racial classification system that appears natural and that favors whites. In fact, it was not uncommon to hear my participants express essentialization of their own racial group.

This essentialist view of race enhances and emphasizes race as a legitimate way to judge people (Chao, Hong, and Chiu 2013). In fact, those who endorse this notion typically hold stronger stereotypes and prejudices about racial minorities, including their own (Jayaratne et al. 2006; Keller 2005). Fundamentally, that students of color endorse racial essentialism points to an internalized oppression, which supports white supremacy. Keisha (23-year-old, black female) explains that she is aware of her tendency to essentialize race, and explains that her friends remind her that she should not contribute to this type of racism:

> And one good thing with my friends is we check each other on things like that. Like, not just some of my white friends, but just in general, cause there are times when they'll say something, and I'm guilty of it too, like they'll say something about a diet or whatever, and I'll say something like, 'Oh, white girls don't eat.' And, you know, it's messed up.

Although not their intent, those who adhere to this thinking reveal a subtle essentialist view of race, as if individuals of the same race must be alike. This ideology can contribute to racism and racial divides by assuming that everyone in their racial group are alike in meaningful ways. This logic was used by whites to justify slavery and other forms of maltreatment of blacks, and it leaves no room for individuals to break stereotypes of the group.

Because stereotypes about brown and black people in the US are usually negative, this essentialization contributes to their own subordination. These students' essentialization of race "naturalizes and dehistoricizes difference, mistaking what is historical and cultural for what is natural, biological, and genetic" (Hall 1993). This is dangerous because this logic embeds each racial category in a biologically constituted

category, which inverts and valorizes the very ground of the racism that needs deconstruction (Hall 1993).

Meanings and beliefs are often found not in what people say, but how they say it, and what they actually do. Some of the manifestations of racial essentialization by students of color are not vocalized, but are otherwise revealed in subtle ways. When students spoke about or mocked others, their demeanor and voice were usually different while imitating whites, blacks, Hispanics, and others. This was especially common among the black participants. Most of the mimicking of white students involved the use of a preppy, even snooty, and nerdy voice and demeanor while several of them laughed and joked about other students of color, namely black students. Frequently, in telling their stories of encounters with other black students, they used exaggerated cultural stereotypes of how young black men and women supposedly sound and act.

Embedded within these recounts with people of varying racial groups is a juxtaposition of cultural, but internalized, stereotypes these participants unknowingly hold. When mimicking whites, these participants often conveyed a white identity that is academic, intelligent, and privileged. On the other hand, while mimicking black students, they typically used poorer grammar, more pronounced body language, and an aggressive tone of voice. This reveals an internalized distinction between whites and blacks, in particular, which is also intertwined with class, which many of these students did not acknowledge they held. In essence, these students have internalized racial stereotyping, with whites as more academic and intelligent, and blacks as less intelligent, more aggressive, and louder.

What is especially troubling is that, as members of minority racial groups, these participants hold essentialist notions of race, subconsciously believing that their subordinate status to be natural and unalterable. Even in their talk about other members of their own racial group there is an implicit indication that they equate negative, devaluing characteristics with their own race. As part of this internalization of negative stereotypes about their own group is an implied class distinction as well, in which black and brown individuals associate blackness and brownness with a lower social class.

For instance, Mike (30-year-old, lower-middle-class, black male) and Mikayla (20 year-old, black-Dominican female, track athlete) explain that many black students act "ratchet" on campus, which embarrasses them. They fear that others will view them in the same light, as they are aware of essentialized views of blacks. Mike (30-year-old, lower-middle-class, black male) explains:

> I feel like on this campus, if one (black) person does it, and everybody sees it, it's gonna basically represent all of us. Sometimes, you look at people of your own minority group, and they may act a certain way, and you know, you want to call them ratchet and stupid for it, but within that setting, it's like, yeah you do kind of get embarrassed, but you know, you need to be that person to, you know, show them.

Such classed attributes include particular ways of speaking, dressing, behaving, and interacting. For example, the term "ratchet" is a common term used by some of the black focus group members to describe other blacks.

Mikayla, for example, says that many black students act like a "ratchet bay-bay's kid," and in her language there is an implicit suggestion that being educated is not a characteristic blacks have. She recognizes that whites have essentialized views of blacks

as ignorant and lower class, or even "ratchet," and she explains that she surprises people when she does not conform to this stereotype.

This essentialization can significantly affect one's sense of identity. Hall (1983) writes that oppressed people tend to face an unnoticed psychological burden, as they struggle with negative cultural representations of themselves. They are in a continual struggle to self-identify in the absence of these debasing, essentialized, racialized ideas (Hall 1983). Because people tend to attribute observed behavioral patterns of some members of a group to all members of that group (Mackie, Hamilton, Susskind, and Rosselli 1996; Prentice and Miller 2006), it is not surprising that members of racially-devalued groups hold negative stereotypes of themselves. This is yet another burden facing students of color, whose adjustment to life as a college student is complicated by the weight of essentialist views of their group as regarded by society, and their identities as students.

Discussion and Conclusion

The insidiousness of race and its power to structure society in subtle and overlooked ways encumbers the self-esteem, self-actualization, and even the personal identity of students of color at the university. Race is a significant component of brown and black students' identity, especially in white spaces, such as universities. They are forced to live as racialized beings, while whites are devoid of this classification. And essentialist notions of race demand that people of color are perceived in stereotypical ways. This is harmful, as cultural stereotypes of brown and black groups tend to be non-

academic, lower class, even criminal. Each day, students of color are further removed from being seen as a typical student and they are stripped of their individuality. This exacerbates the emotional and psychological burdens facing these individuals.

Further, essentialization exoticizes and tokenizes brown and black individuals in overlooked ways. People often assume some microaggressions to be benign fascination by the perpetrator, such as interest in hair and language, but such aggressions reflect racialized exoticization and promote the degradation and objectification of targets. Perhaps more disturbing, brown and black students also participate in their own internalization of white normativity and essentialism, which affect their self-identification. This is because identity does not develop in isolation. Instead, identity development occurs as individuals reflect upon complex processes, structures, and external environments. Because experience is at the center of all knowledge, people understand who they are based on their interactions with others (Bogdan and Biklen 2003). Self-perceptions are shaped by the messages received from those in the environment, and in predominately white spaces. When environmental cues, such as essentialism, tokenism, exoticization, sexualization, objectification, stereotyping, and overall differential treatment reflect the primacy of their race, the individual becomes more aware of that aspect of their identity. The oppressed individual is forced to grapple with what it means to be a raced person, a member of a group affected by racism (Tatum 1997). These individuals begin to think of themselves as racialized persons, and they relate their self-worth to this constructed category. It is in white spaces, such as the classrooms, dorms, and other settings at the university, that race is more visible among

members of socially devalued groups. Through all of this, the student, academic status of these individuals is downplayed or even ignored.

Racialization and essentialization are not only harmful to people of color- they make all people less creative. In fact, racial essentialization plays a direct and causal role in making people less creative in terms of seeing beyond the constraints of racialized categories. Research shows a positive correlation between one's inclination to endorse an essentialist view of race and one's creativity. For instance, even exposing people to an essentialist racial thinking can hamper cognitive flexibility, affecting not just what people think, but *how* they think. In fact, stereotyping and creative stagnation are rooted in a similar tendency to over-rely on existing category stereotypes (Tadmor, Chao, Hong and Polzer 2013). Therefore, racism and essentialist thinking are harmful and hindering to all involved, not just the targets.

CHAPTER SIX | STEREOTYPES AND IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

"*I have to change sometimes little pieces of me so that I don't come off a certain way, or play into a certain stereotype, and it's just a lot to think about.*** –Tomasina (22-year-old, lower-class, black, female)*

American Education as a Racialized Institution

The US is characterized by a long history of exclusion from educational opportunities by social class and race. Race and social class inequalities are inextricably intertwined through practices like historical and continual segregation, differential funding, and discriminatory treatment. These raced and classed differences result in poorer preparation and lower chances of success for marginalized members of society (Fryer 2009). Although social class cannot be ignored, race works as its own structuring agent to create particular experiences and expectations for people of varying racial groups (Leonardo 2009). For example, even in affluent neighborhoods, whites tend to perform better in school than black students (Ferguson 2001; Ogbu 2003). And, even when social class is controlled for, students of color, particularly black students, are more likely to have less qualified and less experienced teachers and larger class sizes than their white counterparts. Race continues to affect and shape the differential experiences and outcomes for student of color, independent of social class (Darling-Hammond 1998).

American institutions of higher education (Karamcheti 1995) and academic achievement are overwhelmingly associated with being white, both by professionals and by students (Ogbu 1981). While cultural stereotypes about whites include academic ability (Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Fryer 2009) and professionalism, most other groups are not expected to fare as well in school. In fact, being a person of color often means one is expected to be unprofessional, uneducated, and less intelligent (Karamcheti 1995). While social class affects these expectations, race also imposes a particular set of academic and social expectations on students.

Violeta (21-year-old, female, naturalized US Citizen from Mexico) recognizes this, and states that:

> I think that, for the most part, white people believe that all Hispanics are like Mexican, and therefore should not attend college, and they're like, 'Oh, you're here!' and they're surprised that we have a thousand Hispanics here.

So, doing well in school and maintaining professional and academic styles of communication are culturally associated with whiteness (Tatum 1997). In addition, there seem to be racial differences in the relationship between social status and academic achievement that result from and reinforce the association between whiteness and academic achievement. Whites are expected to perform well in school, to care about grades, and to achieve higher degrees, while others (mostly blacks and non-white Hispanics) are regularly stigmatized for behaviors that are often considered "white" (Fryer 2009; Neal-Barnett 2001). In fact, black high achievers are even stigmatized by their black peers, while whites tend to gain social status for their high achievement (Fryer

2009). This mirrors larger cultural expectations associated with academic potential and achievement, and the association of academia with whiteness (Neal-Barnett 2001).

Assumptions of Inferiority

Because most stereotypes concerning academic achievement and social and cultural behaviors of racial minorities are negative, it can be difficult for students of color to maintain a positive self-image in the face of ongoing contradictory messages, consistent with studies that show that assumptions of academic inferiority can negatively affect one's self-esteem and self-worth (Nadal et al. 2014; Torres, Driscoll, and Burrow 2010). The majority of the students in this research face negative expectations from others on campus, as Paulina (19-year-old, bi-racial Mexican-American, poor/middle-class, female) argues, "(White) People are always so ready to shoot you down. They don't expect you to succeed. They're just waiting for you to mess up so they can say something or do something."

The impact of negative expectations can be devastating on the psyche of these students as they internalize the stereotypical depictions. They often begin to believe the negative perceptions about themselves (Nadal et al. 2014). For most of these students of color, race seems to trump all other aspects of their identity as whites tend to have trouble seeing past their race, and the associated racial stereotypes. Alicia (21-year-old, black, bisexual female) explains this tendency below:

I feel like sometimes people get uncomfortable around me…..I mean I know you can see that I'm black, so that's not the problem. Don't ONLY see me as being black, you know, I'm still like another student, I'm still young, you know same age group, we probably have some similar experiences, so I would like to not ONLY be black to some people.

The only exceptions to this trend are Asian and Asian-American students, who are perceived to be hard-working and exemplary (Reddy and TuSmith 2002). In fact, they are considered to be the "model minority," a standard by which other racial minorities are often compared. Even though this seems to be positive and complimentary, the model minority stereotype is harmful to Asian Americans (Wu 2002). As Wu (2002) explains, the model minority stereotype serves to reinforce the prospects of the American Dream for everyone regardless of racial and class inequalities. In short, by praising the success of Asian Americans as model minorities, it deflects attention from the race-based discrimination and other forms of inequality responsible for lower achievement of racial and ethnic minorities (Wu 2002).

The overwhelming majority of the students of color in my study are very aware of these negative assumptions whites have of them. Ne'Dra (21-year-old, black female) said, "African-Americans' attitudes- bad attitudes, and white people have these stereotypes."

One of the most important factors explaining student success in college, especially among those who suffer from negative expectations, is support from professors (Wagner and Nettles 1998). For instance, Aronson, Fried and Good (2002) found that students who felt that their teachers recognized their potential for academic success enjoyed school, had greater academic engagement, and obtained higher grade point

averages. Unfortunately, many professors fail to provide this type of support for brown and black students, and often perpetuate the negative stereotypes associated with these students (Tatum 1997), forcing them to contend with negative stereotypes about their intellectual capabilities (Yolanda 1999). The participating students in this study corroborated such lack of support from the majority of their professors.

Stereotype Threat and the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

The assumptions of inferiority facing brown and black students pose a real threat to their academic achievement. This threat is a *situational* danger to the individual's self-image. This danger is situational, as it is not generalized to all of the students' experiences, but to certain situations. That is, through stereotype threat, the individual's self-image is threatened in *certain situations*, such as in institutions of education, where there are negative stereotypes about their group (Spencer, Steele, and Quinn 1999; Steele, Spencer, and Aronson 2002). Because students of color are typically aware of negative cultural stereotypes of their racial group (Spencer, Steele, and Quinn 1999), they often fear that they may actually fulfill these negative expectations. If they do fulfill them, they face scrutiny, and it is likely that subsequent behaviors will be judged based on the stereotype. *Stereotype threat,* or the actual or perceived risk of confirming a negative stereotype about one's social group (Steele and Aronson 1995), has been found to contribute to lower academic performance among brown and black students compared to their white counterparts (Aronson, Quinn, Spencer, Swim and Stangor 1998; Aronson, Fried and Good 2002).

Essentially, awareness of negative racialized stereotypes can impair and undermine academic performance and psychological engagement by interfering with performance on mental tasks, causing the affected students to perform worse when they believe the test to be a measure of their academic capability (Steele and Aronson 1995; McKay, Doverspike, Bowen-Hilton, and Martin 2002). This represents a self-fulfilling prophecy, resulting in the stigmatized student affirming group stereotypes.

Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1967) classic study on this phenomenon revealed the power of suggestion, where expecting someone to excel academically can alter the ways in which others react with and treat them, causing commensurate behaviors. Others have found similar results (Brophy and Good 1970; Wittrock 1986; Jencks and Phillips 1998; Mayer 2002), where schools that tend to place lower expectations on students of color (DeMeis and Turner 1978; Gamoran 2001; Merton 1948; Rist 2000) frequently produced lower achievement and deviant behavior among students of color.

Over time, stereotype threat can prompt students to safeguard their self-esteem by disengaging from academics (Aronson, Quinn, Spencer, Swim and Stangor 1998), leading some of them to actually drop out of college, becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. Some of the students spoke about this, as discussed by Darian (19-year-old, Native American/Lumbee, female):

> I feel like just going off of stereotypes, most people are like, "Black people aren't supposed to go to college. Black people aren't supposed to do this. Black people aren't supposed to do that." And, like, how if they were to go to college, they would flunk out the first semester, or the first year, they wouldn't go back cause it was too hard. I feel like if African-American students aren't doing as well as they think they should, they feel like they're living up to the stereotype, and it would probably like degrade their self-esteem, and like make them look down on their academic

abilities, and I feel like it probably hurts them, because they're like, "Oh, man. I can't do it. Everybody was right. And then they'd probably give up. I feel like that's really bad of our society to like do that, because it doesn't hurt like a certain ethnic group, or a certain minority, or like a certain race group. It hurts like society, like it hurts America, because we have bright young children, and we have people who could be promising in the future. Like, years to come, somebody could be our next president, but because they feel like they aren't living up to what they should be, or they're falling into the stereotype, and they're not gonna apply their selves like they should, and whoop, there goes our next president, or our next senator, or something like that.

Although many recognize the negative impact of stereotyping on individuals and targeted groups, Darian asserts that these preconceived notions can actually affect everyone. This is an interesting contribution to our discussion, one that a great deal of individuals do not typically acknowledge.

Self-fulfilling prophecies of academic failure can also include disruptive or inappropriate behaviors at school and a commensurate decline in academic involvement (Tatum 1997). For instance, the ghettoization of black students (Collins 2009) perpetuated by microaggressions on campus and other university spaces can encourage behaviors and modes of interaction that can be seen as disrespectful, less intelligent, and nonacademic. Expectations that a student might display disruptive behaviors often triggers the same behaviors from that student (Tatum 1997). As Kevin (38-year-old, poor/middle-class, black male) mentions, when others around him accused him of treating another basketball player and a referee rudely, his behaviors intensified to mirror the aggressive expectations. Such treatment from others forced him to conform to the aggressive and pathological stereotypes.

Racism operates in all realms, so it is not surprising that most of the participants reported feeling negatively judged by other students of color. Some of the students explain that they actually do possess and display some of the negative racialized behavioral and communication styles expected of them. They assert that there are some whites who also display these behaviors, but that they are evaluated as if these behaviors are only *part* of their identity. On the other hand, these behaviors are considered a major aspect of the students of color that affect the entire perception others have of them.

Keisha (23-year-old, black female) acknowledges that because some negative stereotypes are in fact part of her identity, she is unable to display all aspects of herself at all times due to the excessive attention paid to people of color, and the tendency of whites to racialize and judge others' behaviors as "inappropriate." Research finds that it is common for individuals to attribute behaviors to an entire group as opposed to situations or individuals, especially when those behaviors are those of persons of color or other subordinated groups (Weinstein, Curran, and Tomlinson-Clarke 2004; Rios 2011). As Keisha says, she does not want to live up to any stereotypes that might further damage the image people have of black women. This places a cognitive burden on Keisha, forcing her to devote excessive energy to ensuring her behaviors do not match negative expectations.

Solórzano et al. (2000) find that this is a common problem for students of color, contributing to an adverse college climate. Any negative actions or supposed deficiencies among one or more students are used to justify pejorative perceptions about all students in that racial group. But as other students of color have described, Keisha reveals that she

is cautious not to fulfill stereotypes about her racial group because she also holds many of the same stereotypes about her own group, and she does not want to become a racial stereotype. She wants to be perceived as an individual, and she wishes that her behaviors would not be evaluated in light of her race.

Microaggressions and Stereotypes

Awareness of the lowered and otherwise negative expectations of students of color is often conveyed through microaggressions (Nadal 2011; Sue et al. 2008). These microaggressions fall within the category of what Nadal (2011) and Sue et al. (2007) refer to as "Assumptions of Inferiority" microaggressions. These attacks, such as the variety of microaggressions that Nadal (2011) has termed, "Workplace or School Microaggressions," let targets know that they are expected to hold substandard careers, have lower educations, and are of lower social statuses. These microaggressions convey that the person's school work and achievement would be inferior to others. For example, as Mikayla (20-year-old, black-Dominican female, track athlete) explains, "People, you'll see them, they are surprised, like oh, you're that educated, you're that intellectual, like I wasn't really expecting that...."

Unlike most microaggressions, some can be overt and explicit. Under the guise of a compliment, this type of microaggression conveys substandard expectations, letting the target know that she or he is considered inferior. Bri (19-year-old, black, female) remembered such microaggressions that made her a bit angry, but to which she chose not to respond:

> I went to a meeting for pre-health students…..and we had to go around the room and say what our major was, and I was of course, the only minority, and I said mine was Nursing. And a (white) girl two seats away from me was like, 'She's black- she's not getting into Nursing School. It's ridiculous- she's too dumb.' And I didn't say anything. I was like whatever. I am not gonna deal with it.

It is not surprising, given the pervasiveness of these negative stereotypes and microaggressions, that students of color also internalize those stereotypical depictions, and hold negative academic expectations of theirs and other marginalized racial groups. Because people of color have usually been socialized to accept the stereotypes about their own academic inferiority, they are also apt to express surprise when a brown or black student excels in school.

Ne'Dra (21-year-old, black female) remembers:

> Black people. It comes from black people. Like, 'Oh, you're really smart. Wow. You do that?' Or, 'You're a TA?', or, 'You tutor?' like I'm not supposed to do great things. Even my own people somewhat are like surprised that I'm excelling. Like you should be doing the same thing.

Ne'Dra's remark shows how deep the internalization of racialized stereotypes is, and how internalized oppression in fact operates. The offender is shocked that Ne'Dra seemed "smart," is a "TA," and "tutor," as if black students cannot possess such positive, "academic" attributes.

These assumptions of inferiority are not only conveyed directly to the students, but their families abecome subjected to this form of racism as well. Bri (19-year-old, black, female) recalls a conversation her mother had with a high school classmate's father at a hospital in her hometown:

> My mom went to the hospital at home, and she knows from the doctors that I grew up with, like their kids went to school with me, and all of their

kids went to UNC Chapel Hill… (one of the doctors) he feels that he's above everyone else. He just acts that way. His kids act that way, like everything. So, he comes up to my mom, and he goes, 'Oh, so is Brianne still in college?' First question. And she was like, maybe he just means, 'is she home for break?' And she was like, 'Yeah, she's doing good. She got her grades back.' (He says) 'Oh. How'd she do?' (her mom replies) 'She did well.' (he asks) 'How well?' Like, he wants to know my exact grades, and she's like 'oh, ok, well she got all A's.' And he's like, 'Oh! Wow! They must have changed the grading scale over there.' Like, trying to like find every little piece he can to put her down. And she's like, 'How did your daughter do?' And he's like, 'Oh, yeah she did OK,' and he just walked away, like and 'I don't wanna talk about it' type of thing. And that, it bothered me.

Although these comments may seem harmless, the message that is repeatedly being communicated is that because the student is a member of a marginalized racial group, they are not expected to be good students. But, not all targets are aware that such seemingly complimentary and benign messages they receive are actually degrading and subordinating (Nadal 2011).

The impact of racism in college extends beyond mere stereotyping and assumptions of inferiority. Marginalized students will also respond to the intimidation and negative racial climates created by these cumulative microaggressions, in ways that work to their own detriment, making it difficult for many students of color to participate, become interested in, and get involved in academic pursuits (Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000; Feagin, Vera, and Imani 1996). For instance, some students have even been compelled to drop particular classes due to the hostile or uncomfortable climate within predominately white universities. Others report transferring to a historically black college (HBCU) to escape the racist campus climate at their white university (Solórzano et al. 2000).

Non-Academic Expectations and Microaggressions

Assumptions of academic inferiority are not the only stereotypes associated with students of color, as they also encounter other racialized assumptions in various domains, forcing them to constantly reflect upon their racialized identity. Through expressed stereotypes and expectations from others, they must learn to contend with what it means to be students of color (Tatum 1997), which involves a host of varied, often adverse stereotypes. They cannot escape race-based assumptions, and these extend to every domain of their identity.

For instance, Astin (19-year-old, black male) describes expectations other students have of him as a black male. He rsays, *"From my personal experience, when it comes to anything athletic, I'm stereotyped as being, you know someone who should be in the top tier, so if my performance is lackluster, I'm gonna get ridiculed for it."*

Not only must students of color deal with negative academic expectations from others, but they are also faced with judgments about their values, beliefs, and behaviors that are routinely conveyed to students of color through microaggressions. Sue et al. (2007) call this form of microaggression a *microinsult*, namely the type that *pathologizes cultural values and/or communication styles* of students of color.

This type of microaggression communicates to the students of color, that they are expected to ascribe to abnormal values and communications styles, and they reveal a presumption that the values and styles of the dominant white normative culture are ideal and that others should attempt to assimilate (Sue et al. 2007).

The students describe the frustrations and pain-staking deliberations they must perform to determine if and how to respond to a racist attack since they know that their response can be construed as 'impulsive, unreasonable, and stereotypical.' If they were to respond, they must exercise caution in what they say, and how they say it. Many of the students explain that they take care to avoid coming across as stereotypically black or Hispanic when interacting with whites.

Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) find that black women are especially vigilant of what is happening in their surroundings, and they must determine quickly if events or statements are racist or not. They must also quickly decide if they will challenge or ignore any perceived racism they encounter (Jones and Shorter-Gooden 2003). For example, Amber (20-year-old, black, poor/lower-middle class, female) explains that she often thinks that her white roommates are racist because they make countless subtle racially-charges remarks towards her. At the same time, although she wants to confront her roommates when they make racist remarks, she knows that if she were to do so, she would probably reinforce negative stereotypes about black women, as 'confrontational, loud, and angry.' She is fully aware of the likelihood that her communication will be pathologized, and others will expect her to act in a rude or disrespectful manner.

Because her roommates will judge her responses as rude no matter what, and because of their pathologization of her communication style, Amber struggles with how to express her opinions, placing an added strain in addition to her already stressful academic life. As Amber explains, communication is frustrating when she herself feels slighted and disrespected, but it is also angering when she witnesses maltreatment of

other people of color. In such cases, she feels as if she must decide if she should speak out and risk being seen as rude, or to remain silent and continue to feel disrespected.

Clearly the angry black woman stereotype, along with other racial and gendered stereotypes embedded in American cultural ideology, produce unnecessary frustration and discomfort for people of color. Kaja (22-year-old, mixed black and Hispanic, female) explains this frustration:

> It's hard almost to say something when you have that type of stereotype. It's like for, being a black student, or something, and you have something, and it's like blown up- it's like, 'oh there's another black student complaining about injustice or discrimination, like here we go again. Oh, like, you're playing the victim.' So it's like if you say something, you're a victim, but if you don't, you have to live with somebody just being racist to you. So it's almost like, should you say something? And I do think that people are just ignorant, and it's- I don't know, it's hard to figure out what is worth getting your blood pressure up, and is it really gonna do a difference to that person. And is really gonna let them know that it's not ok to say that? So it's hard to like figure out what to say.

Michelle (24-year-old, middle class, black, female) also recognizes that her white roommates have pathologized her communication style, expecting her fulfill the "angry black woman" stereotype. She offers an example of this in her description of her roommates confronting her regarding household chores:

> And they (her white roommates) look at me like all frightened or confused, or they think I'm coming at them some type of way, but it's just the way I'm talking. I'm loud enough for you to hear me. I'm being respectful. I mean, and they come off thinking it's something else, and it's not. And I feel like, why do they feel that way? Why do they feel like us, as blacks, that we come off as aggressive, or we have an issue with them if we stand up for ourselves, or we say something to them, like a comment. And I just, I don't think it's right. I don't think it's right at all.

John (27-year-old, middle-class, black male) says that whites also make him aware of the pathologized communication style associated with black men. He finds that white

students tend to respond to him differently than they respond to whites because they assume that his communication style will be stereotypically "black." White students tend to adjust their style of communication to mimic stereotypical black ways of speech. Whites adapt the words they choose to use, their body language, and their facial expressions, in attempt to mimic the stereotypical style they assume John, as a black man, would use and understand. White students' belief in black students' use of a stereotypical, racialized, pathologized communication style certainly makes John feel othered and marginalized, underscoring that race defines and guides much of his interactions with whites.

John recounts how a white friend who introduced him to a group of white students used exaggerated and stereotypical speech patterns and interactional styles. The white student said, "Hey everybody, how's it going man, how's it going man, how's it going?" to the other white students, but when he got to John, He said, "What's up dawg?" and gave him a fist pound. John explains, "It's kind of insulting. I'm like, 'Oh man, cause I'm black? What, man, you can't even shake my hand, bro? Like, come on.'"

Assumptions of Criminal Status

Students of color not only confront stereotypes associated with abnormal and objectionable communication and interactions styles, as described above, but they also face assumptions of criminality. Because stereotypes are often reinforced through cultural images, such as those in the media, the expectation that black and Hispanic males are violent, criminal and/or aggressive is common (Collins 2009). Sue et al (2007) has

identified the type of microaggression that conveys this expectation the *Assumptions of criminal status* microaggression, while Nadal (2011) calls them *assumptions of criminality* microaggressions. Not only do whites exoticize and pathologize cultures and communication styles, but they also assume the target will behave in criminal ways. These attacks let the target know that she or he is expected to be criminal, dangerous, or otherwise deviant.

For instance, several of the black males in the focus groups report that white students walk cautiously or even avoid them, as if they were afraid of them. In particular, they are especially cognizant that whites often seem fearful, and tend to walk more quickly as to get away from them, when they are out late on campus. Matt (20-year-old, black athlete) explains that this is a constant consideration, that he is always aware that he creates fear in others, just by being out late. But, because he does not want to make others fearful, Matt tries to accommodate others by adjusting his behaviors. He explains, "If I'm walking down Chancellor's or something, I try not to like walk up on people or not to get too close to people, cause like people will really freak out, like I don't get it."

In light of the assumptions of criminality of black and brown males in the university these students also monitor and adjust their behaviors and appearances to reduce whites' fear of young black males. In order to avoid confirming racist stereotypes, these young men must be strategic in their actions.

John (27-year-old, middle-class, black male) remembered a typical interaction between him and his white suitemate:

> I was washing my clothes, and he (a new white suitemate) was in the bathroom, and he left his door open, and I open my door, and I'm walking

to the laundry room, which is like in front of his door, and I hear him come out of the bathroom, and he is like (makes "boom, boom" sound and pretends to close a door), closes the door, and locked the door. And, I'm like, "What? Are you serious?" Are you serious right now?

John noted that this sort of incident is common and regularly makes him uncomfortable.

Matt (20-year-old, black track athlete, male) also recalls a situation that was reflective of the ways in which whites often react to his presence on campus:

> One time I was trying to get on the elevator, and some people were already coming out, and the elevator opened, and they got big eyed, and surprised as I don't know what, and they were like, "oh you can come in, come in" (all laughing) and I was like, "you guys can get out, cause like I need the elevator and you guys don't." Like, they're trying to want me on so they can get away from me, and I'm just like, I'm trying to get on the elevator." Matt goes on to describe another typical occurrence on the elevator: "if there's a white woman on there (an elevator on campus), and she has her purse on this shoulder, on my side, she'll switch it to this side…. some people might be doing it just to spite us for whatever reason, they don't like me, or and some people honestly are scared that I could snatch their purse. But, the whole elevator thing, I don't get because if I really want to steal your purse, switching to the other shoulder is not going to save you. Stuff like that makes me laugh cause it's so stupid.

Kyle (20-year-old, black and Puerto-Rican, track athlete, male) shares:

> Yes, usually when you're walking on campus or something, or if you go like open doors, usually like white people will, say "sorry" for no reason, or if you're like waiting in line. I experience this all the time, like I'll be at Wag (dining hall) to get my cup and fill my drink up, and I'll turn back around, and they'll be like, sorry, but like what are you saying sorry for? They say sorry like I'm going to like push them out my way and like choke then and like snap their neck cause I'm this (black guy)…. Funny.

White responses to black male make life more demanding for them at the university. Negative stereotypes of these men are effective in dividing and differentiating them from whites, further removing them from the identity of a typical student, and imposing the burden of accommodating the standards of others. In fact, students of color report more

surveillance and visits from the university police than other groups (Smith et al. 2007).

Such incidences of *assumptions of criminality* (Nadal 2007) convey that all black and/or

Hispanic males group are aggressive and violent. Research suggests that

microaggressions that treat brown and black people as if they are criminals are likely to

significantly and negatively affect their self-esteem (Nadal et al. 2014). To be sure, these

stereotypes are not limited to the campus, as these students are faced with negative

expectations of them in spaces outside of the university grounds, making their

surveillance and differential treatment inescapable.

John (27-year-old, middle-class, black male) confirms this and explains that this

fear of black males is generalized to other public places around town.

> Yeah, I mean like, kind of, like you don't want to like walk in the dark
> alley behind somebody in an all-black hoodie (all laugh), or like go into a
> store, and like look around like this (makes what he called a "ghetto
> face"), and look like sketchy, so you try and like, you to go out in public
> and you try and like not be as sketchy as possible I guess (others agree).
> Cause like others will be like, son, are you stealing? And they feel you up,
> you know. "What you been doing?" Or whatever, you know, so you
> wanna like, I guess you try to dodge that, I guess.

This criminalizing of black males is reflective of images and ideology pervasive

throughout the broader society (Monroe 2005), which paint them as violent, aggressive,

and dangerous (Ferguson 2001; Collins 2004; Smith et al. 2007). Media and scholarly

depictions of black life typically emphasize cultures of drugs, gangs, violence, and other

social deficiencies, so threatening and criminal archetypes tend to define this group

(Monroe 2005). Because they are so pervasive, these men are at risk of internalizing these

negative stereotypes of their group.

Tensions between these males' self-identity and the identity expressed in the media and embedded in cultural stereotypes can be burdensome for them. This is especially true for people with characteristics that intersect in a way to enhance society's scrutiny and contempt, as with black males (Chickering and Reisser 1993; Collins 2009). These males face an intense struggle to maintain a positive self-identity that requires negotiating various dimensions of their identity in an environment that seems exclusive or unaccommodating (McEwen, Roper, Bryant and Langa 1990; Sedlacek 1987).

Hyper-surveillance of Students of Color

The othered and degraded status of these students affects their visibility in various campus settings. While some extant research suggests that students of color in PWIs often feel invisible and ignored on campus, especially in the classroom (Nadal et al. 2008; Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000), this theme of invisibility is not as prevalent in the current research. The various pathologizing stereotypes of students not only result in differential expectations and treatment, but they also create a hyper-surveillance of these students. Because of their pathologization by whites (Monroe 2005), brown and black students tend to be watched more closely and to be noticed more than whites (Collins 2009), subjecting them to tighter surveillance, higher likelihood of detection of offenses, and stricter punishments for offenses.

Matt (20-year-old, black track athlete, male) recalls an incident where he was perceived being excessively watched due to his race:

> In my Anatomy class…I was doing my test, and she (black female classmate) was doing hers, and I noticed the teacher kept following us

around the classroom while we were taking the test, making sure we weren't cheating or something. At first I was like, she's just walking around the whole class, but I noticed as I was looking up to look at the time or something to do my work, I noticed she was like right behind me, so that's the only experience I've had, but you just have to like ignore stuff like that.

This assumption by white professors that black and brown students will cheat on assignments is a common expectation, once again signifying assumed deviant cultural values (Sue et al. 2007) of these students. Mike (30-year-old, lower-middle-class, black male) discusses stricter surveillance in other areas of campus, namely, the close monitoring by campus officials while driving through school grounds, such as the significant phenomena of "driving while black" at the university. Mike explains, "DWB. All day. I've been hit with that a few times, and I know a lot of people on campus have been hit with that, on campus grounds."

This strict surveillance racializes these students, letting them know that race is a major marker of their identity. And for Matt, being black signals that he is immoral, a cheater, and someone to distrust. John learned that due to his skin color, he is assumed to exhibit behaviors that deserve scrutiny, even while driving. What Kevin learns from situations such as the one he described on the basketball court is similar to the lesson Matt learned: they are black males, so race and gender intersect to provide for them a particular set of damaging and frustrating stereotypes. Even though Matt laughs at some of the racist behaviors from other, and Kevin often has a more critical reaction, racist messages can help shape individual self-perceptions. They are reminded that they are black during such encounters because that is how the rest of the world sees them (Tatum

1997), and being male adds yet another scrutinizing dimension to the generalized expectations others have of them (Collins 2009).

Scarcity of students of color in PWIs tends to contribute to the likelihood that brown and black students will be observed more closely and noticed more than whites. For instance, Cognard-Black (2004) finds that minorities in white settings often face more scrutiny, criticism, and performance pressure due to their extreme visibility and physical difference. In fact, some of the students in my study have found that that when there are two or more students of color in the classroom, there is concern over adhering to stereotypical behaviors. This is because, with other brown or black students around, they are not the sole representatives of their group in that classroom. In this situation, the pressure is not only on them to represent their race, and they are not under as strict of scrutiny. In this case, they can relax a bit and focus more on the information presented in class, which is an overlooked effect of racial diversity in the classroom.

Keisha (23-year-old, black female) also explains that, because of the extreme visibility of black students in her class, she and the only other black student there must work together diligently to avoid representing their group in an adverse, stereotypical way. Taleya joked that her status as a student of color means that she is in the "extreme minority," making it difficult for her to cut class without her professor knowing. Others also joked about this, saying that due to the white majority in classrooms, they felt as if they were more visible. So, for many black or brown students, *they* are how race is visible on campus. The hyper-surveillance of these students is commonly reinforced by tokenism (Niemann 1999) due to lack of racial diversity, and their hyper-surveillance is

not only linked to the expectation of pathological behaviors, but it can also result from

their inadvertent function as representatives of racial *difference.*

Taleya (20-year-old black and white, poor/middle-class, female) also believes that

she is excecssively visible because she is a student of color:

> I feel like being a minority student, you're noticed, because if you look
> around, there are a whole bunch of white people in the class, and your
> professor noticed you anyway…..Like, some of my teachers, they know
> my last name because I'm like the only minority in the class.

With excessive surveillance plaguing students of color, they are regularly forced to

contend with stricter discipline. Throughout grade school, black students are more foten

targeted for disciplinary actions than others (Johnston 2000), and are up to five times

more likely to be suspended than their white counterparts (Irvine 1990). Further, even

when students of other racial groups engage in the same behaviors, black students are

more likely to be reprimanded and to receive punishments (McCadden 1998), harsher

than those imposed upon whites (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, and Peterson 2000). Although

instructors might not explicitly recognize their own negative expectations of students of

color, they are many times guided by stereotypical perceptions that black males will not

respond well to non-punitive measures, and that they will require the most control

(Monroe 2005). In fact, research shows that black male students are perceived more

negatively with regard to academic capability than others, including black females

(Ferguson 2001; Irvine 1986; Noguera 2003), and they also receive more punitive

treatment from school officials compared to girls and white boys (Davis 2003; Noguera

2003).

The participants in my study recognize this racialized disciplining. Therefore, while these students must deal with stricter surveillance from professors and other faculty, they also report being subjected to harsher discipline than white students. This is in accordance with research in which students of color face differential detection of behaviors, definition of behaviors, and response to behaviors compared to white students (Hanna 1998; Weinstein, Curran, and Tomlinson-Clarke 2004; Rios 2011; Collins 2009). This has been largely attributed to racialized stereotypes, which insist blacks and Hispanics to be criminal, violent, or dangerous.

For instance, Kevin (38-year-old, poor/middle-class, black male) recounts the incident on the basketball court, where he feels that if he were not a black male, the situation would not have escalated the way it did. As a black man, he was expected to be aggressive and violent, and as he explained, once they treated him that way, he responded accordingly. He then suffered disciplinary action which he felt was excessive, considering the nature of the incident. He explains that the situation escalated and his punishment was excessive due to the combination of his race and sex.

As college students of color, the participants are required to maintain a raced, gendered, and academic identity. The integration of these components is not always easily managed, especially in an environment where it is usually difficult for one to simultaneously manifest these identities in culturally-appropriate ways. The intersection of their age, race, and sex has created for these students a particular experience devoid of respect. The combination of their race and sex has historically been vectors of oppression in the US, markers of violence and aggression within US society. Therefore, while these

men desire respect, others view them as potential offenders, and treat them as such. And as Kevin explained, the initial way in which he was treated by the athletic director incited anger in him, provoking him to respond aggressively, commensurate with the stereotype expected of him. This resulted in a self-fulfilling prophecy, stimulated by the racism of the whites involved.

Accommodating White Standards

Because of the invisibility of many of the inequities within the institution of education, these students of color must contend with a complicated and burdensome process of emotion and social management as they navigate through the institution. This includes the accommodation of white standards and deliberately avoiding negative racialized stereotypes.

Kevin (38-year-old, poor/middle-class, black male) recognizes the extent to which white standards pervade the university, even affecting student achievement. He explains, "I think success is built upon European standards. That's my answer. That's what I feel personally, and that's how it was displayed to me."

Other students agree with Kevin, that in order to succeed in the university, one must avoid fulfilling racialized negative stereotypes. Students of color must be aware of how others might perceive their actions, and must consider which measures to take to avoid these assumptions from others. For example, brown and black students recognize the cultural stereotype that students of color do not care about formal education, and as

several of them report, they make extra efforts to let their professors know that they are serious about their schooling.

Keisha (23-year-old, black female) indicates that because of the assumption that black students are not diligent and responsible students, she and the only other black student in the class take deliberate measures in order to avoid appearing as not caring about class work. She explains that in addition to completing her classwork, avoiding race-based stereotypes is a constant pressure and consideration she and other black students face:

> There are two African American people in one of my senior-level classes, and it's me and another black girl, but it's the two of us, and we text each other every day to make sure we're going to class. Cause since there's only two of us, neither one of wants to be missing. Or if we're both missing, we don't want that to be seen. And I don't think that most (white) people think about that.

Of course, white students in PWIs do not have to consider avoiding negative race-based academic stereotypes, given that such expressions of white privilege are hidden and overlooked. On the other hand, everyday communication and interactions with others requires a substantial amount of consideration for students of color. This is because behaviors, communication styles, and interactions of students of color are often pathologized. This occurs throughout one's academic career, beginning in grade school (Hanna 1998; Weinstein, Curran, and Tomlinson-Clarke 2004).

Some examples of misinterpretations of students of color by white instructors include the tendency for overlapping speech to be seen as disrespect, pretend fighting as aggression, and ritualized humor as literal insults (Monroe 2005). This emphasis on stereotypical "white" normative standards of expressions and communications are due to,

and reinforced by, the limited racial and related cultural diversity in educational settings, and the prevailing stereotypes concerning students of color that are left unchallenged (Monroe 2005). On the other hand, if whites interact or behave in ways consistent with some of the stereotypes associated with people of color, they typically do not face judgment associated with matching a racialized stereotype. And, if stereotypical behaviors are noticed, it is commonly just considered a temporary behavior of the individual, not a manifestation of what it means to be of their group.

The accommodations by brown and black students are multifaceted and require conforming to the normative standards of behaving, speaking, and self-presentation, which involves the conscious, deliberate filtering and switching of modes of expression when communicating in order to make whites feel more comfortable.

Ne'Dra (21-year-old, black female) explains the importance of accommodating normative standards to avoid negative stereotypes associated with her group. She says, "I do think self-awareness is important because a lot of minorities have stereotypes already, and being self-aware, you try to not live up to those stereotypes."

Ne'Dra goes on to explain that some of these stereotypes of black women that she takes measures to avoid fulfilling include speaking too aggressively and loudly, and skipping class. She also describes that she makes efforts to sound articulate when she speaks, and to avoid the appearance that she does not care about her class work.

Stereotyping can impact brown and black students in ways not often recognized, such as when the fear of fulfilling pathologized stereotypes about their group prevents many brown and black students from speaking up or being honest about their feelings in

certain social circumstances (Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000). Several of my

participants explained that they feel forced to spend energy trying not to conform to racial

and cultural stereotypes. These students describe the constant need to consider the

interpretations of whites in an effort to avoid being seen in a threatening or otherwise

negative way.

Michelle (24-year-old, middle class, black, female) describes how this extra

burden makes her feel, and describes that this is a clear manifestation of white privilege.

And, "I don't think it's right at all." She goes on:

> You know, and it shouldn't be that way….And they (whites) look at me
> like all frightened or confused, or they think I'm coming at them some
> type of way, but it's just the way I'm talking. I'm loud enough for you to
> hear me. I'm being respectful. I mean, and they come off thinking it's
> something else, and it's not. And I feel like, why do they feel that way?
> Why do they feel like us, as blacks, that we come off as aggressive, or we
> have an issue with them if we stand up for ourselves, or we say something
> to them, like a comment? And I just, I don't think it's right.

The students discussed their strategies for accommodating others by filtering, monitoring,

or adjusting their self-presentation. But, many reveal their frustration with having to

conform to these standards, and the repercussions they face if they do not. For example,

Michelle (24-year-old, middle class, black, female) indicates that even though she

sometimes presents herself in a manner consistent with negative stereotypes of black

women, this should not negate her actions or intentions. When she does speak out, her

concerns are often overshadowed by the reactions to her style of expression. The mode of

expression and interaction overshadows her feelings, which is frustrating and unfair to

Michelle. She explains that she lived with three white girls who consistently and unfairly

accused her of evading her share of chores, and when she confronted the girls about her

feelings, she first had to consider how they might respond to or interpret what she would say to them. She took time to think through the best way to discuss her thoughts, as to not fulfill cultural stereotypes about black women:

> I've been trying my hardest before I speak to think about how I'm going to speak to them, and think about how I'm going to come across to them, and try to be as nice as possible, and it's so hard. How come I have to change who I am and the way I talk or present myself for you to feel more comfortable in your environment? You know? Just for your standards? And just talk to you the way I would just talk to one of my black friends, you know, over the phone or whoever comes over to visit me. You know?

Sand (49-year-old, poor, female, naturalized citizen from Jamaica), was very vocal about the care she took to avoid conforming to the pathologized cultural stereotypes she knows are part of the racial ideology in the US. She described her frustration with her adviser, who failed to keep her informed about academic opportunities. She believed that he did not inform her about the MA program because, based on stereotypes, she would not be interested in graduate school, and "he assumed I wouldn't even try it." And, as mentioned previously, she did not want to speak up about this differential treatment because she, "..… didn't want him to say, 'well, that's one angry black woman there! Really mad black woman!'"

Michelle and Sand recognize the intersecting inequalities they face as black females, or the "angry black woman." Black women recognize that if they were to express their frustrations or emotions, they would be fulfilling that stereotype, since, as black women, their behaviors and attitudes are commonly viewed and evaluated in light of their race, but if whites were to express themselves in this way, their behaviors would most likely be attributed to their individual personality or circumstances (Tatum 1997).

"Acting White" and Race Traitors

Because it is typically in peer groups that young adults learn what it means to be of a certain race (Tatum 1997), individuals often learn that their behaviors and attitudes are inconsistent with what is expected of them as members of their group. The pervasive racial essentialism in the university insists that those who possess qualities or characteristics incongruent with racialized stereotypes also risk social stigma (Collins 2009; Tatum 1997). For example, they might be perceived as trying to pass for another race or as being disloyal to their own group.

Therefore, the common accommodating of white normative behaviors and standards at the university can affect more than a student's self-perceptions, since it can also affect the ways in which others view them as racialized beings. Because students of color in white colleges are constantly reminded of their race (Tatum 1997), they must contend with any discrepancies between their own behaviors and those expected of their group. Essentially, while many feel forced to make deliberate and calculated efforts to avoid fulfilling stereotypes associated with their race, these efforts can also backfire. For example, if students of color adjust their behaviors, or otherwise accommodate white standards in order to fit in, they can be considered to be race traitors by members of their own group (Tatum 1997; Fordham and Ogbu 1986).

For example, students have learned from their peers that being black means adhering to a certain way of speaking, communicating, and behaving. This is troublesome for students who must accommodate the standards of the PWI because they can be judged

for failing to adhere to the white normative standards, as well as for behaving in ways considered "black." For example, to behave in a manner defined as falling within a white cultural frame of reference is considered "acting white," and is oftentimes sanctioned negatively by peers (Fordham and Ogbu 1986), or "not being black enough."

Astin (19-year-old, black male) also encounters this type of reaction from his peers:

> ….a lot of people- I mean a lot of the students that I was talking to that were black, they were saying that I talk white, and it caught me so off-guard…. but I was just like, how can someone speak like an ethnicity? That makes no sense at all, and I just didn't understand it. I was like so, you basically say in order to be a part of a certain group, like being black, you have to speak ignorantly? Like, I don't- I just didn't understand that.

Marginalization and ostracism from other members of their racial group in academia is not uncommon. Research suggests that in some school structures, black and low-income white students who do well in school are at risk of being seen by their peers as too nerdy or geeky (Tyson, Darity, and Castellino 2005). Others have found that black students experience alienation from other black young adults, as they associate academic success with being white (Ogbu and Fordham 1986; Winkle-Wagner 2009), so black students who appear academically-oriented can risk negative judgment from some peers (Tyson et al. 2005; Winkle-Wagner 2009). This is consistent with the experiences of the majority of the students in my research. For example, Ne'Dra (21-year-old, black female) explains that she typically makes good grades in college, but she routinely hears people say things like:

> "Ne'Dra's trying to act white, trying to act white, trying to be white." And I'm like, so what does that mean? I don't understand……just because I

make good grades, like how, how is that acting white? That's a question I have too, like I don't know what people mean when they say that.

Further, recent research finds that in PWIs, black women, for example, have trouble balancing demands to avoid acting "too white" with demands to avoid acting "too black" at the university and within the larger black community (Winkle-Wagner 2009).

Code-Switching

The constant hyper-awareness of one's identity, behaviors, communication style and environment often creates much tension for students of color and force them to constantly monitor and adjust how they express themselves. Some have learned to adapt to discrepancies between the ways they interact as racial minorities, and their sense of identity and self-expressions as college students (Tatum 1997). But they risk offending others of their group who perceive them as conforming to white ideals, placing an extra burden aside from academic responsibilities. In order to avoid slighting other individuals of their group, while also attempting to adjust to white communication styles, most of these students report constantly regulating their modes of presentation.

The majority of the students in my research recognize such a discrepancy between white interactional expectations and those of students of other racial groups, and they explain the adjustments they make when they are around others of different groups. For example, Matt (black athlete, age 20, male) explains a deliberate adjustment in communication style he makes to fit in with those around him:

> It's a trap, because like if you act too white then your black friends will shun you, and then you can only count no your white friends to a certain extent because you can't really relate like that, and society won't let you,

anyways, so you don't have any black friends, but who's to say your white friends will be with you your whole life, you know what I'm saying? Then you kind of start "acting black," quote un-quote, so you can get your black friends back, but still not too "black," so you can still keep your white friends….It's a lot to think about! And, unfortunately you have to think about it…and, I mean, you're gonna talk differently around your white friends than you would around your black friends, I mean, I just do it naturally, without thinking about it. I just notice it after the fact, but it's just one of those things that's really unfortunate.

After one of our meetings, Kaja (22-year-old, female, mixed black and Hispanic) mentioned that she recognizes that she is more aggressive and "loud" when talking to her black friends, including during the focus group meeting. Randy (early 20's, Hispanic male) indicated what several of the other students acknowledged; that he knows how to communicate with various racial groups, that he adapts to the communication styles depending on with whom he is speaking to. He explains that whites, blacks, Hispanics, and others have differing ways of talking and interacting, which he doesn't mind conforming to their particular mode of expression when interacting with them.

Taleya (20-year-old black and white, poor/middle-class, female) describes this process of code-switching:

I'm mixed, and like when I say certain things, I have like, as other people refer to it, like, "black switch on," and "white switch on….. I like talk different sometimes. Like certain things, they would say like, "talking black," and talking proper would be "talking white." And so for me, I just talk how I talk. I mean, I don't try…..Oh yeah, they say like, "Oh, there go her black switch." That's like my friends- they pick on me……….Like when- maybe like when I'm mad, my black switch comes on. (all laughing), or I might sound a little more ghetto (laughing), but yeah, I don't do it on purpose.

Others also explained that their parents deliberately taught them how to code-switch, for instance, to present themselves in a manner in school so that others view them as

educated and intelligent. However, they were taught that this is not necessarily the way

they must self-represent in all social and home settings.

Keisha (23-year-old, black female) explains this process:

> And, also as a black student, you're taught to code-switch, or hat-switch,
> or I don't really know what other terms they use for it, but you change, not
> really who you are, but you change how you put yourself out there,
> depending on your environment. And I think that's the same with Hispanic
> students, you know anyone (not white), you know, you're taught at home,
> you talk one way, and at school, you speak another way (at home).

Therefore, there is the recognition that students of color must alter their mode of

communication and self-presentation in order to be taken seriously and to avoid negative

perceptions from others. To fit in with white standards of normalcy, and to fit in with

those at home or in other settings, students of color are constantly monitoring and altering

their interaction and presentation styles. Fitting in is especially important when the racial

composition of the classroom or other campus areas is homogeneous, so deciding when

to embrace or to abandon an aspect of one's identity is a common struggle for people of

varying marginalized statuses (Stewart 2008). Further, the need to adjust self-expression

depends on who else is in the area, as well as the racial composition of the group. This

differential need to monitor one's behaviors is revealed in the ways in which these

students are taught to alter their mode of presentation while in public as compared to

being at home. For example, Darian (19-year-old, Native American/Lumbee, female)

explains:

> And when you're growing up, and your parents are teaching you how you
> should act in public and act in private, and like there's a certain way you
> act in public. There's a certain way you talk to adults. There's a certain
> way you address other people whenever you're in public. There's a certain
> way you act, and then when you're in private, you can do whatever you

want to. Nobody's watching, like making sure you're on your p's and q's, like speaking correctly and, going off what everybody else was saying, like there's a way you should act in public, and there's a way you should talk and everything, but there's also a way, like you don't have to act that way in private, whenever you're hanging out with your friends.

This purposive teaching by parents to change the way they present themselves in academic environments indicates the white cultural normativity of the institution. Keisha (23-year-old, black female) explains that the white culture of her university lets her know that she is an *other,* and she feels forced to accommodate the standards she perceives there. This also illustrates her internalized oppression, as she has been taught to accommodate what is considered culturally white as the norm (Dixson and Rousseau 2006).

The students pointed out that they recognize that this code-switching also involves a behavioral component because people of differing racial groups are judged differently for the same behavior (Ferguson 2001). Keisha describes such a racialized double standard below:

Personally, I don't allow myself to do certain things. Like in my classes….. a lot of kids put their feet up on the desk…..And it's mostly Caucasian students that do it, but I would never. Not just because of, you know, the way I was raised and I know it's not professional, but I'm also African-American- I would never present myself that way. I just wouldn't…..But then, another thing is, I don't put my feet on stuff in the library, and things like that, whereas it's very common. Like, you see it everywhere. I remember my first year, I was like, "Why are all these white kids putting their feet on stuff?"

Blackness in the US means that Keisha must be aware of how she presents herself on campus, while, most whites adhere to less stringent rules for self-presentation. They are not judged as harshly for the same behaviors, which mirrors the harsher surveillance of

brown and black individuals within larger society (Collins 2009). As within any institution, expectations, practices, and policies reflect the values and perceptions of those who create and have power to reinforce them (Monroe 2005). The academic and social settings of this white university, and the residential settings, are overwhelmingly inhabited and controlled by whites and white norms (Monroe 2005).

This stricter surveillance and judgment not only let these students of color know that they are pathologized and must adapt to white standards, but they also add an emotional and psychological strain on these students. Keisha (23-year-old, black female) describes these extra burdens below:

> And it wasn't until later when I actually sat down and thought about the painstaking, and the different modes we had taken to make sure we didn't seem like the angry black people. So, I think that we do try to set an example, and not try to draw attention to the stereotypes, and we didn't want to be the angry ones. We didn't want to be the ones disagreeing all the time, and I'm just aware of the stereotypes. And I don't always squash some of them, because unfortunately, I am some of them, but I mean we all live up to some of our stereotypes.

Further, this code-switching is a linguistic tool that enables the individual to adapt to and to negotiate through various contexts of communication (Green and Walker 2004). But, code-switching also has broader, ideological effects. This switching of communication mode effectively conveys and reinscribes essentialized ideas about race and ethnicity. Through this process, a racial hierarchy and a narrow view of ethnic and racial differences are revealed and reinscribed (Green and Walker 2004).

This reinscription of stereotypical ideas associated with race and ethnicity can be seen in many of the students' conversations. When Kaja (22-year-old, mixed black and Hispanic, female) exposes the norms she associates with members of different racial

groups, she also reveals the racial-based hierarchy society has imposed upon its members. She perhaps unknowingly correlates using "proper English" with whites, and below, she correlates using "double negatives" with people of color. Kaja explains:

> You now, at home, my parents taught me not to use double negatives, but when you get into school, and you're around all these people (of color) who are all speaking certain type of way, you subconsciously pick up on it, and you start speaking like it, and you don't really notice it when you're in that situation. It's just all you hear, every single day. And then you come home, and then you know either speak the same way, and my parents would catch me sometimes, but I kind of like translate still.

Identity and the Academy

The immense and deliberate effort put into accommodating white standards, as well as expressing one's self as a member of one's own racial group, is problematic for other reasons as well. Not only can other people of color perceive them as trying to "act white," but their own sense of identity can be affected by accommodating the normative standards. One's identity is somewhat shaped by the perceptions of others, and these perceptions can greatly affect their self-concept. If individuals in the environment view them negatively, this can reduce the target's self-esteem and self-expectations (Taylor 1992). They must juggle presenting themselves in a way in which they feel they are true to their own sense of self, while accommodating others.

This is particularly true in academic settings, as many students of color feel like "outsiders-within" the academy (Collins 1986), and their bodies are sites in which bodily negotiation must occur (Ford 2001). These students feel as if their racial identity is fragmented from their status as students, where race becomes the emphasized aspect of their selves. Hence, students of color oftentimes find themselves not only presenting

themselves in different ways in different contexts, but they also feel as if they have multiple selves that manifest differently in different environments.

Because the norm for acceptable behavior and self-expression for college students is racialized, with "white" behaviors defined as normative, identity construction and expression can be dually troubling for women of color in a white university (Feagin, Vera, and Imani 1996; McEwen et al. 1990). For example, black women commonly experience difficulty balancing their racial and gender identities in white colleges and universities, as they often experience a feeling of "homelessness" upon enrolling in a PWI. They are routinely othered and isolated from the white mainstream of the white campus environment, while they also feel as if they no longer fit in with the larger black community and friends from their hometown. This is an additional burden these women face in the course of learning how to be a socially acceptable "good woman," as they recognize differing norms of white womanhood and black womanhood on campus (Winkle-Wagner 2009).

Even well-intended or seemingly innocuous comments draw attention to the racial identity of black women, while detracting from their identity as students. My participants shared numerous examples, including those below, in which professors have emphasized their race over other aspects of their identity, reinforcing that race often trumps all other aspects of their identity.

John (27-year-old, middle-class, black male) describes an experience that made an impression on him, in which his well-meaning teacher emphasized his race as an

important aspect of his identity. He explains that he was not particularly offended

because she is a nice person, but her statements racialized him nonetheless:

> My teacher, she wasn't really like taking shots at me, she knew, she was
> aware of saying, like "you're my only black student," like she didn't really
> want to say that, she was like, "You're my only…." And I said "black?"
> And she was like, yeah, "black student with a Scottish last name…." (all
> laugh). And I was like, well yeah, you know. And I tell her about my Irish
> heritage, but like I them tell her like how I got the Scottish last name, and
> she was like, Oh yeah, blah, blah, and like, I wasn't really offended by it
> cause like at the same time, she's a really nice teacher…

Racial essentialism and related stereotyping effectually reduce the complex identity of

students to merely that of race. In fact, it is typically while entering the academy that

brown and black people most saliently experience themselves as tokens, and their race

becomes even more salient than ever, where they become not just academics, but

academics *of color* (Niemann 1999).

DuBois described this consequential fragmentation of identity "double

consciousness," which regularly prompts students of color to desire to reconcile their

identities. Therefore, they often proceed to merge their racialized identity and their

academic identity in the course of identity negotiation and manipulation discussed below.

Double Consciousness

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's

self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks

on in amused contempt and pity.

—W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folks (1989 [1903]:3)

DuBois (1903) was among the first to discuss the particular experiences facing blacks in the US, in which they must maintain a positive black identity within a white dominated society, resulting in the construction of multiple selves. He indicates that blacks must view themselves through the eyes of whites and measure their soul by the standards of a world that pities and mockingly disdains them (DuBois 1903), which is what he referred to as the double consciousness.

Because the prototype of a typical American college student has consistently been that of a white upper or middle class, heterosexual male (Morales 2012), identity construction for students of color is oftentimes problematic. The cultural ideal of white as academic poses particular difficulties for brown and black students in the academy, as they try to fit in while being viewed as an outsider who does not belong.

Kaja (22-year-old, mixed black and Hispanic, female) explains this tension between being black and being perceived as a good student:

> I try and feel like a regular student, but there are certain times, when, like this news article just recently went viral- a few black students in inner city schools were just accepted and recruited by like nine ivy league schools, and it's like, "oh this black male student has been accepted to all these ivy league schools- that's so great." And, it is great that he is doing this well, but it's almost kind of like putting this, oh, it's so crazy and weird to think that he can be accepted to nine ivy league schools. Let's put all this attention on him. I mean, it's kind of like negative and positive. It's like positive you know, cause some people might be discouraged, but it's also like, you know it can be done, but they kind of just like put it on there. When he does go to this school, it's like, "this black student at Harvard," or something- it's not, you know, normal or whatever.

Kaja explains that she tries to feel like a "regular student," but racial cultural stereotypes remind her that she is not expected to succeed in college. This lets her know that her race is an important aspect of her identity as a college student. In light of this, people tend

react with exaggerated surprise and praise when students of color excel academically. Such messages reveal that students of color, including Kaja, are not expected to succeed in college.

Once again, this is achieved through various means, such as subtle exchanges and comments, and actions and behaviors which remind them that they are different. Nadal's (2011) aforementioned *exoticization/assumptions of similarity* microaggressions, for example, are effective in establishing this sense of marginalization among students of color, further normalizing cultural and institutional whiteness. Managing the dual identity of college student and a person of color, as an *other* within the academy, is an often draining task these students must undertake.

In the next chapter I explore the invisible nature of the racial and intersecting inequalities embedded within life at the university, and the ideologies and strategies used to reinforce and justify these inequalities.

CHAPTER SEVEN | COLORBLIND LOGIC AND THE INVISIBILITY OF OPPRESSION

"*I have one black friend. I am not racist….no, not me. Not I- never.'*"

Paulina (19-year-old, bi-racial Mexican-American, poor/middle-class, female) describes a common response from whites when accused of being racist. That is, while countless college students of color report experiencing racism, whites regularly deny their participation in it (Smith et al. 2011). This typical white denial of structural, institutionalized, and interpersonal racism is troublesome as it contributes to the difficulty of combating racism, including microaggressions (Sue et al. 2008; McCabe 2009; Royster and Simpkins 2012).

White Obliviousness and White Denial

Even those whites who recognize that racism exists on campus are likely to place the blame on other whites, and even when the offender does acknowledge her or his unintentional offense, he or she often minimizes or trivializes it (Constantine and Sue 2007). Not only are many oblivious to the hidden injuries of racism, but they are also unable to understand why minorities believe racism to be so damaging and troubling. They are many times unaware that targets suffer internalized oppression and other side effects from racist comments and behaviors (Smith et al. 2011). In a typical blaming the

victim fashion, some whites even insist that it is the person of color who are oversensitive, paranoid, or have perhaps misinterpreted the situation (Smith et al. 2011).

My participants voiced similar experiences of denial or ignorance in the classroom and other campus settings. Some also pointed out that offenders often rationalize their racist comments or behaviors, denying their participation in the system of domination, which is a well-documented phenomenon (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2003).

Kaja (22-year-old, mixed black and Hispanic, female) describes this type of incident:

> No one's willing to admit that they're racist, or even to think that they're racist, because it is not a good thing. But when they say something that is racist, and then you call them out, and they're like, "Ughh," (all laugh).

The response to racism depends on whether the target thinks the offender was aware of their offense or not. For instance, Amber (20-year-old, black, poor/lower-middle class, female), explained that despite being offended by racist comments or behaviors, she is often unable to respond appropriately. When I asked Amber why she doesn't speak up during a particular racist incident, she explained, "I don't know. I was just kind of nervous to, I think. I think that was the reason. And I was scared of how I would be portrayed after I spoke up."

This feeling of needing to restrain oneself from speaking out against racism can be very frustrating to people of color, who are aware of the strong possibility that whites will deny or blame them if they speak out against racism (Sue et al. 2008; McCabe 2009; Bonilla-Silva et al. 2003; Royster and Simpkins 2012). These targets must frequently choose between calling out racism and being accused of oversensitivity or paranoia.

Therefore, it is imperative to bring awareness to hidden injuries of racism, and intersecting forms of inequality that affect the experiences and educational outcomes of black and brown students. What's more, the same mechanisms and ideologies that promote differential experiences for students of color in PWIs are likely responsible for differential racialized experiences in other institutions and environments, so it will be useful to recognize and learn how to effectively combat effects of racism in PWIs, as well as in other institutions.

Colorblind Ideology

"Never trust anyone who says they do not see color. This means to them, you are invisible." (Nayhyirah Waheed)

Bonilla-Silva (2013) observes the aforementioned strategies whites employ to deny racism through the use of discursive buffers and disclaimers, which mask and obscure the true character and effects of this insidious racism. He calls this new form of racism "colorblind racism," or "racism without racists." The impacts of everyday racism, or racist incidents that take place as part of one's typical day, which seem ordinary, perpetuate the white privilege, as they deflect blame for their part in the arrangement (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2003).

Critical Race Theorists have long studied the discourse and effects of colorblind ideology on students of color, which marginalize and mask the insidiousness of racism within the institution (Williams and Land 2006). Sue et al's (2007) *Color blindness* and *Denial of individual racism* microaggressions, in which whites deny their contribution to

racism, and Nadal et al's (2011) Microinvalidations, in which whites express their colorblind ideology through various comments and actions, convey colorblind logic in the interpersonal realm. Some examples include comments like, "I don't see color," "I'm not racist, but….," "racism is a thing of the past," and other ways in which perpetrators invalidate or deny the existence of their own and/or societal racism. Many students of color, aware of the racism embedded within these comments, feel offended and frustrated by these remarks. The justifications found in microinvalidations are actually rhetorical devices used as discursive buffers and disclaimers, employed to get away with racist comments without appearing to be racist (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2003).

For example, Kaja (22-year-old, mixed black and Hispanic, female) exclaims, "We could talk about this forever! 'I'm not racist cause my friend is black. I have a black cousin.' Ok, that just gets on my nerves….!" Darian (19-year-old, Native American/Lumbee, female) adds, "I'm dating a black guy." (mocking what whites say) (all laughing). Kaja adds, "Oh, that's one thing I should have said that white girls say, 'I'm not racist- I've had sex with three black guys.'

By denying blame, microinvalidations create a hostile environment, resulting in increased frustration among targets of racism. In order to address white denial or defensiveness, some have suggested that people of color should be more proactive in eliminating racism. Because subtle racism is commonly denied by its perpetrators, some assert that those who are affected by it must strive to eradicate it. On one hand, it is important for brown and black people to be taught to recognize microaggressions, as well as the appropriate responses against them (Pierce 1970). On the other though, having the

targets lead the fight against racism places undue burden on them, leaving perpetrators effectively off the hook.

The participants discuss the burdens resulting from subtle racism and ambiguous racist intent. Some suggest that they are more likely to speak up against colorblind comments if they are not the only person of color present.

Kaja (22-year-old, mixed black and Hispanic, female) explains the benefit of having another person of color around when microinvalidations occur:

> Like, you feel like you have that support system. Like if something is said that you feel is offensive, like against yourself, or like another minority, the person beside you of your ethnic background, or that ethnic background, you're gonna realize- there's that nonverbal communication where they also don't feel like it's right, and one of you guys- it's more likely that if there's more than one person, or two or three people, that one of you are gonna speak up, and you'll feel- like, you'll automatically know that you'll have those people, like those people have your back. If those people try to deny, or say like, "Oh, this is not how it is, you know, this statement's not ignorant, it's not racist," you'll have those other people behind you like, "wait, I felt the same way," because it's hard going against someone just by yourself- not even with like your ethnic people around you.

Sadly, most of the students report being aware of the possible consequences of speaking out against racism. Aside from reinforcing negative stereotypes about one's race, these students also fear the retaliations from the offenders. Because offenders often hold more social power than targets, the possibility of significant retribution is high. For example, Kaja explains:

> But it's like if you're a student talking to someone in charge, an authority, a professor, it's really, really difficult to decide in that situation if you say anything or not, because either that person- that person hold that job in her hand, or that person holds your grades in her hand.

Jokes as Colorblind Devices

"Many a true word hath been spoken in jest." (Shakespeare, King Lear)

Racist comments also come in the form of jokes, which are considered rhetorical devices that function to reinforce difference, hierarchy, and privilege among racial groups (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2003). Most whites overlook these attacks as harmless banter (Burdsey 2011), although they have real consequences.

Most white college students report that they do not make openly racist jokes in public, but most admit to telling racist jokes with friends in the privacy of their residences or settings where minorities are not around (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Colorblind jokes not only work to guise white culpability in racism, but they also can compel people of color to feel as if they must dismiss jokes as innocent banter. The victims of racist jokes are forced to endorse dominant claims that the effects of racism are overstated and trivial because of accusations of oversensitivity and paranoia, people of color are forced to follow prevailing cultural norms and dismiss racist jokes as harmless (Burdsey 2011).

Alicia (21-year-old, black, bisexual female) discusses her perspective on racist jokes:

> I feel like also with jokes, people have to realize, they're jokes. Yes, jokes can be offensive, but jokes tend to be offensive. Like sometimes, we have to kind of take away all the negative that was about it, because sometimes people just like to play off of this was so bad, and kind of make light of it….So I feel like some people need to be like, if this is a joke and they're being satirical, so maybe we shouldn't be so upset about it. But, if people are just doing it to be spiteful, then it's like, "come on now, for real?"…I feel like people just take things, and like run with them, in the extreme direction sometimes, and it's not ever, it doesn't have to be all that sometimes.

Whether or not these students or even the offenders recognize it, making jokes about a marginalized group is a form of asserting power and authority over that group. Jokes are part of a racialized system, a racist power structure, that maintains stereotypes about groups in a way that seems non-threatening all the while they are internalized by the audience. Jokes allow racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice to thrive, with little threat to the power structure. Insults couched in humor allow the prejudice to be disguised as light-hearted and innocuous, making any accusations that the joke is offensive seem overly sensitive (Greengross 2011).

Humor theorists have argued that disparaging humor, or discriminatory humor, has deleterious consequences. At the individual level, these jokes create and reinforce negative stereotypes and hostility towards the targeted group. At the societal level, they play into and reinforce ideological justifications for racial inequality, maintaining prejudices and stereotypes (Ford and Ferguson 2004). No matter how one interprets it, racist humor is neither funny nor harmless. While this "humor" fosters further discriminatory views and actions against groups, these jokes also serve as a gateway to more overt and possibly more harmless forms of discrimination. Overall, these jokes can desensitize people to racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice and discrimination, making unfair and differential treatment a normative part of American culture, and rendering racism more dangerous, and even seen as amusing and light (Greengross 2011).

Racist humor can also impede or even reverse burgeoning progress towards social justice. For example, while some groups that were previously largely stigmatized by society are gaining respect and advancing towards equity, hearing disparaging jokes

about these groups releases inhibitions in discriminating against them again, leading to the view that discrimination against this group is still acceptable. As Ford and Ferguson's (2004) *Prejudiced Norm Theory* describes, disparaging humor creates a normative climate of acceptance of discrimination that obscures racism's effects. This brings up an aspect about humor that is often ignored: jokes are never neutral. Their meaning depends on the views one holds against the group. So, if one holds negative or neutral views of a minority group, a joke about that group likely elicits more prejudiced views and the potential for discriminatory acts. In all, this "humor" is dangerous, as it can lead to harmful outcomes that are presented as funny and harmless repartee, making detecting and combating racism ever more problematic (Greengross 2011).

While a small portion of the participants indicate that racist humor is acceptable, even funny at times, there are some distinctions that students make concerning topics that are off limits, regardless of the intent of the offender. For example, Violeta (21-year-old, female, naturalized US Citizen from Mexico) declared:

> I feel like it's not OK (to make racist jokes) especially when it comes to immigration. Even though I am a citizen, I have some relatives who are illegal immigrants, and I know so many people, and it's like a real thing. I've personally had some people who think it's like cool to say like, 'Oh yeah, we jumped the fence, but no big deal, we're here now.' And, I'm just like you say it likes it's fine, but it really isn't because you don't know how many people die each year, like how many families are here, so it just goes back to not knowing like the background.

In this case, Violeta explains that joking about "illegal immigrants" is not funny, as there are countless hardships, possibly even death, groups risk while immigrating to the US without proper documentation. She is touched personally by such tragedies, while some

are ignorant to the realities behind undocumented migration. Violeta indicates that due to the seriousness of issues related to this topic, joking about it is not appropriate.

Intra-Group Racist Jokes

"Under the mask of humor, our society allows infinite aggressions, by everyone and against everyone." -Legman 1982, No Laughing Matter

While many are offended by racist jokes, some of the students of color also admit to engaging in telling own racist jokes, again pointing to internalization of oppression. Some of the participants suggested that it is not offensive for someone to make fun of their own group, as they are in control of the dialogue and are in fact part of the joke. But, as several of them qualify, it is only acceptable to joke about race in the presence of people with whom they feel comfortable. Bri (19-year-old, black, female) agrees. She adds:

> I totally understand. I feel like if they know you, and- I'm not saying if they're minority and they joke with you, it's ok- it's just, it makes you feel a different way- it's kind of a comfortability, almost, cause they understand, they get where you're coming from (all agree). We're laughing about it- it' like, we understand, but when like some random white person- um like, for example.

Darian (19-year-old, Native American/Lumbee, female) explains that when she is in the company of people whom she knows well, it is acceptable to make racist jokes. For example, she recalls her black friend, Tevin, saying he was "not black enough" to wear Jordans (sneakers). Darian recalls:

> And, I was like, 'No, Tevin, I agree with you, bro, you are too white to pull it off!' I mean it's not something to play about, and it's not something to say loosely, but I feel that if you're comfortable enough with that

person, you can joke around with them, and it's OK. But, I wouldn't walk up to somebody on Chancellor's that I didn't know, and be like, 'You are talking really white'- I would never do that in a million years! Regardless if I knew them or not, like any kind of like stereotypical jokes I make, I just do it behind closed doors, cause I don't want somebody that I don't know to get offended or to think of me in a different way just because I'm saying something. They'll be like, 'She's racist...'.

Of course, there are reasons for telling jokes beyond mere entertainment and achieving laughter, and even the deliverer might not be aware of their own motives (Davidson 1987). Therefore, the danger with the so-called self-deprecating and racist humor is that it is actually representing and reinforcing internalized racism. Or, this type of humor could work as a defense mechanism to alleviate the strain of racist stereotypes, as if laughing at racist stereotypes takes away their power to harm.

Further, intra-racist jokes can naturalize racial differences instead of challenging racial stereotypes (Park, Gabbadon, and Chernin 2006), allowing racism to go unchecked, so becoming more effective. Therefore, the freedom to make racist jokes around other people of color actually reinforces white privilege. While the intent might be humor, the effect is more dangerous. In fact, countless brown and black individuals contribute to unintentionally conveying, and joking about, white supremacy through their jokes about their own group (Sue et al. 2008).

Within quite a few of the focus group conversations, the participants made fun of their own group, while others of their own race laughed at these racist remarks and jokes. They seemed to find it liberating to joke when they were in control of the racist mockery. When expressed through jokes, these stereotypes are guised as innocuous, and the person telling them might not recognize their effects.

For example, Steph (a 23-year-old, female, naturalized citizen from Colombia) points out:

> So I've had like, it's weird because I've had friends who are Hispanic, who are like, if they hear like police sirens or something, they joke, they like, 'Oh, they're coming to get us.' And people laugh, because you know it's like kind of funny, but if like somebody else of another race says it, everybody's like, 'no, don't do that, no.' So, it's really difficult to establish. It's a double standard, so like if a Hispanic person says a joke, then oh it's funny, but if a person from another race does, then no.

By making racist jokes about one's own racial group, racism is perpetuated. And, by dismissing white racist jokes as mere banter, the stereotypes and marginalization of people of color are reinforced. Overall, if racist jokes are made by members of the target's own racial group, some whites think it is acceptable to make racist jokes about people of color (Park, Gabbadon, and Chernin 2006; Sue et al. 2008).

The next section is devoted to additional and overlooked ways in which colorblind racism can force students of color to bear the strain of white racism.

"The Second Eye"

How does one determine if a passing remark or comment is racist, or just racial? This is an important distinction, although a difficult one to make, and it affects how the offended responds to racism (Feagin 1991). Darian (19-year-old, Native American/Lumbee, female) explains that she encounters this dilemma quite often.

> Like people have said to me, and they just jokingly use it, and then I'll just comment- if they're like having a meeting, and they're like, 'Let's just have a little pow-wow,' and I'm like, 'Oh, is that cause I'm Indian….cause I'm Native American?....'

Embedded in the English language are countless phrases, like "have a little pow-wow," that are used without considering their connotations, and without recognizing what is actually being said. Even if they are not intended to refer to a subjugated up in a derogatory way, they nevertheless effectively marginalize and degrade the targets.

Individuals can start to question their own perceptions of what actually took place if a racialized behavior is ambiguous, if others are not around to witness the account, or if their experiences are minimized or ignored by the offender. So, the targets of subtle racism tend to internally scrutinize the accuracy of these experiences, feeling forced to question whether the incident actually occurred in the manner in which they originally perceived it (Shah 2007). This promotes the development of what Feagin (1991) refers to as a "second eye" among brown and black people, who are regularly subjected to ambiguous racist attacks. The "second eye" allows targets to watch for and to distinguish between intentional and unintentional incidences of racism (Feagin 1991).

For instance, Shah (2007) found that female graduate students of color who believed they had experienced racist or discriminatory acts were compelled to question the accuracy of their perceptions of the set of events. Consequently, in the absence of others who recognize and acknowledge their experiences with racism, targets are commonly left with the burden of deciding whether or not they should confront the offender. In general, these targets are usually left feeling further invalidated and frustrated if the offender does not admit to the offense (Shah 2007). Targets not only risk fulfilling stereotypes by speaking up, but their response to racism is commonly construed

as being defensive or playing "the race card" when they confront an aggressor of subtle attacks (Feagin 1991).

Because many attacks are covert and subtle, they are generally invisible, making it difficult for targets to cope with them (Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo and Rivera 2009; Troxel et al. 2003). Essentially, the subtle nature of racist manifestations compound the effects of racist ideology. That is, over time, these cumulative experiences affect an individual's mental, emotional, and even physical well-being (Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo and Rivera 2009; Troxel et al. 2003).

Further, whites tend to have strong emotional responses to being called racist (Sue et al. 2008), so they frequently insist that the target is the one to blame (Thomas 2008). Having the tables turned in this way is a major reason why students of color think twice about responding to microaggressions. That they are covert allows microaggressions the power to affect recipients psychologically and emotionally, limiting their capacity to respond appropriately (McCabe 2009).

Some of the students discussed this dilemma, of having to decide whether to speak out against racist events or not. In their conversation, they explained that a major reason they do not speak out is because whites adamantly deny their racism, making acknowledgement of the offense or an apology futile. Ultimately, speaking out against racism results in more stigma for the target.

Bri (19-year-old, black female) reveals her perspective below:

> Like what if there was a way that would could voice ourselves on campus, and then people would be like, 'Oh, you're wrong,' and then they'd go and like- if we voice ourselves, and if hate was proposed towards us, what if they were like, 'Oh, I'm telling the professor.' (and they might say to the

professor) 'Oh, I said this to someone, and they said something back.' (and the professor might say) 'So, you understand you're wrong, right?'......But I feel like if that happened, then they still wouldn't understand. I don't know. I thought it would, but then thinking, they're like, 'Well, I misunderstood.' And, they're not going to say they're sorry.

Darian (19-year-old, Native American/Lumbee, female):

Whenever somebody says something that's wrong, and you know it's wrong, and you tell them what's right, they're not gonna apologize. They're not gonna say they were wrong, they're just gonna be like, 'Well, they didn't explain it well enough.' Or, 'Oh, I didn't understand…….'

Paulina (19-year-old, bi-racial Mexican-American, poor/middle-class, female) also has this experience with stubborn racist whites: "People are just so willing to not admit that they're wrong. And they're willing to not learn why they're wrong."

As Darien and Paulina observe, whites prefer to deny and deflect blame for racist statements and behaviors. That is, whites sometimes insist that victims of racism are actually "playing the race card," seeking attention or reparations when none are warranted. This scapegoating leaves the offender's status untarnished (Wise 2013).

Racial Double Standards and Whites' "Free Passes"

While students of color must constantly monitor and adjust their behaviors and modes of expression, they recognize that white students, and whites in general, are not held to as rigid and specific standards of behaviors as they are. Research supports this perception- whites tend to be less visible and less closely watched in the classroom, especially when exhibiting negative behaviors (Ferguson 2001; Monroe 2005). What's more, if whites are found guilty of displaying decidedly pathologized behaviors, these behaviors are routinely excused away as exceptions. This is because whites, as a group,

do not face negative racialized stereotypes consistent or comparable to those of brown and black people, so, instead of "inappropriate" behavior affecting how people view them, whites are typically given additional chances before judgments are made. But, for students of color, the moment they fulfill a negative stereotype, their behavior is usually seen as typical, expected of that group. And, the student is often punished immediately, and this behavior is considered proof of the validity of the racialized stereotype of their group, giving credence to racial essentialism and race-based expectations (Monroe 2005).

Brown and black students face race-based stereotypes in practically all campus settings, even during social events and interactions with other students and faculty. Alicia (21-year-old, black, bisexual female) recognizes this differential judgment, asserting that, "I feel like white people get a lot of passes."

Mikayla (20-year-old, black-Dominican female, track athlete) remembers her mother telling her as a child that whites have negative stereotypes about blacks, and that she must always be mindful not to fulfill them. She explains, "But do they have stereotypes against you, yes. Everyone has their stereotype. My mom would say, 'You were born with two strikes against you.'" So, Mikayla was taught that she was born into an ascribed disadvantage that whites do not face.

Others speak of racialized double standards they encounter on campus, including Matt (20-year-old, black track athlete, male), who explained that because of race-based generalizations, black people must work twice as hard to get what whites have. Given that the colorblind logic pervading society sees racism as a phenomenon of the past,

blame is removed from the perpetrator and imposed on the targets, in effect, freeing whites from culpability (Faegin 2000; Wise 2013).

> Natalie (19-year-old, West Indian (mixed), female) explains:

> > I feel like sometimes white people just like direct it exactly towards like one race, so they're like, 'that was really ghetto of that person,' but if like another white person did it, it wouldn't really stick out to them as much, like they were just waiting for someone to, of color, obviously, to like do something, and then they could like point it out.

> Kaja (22-year-old, mixed black and Hispanic, female) describes:

> > I kind of agree with that. It's this connotation connected to black stereotypes. It's like she's saying, like if a white person were to do something, and if a black person were to do the same exact thing, you wouldn't hear the white person calling the white person ghetto. Like, I don't know, 'The white person was acting so ghetto.' I've never heard any white person refer to another white person as acting, I guess, ghetto, but it's kind of like, as soon as they see a black person do something that they see as, you know, ratchet, as you were saying (*to Tomasina, 22-year-old, poor, black, female*)…. 'Oh, that person's so ghetto' (mocking a white person, with a valley girl accent)- you know, it just seems to correlate, it's like nails on a chalkboard type of thing, cause it's, I mean I don't really, the word is weird when it's used certain ways.

Whites have the freedom to act without their behavior serving as validation of racial stereotypes. Yet, some of the students excuse away the racist comments and microaggressions made by whites, as ignorance or jokes and take on the responsibility of educating them.

Davis (1989) reports that individuals, namely whites, oftentimes say racist remarks because US history, American culture, and learned cognitive habits have desensitized them to racism. This racism is typically embedded in words and interactions, but when offenders are educated about the racist sentiments they express, they might be more aware and mindful. Although the participants report that this burden to educate

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whites commonly falls on their shoulders (Katz 2003), white institutions and individuals

must make concerted efforts to take the responsibility from those offended.

Whites are not the only ones who have race-based double standards for behaviors.

As Alicia (21-year-old, black, bisexual female) explains, other black students are

surprised about and tend to disapprove of her bisexuality, while they do not view whites

who are bisexual as negatively. She believes this double standard stems from the cultural

logic that, "We have enough problems, why are you adding your sexual orientation to

that, you know, we don't need that kind of negative rep. We're already black and we

don't need enough problems." Tyler agrees that this is a common perspective among the

black community, and he describes a typical reaction that his homosexual aunt receives

from other black people. He explains that religion and race intersect to create a particular

cultural disadvantage for black sexual minorities when it comes to value judgments from

others:

> I think it's for them (black people) it's a religious thing slash, why are you
> adding so many problems, and she gets a lot of like flack for that, just
> cause some of them are like super-religious, and they're like, 'oh, you're a
> lesbian, and you can't make it to heaven,' and like you're minority, too, so
> why are you adding this issue to it… like whereas they saw like a white
> person, they may not attack them for it. But, she gets more cause she's in
> their group.

In Alicia and Tyler's example of sexual orientation and race, the intersection of multiple

categories creates for students of color different judgments for their behaviors, identities,

and action. Again, people of color do not seem to have the same degree of freedom of

expression whites have, including freedom of sexual expression. Tyler points to religion

as a contributing factor in the stricter surveillance and judgment of sexual minorities

within the black community. Indeed, most black Americans claim some type of religious affiliation (Dawson, Brown, and Jackson 1994), and the black church is among the most influential institutions within the black community (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). Therefore, it is likely that Tyler might be correct in his assertion that religiosity among the black community is responsible for stricter judgment of black sexual minorities. Others have found that black American churches tend to foster homophobic attitudes, often by creating fear of extreme disapproval from the community for homosexuals and homosexual behaviors (Dyson 1996). This is also found among Hispanic American populations, for whom religion also plays a vital role, and who report even more conservative views on homosexuality. Specifically, Herek and Gonzalez-Rivera (2006) found a significant association between homophobic attitudes and significance of religious beliefs in guiding everyday life among Hispanics.

In general, research suggests that homosexuality is more accepted among whites than other racial or ethnic groups. For blacks, there is an implicit understanding that gay or bisexual men should not display purportedly homosexual behaviors (Dalton 1989; Mays 1989; Peterson 1992; Savin-Williams 1996; Stokes Vanable and McKirnan 1996). Blacks tend to score higher on measures of homophobia than whites (Waldner, Sikka and Baig 1999), (Durell, Chiong, and Battle 2007), and are more conservative on issues of sexual morality (Bonilla and Porter 1990), and are more likely than whites to view homosexuality as wrong (Lewis 2003). Hispanics also tend to disapprove of homosexuality, and perceive it to be morally wrong, (Bonilla and Porter 1990). While there is scarce research on homophobia among Asians, research suggests that Asians tend

to have more conservative political views towards homosexuality, and "deviant" sexual behaviors (Kennedy and Gorzalka 2002).

Collins (2004) argues that the lower tolerance and acceptance, in general, of those who are black and gay or bisexual is rooted in the logic of American slavery. She argues that the cultural stereotypes for what it means to be black, and for what it means to be gay, do not align, rendering black and gay to be incompatible expressions of these identities. Blacks are hypersexualized in US culture, with men seen as predators, while black women tend to be viewed as sexually loose. Therefore, being gay or bisexual and being black can be difficult simultaneous identities to manage (Collins 2004), complicating the identities of black gays and bisexuals. Collins (2004) views this race-based discrepancy in acceptance of sexual minorities and their sexual orientation as related to stereotypes embedded in culture and history.

In effect, this hyper-surveillance of sexual expression of brown and black individuals ends up reinforcing white (and heteronormativity) normativity and white privilege at the university and beyond. What's more, people of color often impose stricter standards on members of their own racial group in response to the hyper-surveillance of their group, working to further emotionally and psychologically burden brown and black students (Collins 2009; Johnston 2000).

Shouldering the Burden of White Racism: Educating Whites

As discussed previously, targets or bystanders of racist jokes sometimes decide to educate the offender of the impact of their words. This is because the intention behind

racist jokes can be ambiguous, and many targets assume the offender is ignorant of their offense. Jokes can convey information that would otherwise be seen as offensive because it is guised as humor. On the other hand, when racism is presented without a humorous intention, the response from offended individuals can vary. While there is a voiced fear of being accused of being paranoid for speaking up against perceived racism, as with some, some others prefer to take on the burden of educating the offender.

Those who choose this response do not blame the offender, as they assume the offender to be ignorant of their behaviors and their effects, letting whites off the hook for their racist behaviors, while brown and black behaviors deemed as inappropriate are more harshly judged. This benefit of the doubt places greater burden on the target.

Nevertheless, some of the participants reported taking this approach. For instance, Jenny (20-year-old, mixed black and white, lower middle-class, female) explains that when she experiences covert racism, she typically tries to explain to the offender how their statements or behaviors are inappropriate:

> I feel like it's sometimes how you handle the situation, cause I've had plenty of times where I've had people just go on, and on, and on, and it's like, 'Is this real?'.......And it would just be differently if I just went off and attacked them, or if I said, "Hey, I'd appreciate it if you might not did that so often, cause it affects me, regardless of the reasons why it does affect me." It is definitely important to make the other person aware that it does offend you…. There have been a few times where things have just built, but that's my responsibility to make the other person aware…..I mean, communication is always key, and it's something that both parties involved in that situation should keep in mind. I mean I wouldn't put the blame on any one person per say if A was ignorant and B didn't make it aware. They're kind of both on a certain level of let's be mature about it, you know, let's talk it out.

Other research shows that this type of reaction is common among individuals who experience racial microaggressions, especially among light-skinned students of color (Morrison 2010). Jenny is among the lighter-skinned of the research participants, who also expressed more overall satisfaction with the campus climate.

Due to colorism in the US, it is typical for lighter-skinned students of color to be less aware and experience less overt racism, and to believe that their own personal life is not affected by racism. Perhaps they buy into the logic of colorblind ideology because they experience less overt racism, or it could be that they receive some of the social rewards of whiteness. That is, it is likely that they avoid recognizing the devices that highlight their racial minority status, as they live with various social privileges afforded to whites.

Because darker skin is seen as less attractive in American culture, it carries with it a variety of stigmatizing assumptions concerning intelligence and personality, and other attributes. But, lighter skin, even among racial minorities, carries with it more positive assumptions about the individuals. Therefore, lighter skin can sometimes compensate for low social class, while higher class status can somewhat make up for darker skin, in terms of social rewards and privileges (Hunter 2002).

Because of their higher social rewards, lighter-skinned students tend to be more optimistic and naïve concerning racism and its realities, allowing them to avoid the stigmatization of racism, and to maintain their somewhat assimilated status in the PWI (Morrison 2010). This can contribute to misunderstandings or frustration when other students of color attempt to discuss or to combat white racism, as lighter skinned

individuals are not always aware of the extent to which racism affects other people of color. This is yet another reason why targets of racism might not feel comfortable confronting their offenders, and why racism is often left undisputed.

But, even those who avoid responding in an accusatory manner suffer from the emotional work of managing their reactions. This responsibility, along with the constant monitoring, nevertheless takes an emotional toll on the target, in addition to the consequences of the initial microaggression. Therefore, although Jenny and the others who do not take much offense to racist remarks do not realize it, their seemingly more pleasant and diffusing response to racism does not shield them from the harmful effects of microaggressions (McCabe 2009).

Steph (a 23-year-old, female, naturalized citizen from Colombia) takes on herself to explain to the offender, as if they are unaware, that their comments are inappropriate. She reports that she typically lets the offender know that, "…like that sounded ignorant, or you could offend somebody who, yeah you could offend somebody and you could like get yelled at, or get in trouble, or something, so I try and just teach them."

Tyler (21-year-old mixed black and white male) explains his reasons for educating offenders:

> The smaller attacks do wear you down after a while if they just keep coming at you. But, I think that you have to, cause if you don't educate them, or let them know that you're offended, then they won't know and they'll keep asking you. Sometimes all it takes is you just sitting them down one time and letting you know that it hurts you, that them saying that. I mean if they keep doing it, then they don't deserve to be your friend in the first place.

Tyler also explains that he gives the offenders the benefit of the doubt, assuming that the offender is not racist, even though they make racist comments. He also takes on the responsibility to let the person know that what they have said or done is offensive, and seeks to educate them on racial etiquette. Overall, it seems as if these students are frequently unaware of the harm in even seemingly innocuous racialized comments, as many believe that only physically or overtly malicious attacks constitute racism (Van Dijk 1993). As reported below, Jenny believes that there is a gradation of racism, as if some racist manifestations are more harmful than others, allowing subtle and outwardly benign racism to go unexamined. This exemplifies how microaggressions obtain their strength (McCabe 2009), as even though some remarks might be innocent and unintentional and simply stem from ignorance, the effects remain the same.

Because many do not recognize the harmful effects of subtle or ambiguous racism, they are likely to excuse offenders, or decide whether or not to react based on the severity of the comment. Jenny (20-year-old, mixed black and white, lower middle-class, female) discusses this below:

> So, another thing that, of course the situation or circumstance, depending on how severe or less severe we're talking, sometimes, depending on the party, you can do certain things to get yourself out of the situation….you now, of course, depending on the situation, sometimes there are easy fixes to not put yourself, invest yourself in a situation, sparking it, making it more than it is. Maybe taking a step back and saying, 'Nah, I don't really want to go there right now.'

Although some might argue that this approach to handling racism is inappropriate, as it places an added burden on the target, some have found this approach to be somewhat helpful. For instance, by educating their peers, students of color can better understand themselves and the workings of racism in American culture. They can also become more

assertive, thoughtful, articulate, and can develop fortitude, and resilience, which will be useful in dealing with future attacks in a more positive way (Morrison 2010).

While a small portion of respondents sought to educate whites on race and racism, there are others who believe that whites are not willing to learn more about other cultures, or about the realities surrounding racism. They view some whites as complacently ignorant, and feel as if they conveniently maintain their lack of awareness, and are therefore not worth their energy.

Violeta (21-year-old, female, naturalized US Citizen from Mexico) holds this view, as she explains below:

> Going off of what they're saying- you asked if this has happened at UNC Westfield- last week- I don't know if you guys follow the UNC Westfield SeaHawk (university blog), but there was a comment about- something about immigration, and they brought the thing up, and the girl was like, basically saying, instead of coming illegally, why don't they do it the right way. And a bunch of people started coming and saying- if I'm not going to get my point across to you cause you are ignorant, basically, and you don't want to take the time to understand what's behind it, what's the point of trying to explain it to them? That's when I'm just like, it's pointless. Keep on thinking the way you are because how can I change the way you were raised? So, it does happen here, even if we don't see it on a daily basis. I know there are a lot if students who feel like that.

While quite a few of the students recognize the ignorance of whites in their comments, beliefs, and assumptions, Violeta's impatience shows that, there are different views concerning what should be done about white racism. Some seek to educate whites who display racist behaviors or make racist statements, while others attempt to accommodate racist whites in order to avoid tension or confrontation. Others ignore the offender, and carry the frustration of past and continual offenses. And, there are those who speak out against racist attacks, commonly suffering blame and charges of over-sensitivity.

The response one chooses to deal with racism has substantial effects on the individual, but also reinforces the overarching racial ideology. For instance, by taking on the encumbrance of enlightening whites, by adjusting one's communication style to accommodate whites, and by internalizing the oppression of the racist institution, people of color end up reinforcing white normalcy and dominance. Unfortunately, this effort also diminishes the cognitive and emotional energy these students are able to allot to pursue their academic careers. They accept the responsibility to correct racialized stereotypes of brown and black students, not recognizing that this racism is reflective of larger structural and cultural racism that individuals alone cannot correct. To take on the burden of altering their own behaviors that white racists evaluate as pathological does not address the structural and interpersonal disciplining of students of color, nor the white normativity that many internalize. But, quite a few do not recognize the broader racist ideology and racist processes that work to create qualitatively different experiences in academic and social settings of the university. And, they are unaware that racism in the university is a symptom and expression of the durable, endemic structural and hidden inequities resulting from the way race is constructed and enforced in the US (Pyke 2010).

CHAPTER EIGHT | CONCLUSION

Introduction

This research has examined the meaning and effects of race on campus climate and college life of students of color at a predominately white university. The imposition of racial meanings; the emotional, academic, and social impacts of race and racism on these students' experiences and identity; the discernments of subtle forms of racism and other forms of inequality; and the impacts of internalized oppression among students of color were of particular importance to my study. Understanding these effects of racism and their implications for students of color are significant to the study of sociology, race relations, and education. These findings inform educators, researchers, and students as to how students of color are impacted by racism on campus, how whites and also people of color contribute to this system, and how students deal with their (often multiple) statuses as outsiders in white spaces. The countless overlooked ways in which whites benefit from the subordination of students of color are also examined, as these are important in understanding racial gaps in higher education aspirations, attainment, and experiences. Whites naturalize racial privilege in PWIs which needs to be exposed and understood by creating and perpetuating differential experiences of college life and additional cognitive and emotions burdens on students of color.

My research found that a white normative standard was the norm in the majority of settings and interactions at the university, leading to the essentialism and marginalization, and often the exoticization, of students of color and exacerbating the tension among these students' identities as students and as marginalized others. Much of this tension requires a negotiation of identity, considering the stereotypes and expectations of others and the burdens students many times take on, when expressing and asserting themselves in each college setting and interaction. This effort is often conscious, but sometimes subconscious, and is affected by the racialized surveillance, detection, and disciplining of students. These students must develop a "second eye," or sensitivity to possible discriminatory encounters, that require more emotional and psychological energy and affects educational and physical well-being. A colorblind ideology that pervades the university impedes the detection of racism, and obscures its effects, contributing to internalized racial oppression facing countless of the students of color. These students also experience intersecting oppressions that affect the perceptions others have of them, as well as their overall college experience, college participation, and social and personal identity development.

Overall, these various considerations facing black and brown students result from the normativity of whiteness of the university and in the broader US society, which others and marginalizes people of color. By examining the manifestations of racism in this institution, we are able to explore the multitude of ways in which race affects individuals in unexpected, insidious, and overlooked ways, shedding light on the ways in which this system works in larger society.

Even among the "victims," the effects of white normativity on campus are multi-faceted, complicated, and frequently unnoticed. Unlike whites, students of color at PWIs face emotional, psychological, and social burdens above and beyond those inherent in college life. Overall, the college experience is qualitatively different for brown and black students compared with whites, and these differences are often associated with complicated, unrecognized and unacknowledged effects of race and other social classifications, but nonetheless likely affect the pursuit of college education, daily experiences at the university, and educational outcomes among students of color. The supposedly meritocratic character of American education is negated when we acknowledge the disparate experiences and expectations based on race and other factors.

In this chapter, I review the research findings and their significance in the areas of program and education implementations and awareness-raising. I discuss the limitations inherent within focus groups, as well as those specific to my research, and I draw attention to the importance of furthering research utilizing the voices of marginalized and silenced individuals, as prescribed by Critical Race Theory methodology. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the need for efforts to expose the role of whites and others in racism and in the marginalization of students of color at PWIs in hopes that awareness will contribute to efforts to eliminate interpersonal racism on campuses. This section will emphasize the need for outlets and forums for students of color at PWIs to use their own voices to share their experiences and the impacts of racism at PWIs. I also argue for further research using tenets of Critical Race Theory to critically explore and expose hidden, pervasive, and damaging impact of subtle racism, classism, sexism, homophobia,

and other forms of discrimination. The effects of various forms of domination should be acknowledged among faculty, staff, administrators, students, and researchers.

Review of Findings

The findings of this research point to often overlooked, ignored, silenced, and marginalized experiences of students who are systematically and consistently othered and marginalized. As DuBois (1903) writes, blacks in the US experience a "double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others." While this was his observation of race in the US over a century ago, it speaks well to the experiences of the students of color in the PWI under study.

As Collins (2009) points out, "In the United States, who gets to speak and who is silenced, who gets to lead and who must follow, depend primarily on socially constructed categories…." This is very evident in the experiences of the students in my study, whose experiences in white spaces at the university and its associated settings are rooted in monolithic, exoticized notions of what it means to be black, Hispanic, Native American, multiracial, or another racial minority. In other words, they are constantly reminded that they are socially, culturally, and academically different. This demands identity negotiations, emotional tolls, and distraction from their academics. These experiences vary with race, class, sex, age, immigrant status, and other student characteristics, making the processes of racialization, discrimination, and reacting extremely complicated and intricate for these students. Not surprisingly, they often internalize the expectations others have of them associated with academic and social behaviors and outcomes, and must

adjust their behaviors to accommodate the white and normative standards for expressions and behaviors.

Significance of the Study

Horace Mann (1848) writes, "Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery." This ideology is pervasive in the US, and perpetuates colorblind racism, while also obscuring the actual lived experiences of marginalized students in American universities. In reality, formal education routinely reinforces and reinscribes existing race, class, and other inequalities built into the "meritocratic" American social structure. A principal aim of my research's to expose the myth of this ideology, which works to blame a substantial number of students in the US, and can make their experiences at college frustrating and challenging.

To expose and to highlight racism and its effects from the vantage point of those affects, as well as to empower those subjugated by discrimination, are why I chose to utilize the counter-stories of students of color in a PWI whose voices provide the framework and the substance of this research. As Ladson-Billing (2013) explains, using the voices of the subjugated and usually silenced provides a "contrasting story (compared to the majoritarian stories often used in research) that describes the story from a different vantage point. …not just as a defense strategy but also as a way to unmoor people from received truths so that they might consider alternatives."

Undoubtedly, the significance of this study is found in documenting the experiences of the students of color who must navigate through various manifestations of racism and other types of oppression, while pursuing a college education. I examined the experiences and perceptions of 31 students of color at a predominately white university in the US South-East, situated in a town marred by historical and continual racial tension and segregation. These students bring a host of socio-economic, cultural, religious, and social backgrounds, and self-identify with a variety of racial, ethnic, immigrant, sexual orientation statuses. One thing they all have in common is the othering they face at the university. The students described the nuances of their frequently confusing and frustrating interactions, negotiations, and behavioral and cognitive processes that characterize their experiences, both in the classroom and outside of it, forcing them to devise ways to accommodate the normative white environments. All are subject to stereotype threats and expectations, which are commonly internalized and affect these students' self-esteem and self-perceptions. Often they find themselves questioning the intent of racial microaggressions as well as spending cognitive and emotional energy debating their reaction and response to these offenses.

Contributions to Race and Education Research

This study adds to critical research on the historically neglected, but increasingly abundant attention and focus on racialized experiences within the PWI, and the cumulative effects of racial and other oppressions within a post-civil rights institution. Studies show that research including the voices and stories of subordinated groups tend

not to be taken seriously. While people of color have been omitted or marginalized in research on education, I have made sure to showcase the voices of students of color, using their counter-stories as my data, and to ensure that the dominant stories upon which we are too often forced to rely, are questioned and perhaps replaced by these first-hand accounts.

As Ladson-Billing (2013) argues, the US tends to devalue the role of story-telling in social science, as some argue that this type of research does not include "enough 'empirical' data points or use a large enough sample to conform to Western science notions of truth." Therefore, research using the voices of those affected and marginalized by racism is relatively scarce, and my research is a significant contribution to this important form of knowledge, inquiry, and emancipation.

Many studies on educational experiences explore the racialized and gendered perspectives and identities of students, while I also include attention to the ways in which immigrant status creates a particular type of racism for these students. But, conceptualizations of difference among individuals and groups have tended to rely on broad demographic categories, such as race and ethnicity, which masks the vast critical intra-group differences (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar and Higareda 2005; Artiles, Trent, and Kuan 1997; Artiles et al. 2011; McCray and García 2002), and which typically produces inaccurate and oversimplified conceptualizations and understanding of the target populations (Grant and Zwier 2011; Warner 2008). I attempt to circumvent this problem by seeking intricate and nuanced variations in experiences of students of self-identified racial and ethnic groups, with the understanding that individual experience is based upon

the intersections among a host of intertwining and inextricable identities. Therefore, I expose the ways in which sex, age, sexual orientation, immigrant status, language, culture, and social class affect student academic and social experiences, avoiding the common assumption that all members of each group experience college and race in the same ways.

These distinctions are critical to create programs and policies to ensure more equitable experiences and outcomes for the diverse student body, including race, ethnicity, immigration status, and others, represented among the umbrella category of "students of color." To avoid essentializing these students is critical, as my research shows that these students experience a daily and cumulative damaging racial essentialization from others in the university.

Further, while my study exposes effects of intra-group racism, including the intricacies of internalized oppression, research on intra-group microaggressions is scarce. I attempted to fill gaps in research on intra-group racism and internalized oppression, namely the microaggressions directed towards members of one's own racial or ethnic group.

Future Explorations

Implications for Inclusive Educational Programs and Awareness Efforts

The findings of this study call for candid dialogues about race and racism in classrooms, teacher training, administration training, and awareness efforts for broad audiences. Enabling whites, as well as people of color, to better understand the

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complexities of race and racism is crucial in efforts to eliminate microaggressions in various settings of campus. Informing offenders of both the implicit and explicit messages they send through these attacks is important, as many are unaware of the effects of their microaggressions, or even that they are in fact offending. As quite a few of the students in this research explain, whites are very frequently ignorant to the consequences of their verbal and behavioral racist assaults, and some of the participants mentioned making efforts to educate them concerning the implications of their actions, which points to the need for a more concerted effort by researchers and administrators across the US campuses to create programs and trainings to bring awareness among faculty, administrators, and students. These efforts should introduce what microaggressions are, how they work, and how all actors can avoid perpetuating racism through these attacks. As Astin and Bri express, they desire such an avenue for awareness and change.

> Astin (19-year-old, black male):
>
>> This whole thing is just making me wonder how people would react if, since like all of us have situations where we like felt timid, but didn't say anything, like how would people react if we did, and we continued to all the time? It's just like, what kind of change would that bring?

Bri (19-year-old, black female) also indicates her desire and hope for change through advocacy and activism led by students. She asked, "Like what if there was a way that we could voice ourselves on campus, and then people would be like, 'Oh, you're wrong,' and then they'd go and like- if we voice ourselves…."

What these students need is a safe, institutionalized space to voice their experiences, reactions, and perceptions about race and racism. Professors and faculty should be required to participate in such a conscious-raising process in order to better

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appreciate how race affects the daily lived experiences of brown and black students from their own point of view, taking into account that not all people of color experience race in the same way.

We must, however, use caution when creating and implementing such efforts. Even efforts which seem to a most critical eye to be a positive step in the direction towards racial and cultural equality regularly work to reinforce and perpetuate racial and essentialized stereotypes, and do little to promote justice (Gorski 2011, 2014; Pyke 2010). Given the dominance and privilege that white racism affords them, whites often participate in discussions of race with no real intention of carrying out any meaningful efforts to eliminate racism (Gorski 2015). Pyke (2010) reveals that stories celebrating strong resistant black females like Harriet Tubman and Rosa Parks, for instance, are controlled and filtered by whites, distorting and obscuring the many hidden injuries of racism and of intersecting and internalized oppressions. Whites regularly use stories of resistance to cast people of color as ever-resistant and prevailing, which negates the various effects of, and obscure the perpetual damages of, white dominance (Pyke 2010). That is, if the individuals are able to endure racism's injuries and experience no pain, perpetrators can, and often will, deny or trivialize racism (Pyke 2010). By relying on majoritarian stories of a people's "truth," racism is reinforced and perpetuated under the guise of racial justice efforts, becoming part of another dangerous and insidious version of racism: interest convergence. Cases of interest convergence must be recognized, exposed, and thwarted.

<u>Interest Convergence</u>

The aforementioned efforts at promoting racial awareness and equality that reinforce racism can be considered variations of interest convergence. Derrick Bell (1979) explains that interest convergence includes the various efforts by whites that on surface, appear to aim to alleviate racial inequality, but are in fact ploys that work to advance institutional and societal white power and privilege. In interest convergence, whites make shallow efforts to reduce or repair racism if it serves their interests to do so, while avoiding any real, sincere efforts towards racial equity. In fact, some suggest that racial justice efforts are in fact more commonly symbolic than actually genuine and substantive towards racial justice (Bell 1992). For example, some treat stories of people of color as commodities, only introducing those aspects of the stories that benefit them, only discussing racism in ways that are not threatening to white privilege. This has historically occurred, and continues to occur, in various American institutions and organizations.

Within education, in particular, interest convergence has manifested in various ways. For one, dominant group members in academia tend to respond to calls for diversity in ways that cover up practices that advantage them (Aguirre 2010; Bell 1992). For example, Bell (1992) indicates that some affirmative action policies, even the Brown (1954) decision, was made at a time when the world was monitoring the US very closely, the land of the free, with its racially segregated schools. To maintain its appearance of equality, the decision was made to formally desegregate schools (Aguirre 2010).

There are other ways in which ensure their privilege through diversity discourse and action in American education. For instance, when deciding to advance efforts to promote diversity among student and faculty at PWIs, dominant group members control the value they place on diversity. They might question the concrete benefits that increasing student diversity has on relations among whites and others on campus. They might also ask if increasing diversity is a positive addition the campus climate. These questions and their responses are not free of bias, as the dominant group has the power to assess the benefit and utility of equity and diversity efforts. As Aguirre (2010) states, "it is in their best interest to count only that which is in their best interests," as well as to define the value of those measures and definitions of so-called diversity. An example of manipulation of definitions to benefit whites and to impede actual efforts at any substantial diversity would be to count a white woman or man married to a Hispanic spouse as Hispanic, as the surname on rosters would provide the appearance of diversity among student admits. This is actually just superficial diversity (Aguirre 2010), which gives the impression of actual diversity among the population, without making any substantive changes.

Because teacher training is crucial in recognizing and combating racism and other oppressions in schools, it is necessary that interest convergence be eliminated from these efforts. But, teacher education and training programs, including traditional teacher awareness and diversity training programs, often function to advance white privilege within the institution, tending to promote raced interests while seeming to endorse equality and inclusion (Milner 2008).

While most school faculty are not aware of nor equipped to deal effectively with racism, educating teachers, professors, and other faculty about the signs, causes, and effects of subtle and overt racist attacks can provide a vehicle for change (Valenzuela 2010). Not only is it important that any training, programs, and policies to enhance diversity and racial inclusion and awareness be genuine, but they should include, and perhaps even be guided by, students of color. In fact, the students in the study suggested panel discussions towards this end, indicating that if whites were aware of the experiences of students of color, it is likely that they might rethink their behaviors and what they say to people of color. In line with tenets of CRT, this would prevent majoritarian stories from being the main source of knowledge about people of color, giving voice and power to people of color (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995; Ladson-Billings 2013b; Dixson and Rousseau 2006). This reliance on the direction, perspective, and voices of those most negatively affected by racism would function to transform colleges from the site of struggle and domination to a site for change (Valenzuela 2010).

By allowing targets of racism to share their stories of marginalization and oppression, educators can work alongside students to better understand how stereotypes circulate inside schools, the media, and throughout culture. Quarterly panel discussions led and organized by students, with faculty support, will provide frequent awareness to other students and faculty, while empowering the typically silenced and marginalized students. This education will enable perpetrators and targets to dissect the host of ways in which institutions condition people to adhere to dangerous generalizations about groups (Valenzuela 2010; Macedo 1994; Torres 2003).

Limitations

As with any research, there are important methodological limitations to consider. First, I initially aimed to gather data from several participants over the course of a few focus group meetings, but as with much focus group research, it is difficult to coordinate meeting dates and times with the same individuals for multiple meetings, as participants have varying schedules and time constraints. Because it was not possible to have the same individuals attend each meeting, I was forced to include any students of color who would commit to even one meeting. But, the resulting data reflect experiences more diverse than I would have obtained if I limited my research to only include the voices of those who were able to meet multiple times, which resulted in a total of nine meetings and thirty-one students of color participating. Other limitations included the possible and actual, biases which are common among any research with groups and interviewers. They are related to group dynamics, and I discuss each bias I encountered below.

Group Dynamics

Group dynamics are essential to consider when conducting focus group meetings, as well as when analyzing these data. They are fundamental in shaping group participation as well as the themes and modes of reporting during the meetings (Farnsworth and Boon 2010). Because focus groups are interactive, in that they take shape and are reliant upon the synergistic dynamics of participants responding to and relating to each other's views and experiences, there is potential for various characteristics of the participants to affect one another's responses, comfort levels, and

other crucial aspects of data collection. In this sense, participants are influenced by and influence each other (Krueger 1994; Morgan 1997). Aware of this, I made conscious efforts to be aware of any effects that various characteristics or personalities of participants might have during the meetings. One of the major issues I encountered during the meetings was the tendency for a couple of participants to tend to dominate the meetings.

For instance, Sand, a 49-year-old, lower class, female, naturalized citizen from Jamaica, with a very direct and arguably aggressive and defensive communication style, often dominated the discussion, taking conversations in directions in which it seemed no other participants desired to go. She sometimes used the meetings as a platform to speak about issues not related to the topics at hand, and other participants seemed to have trouble connecting with her or making sense of her contributions to the discussion. Her presence often changed group dynamics and the participation of others. She tended to interrupt the other participants, bringing the conversation back to herself, and usually to comment on something that was not related to the issue being discussed. Although a feature of focus groups is that the moderator has reasonably little control over the research agenda, compared to more structured interviews, focus group meetings have a more organic and unpredictable direction and feel (Litosseliti 2010). But, I did make an effort to redirect and regain adequate sort of control over the general direction of the conversation.

Further, when Sand would reveal her experience with racism in the university, and others reported that they had not had those experiences, she would be visibly

annoyed by them. Sand cited several instances that she asserted were fuelled by race, such as her credits not transferring and a professor not saying hello to her in the hall. When she spoke of some of these incidences, I noticed some of the others looking at each other as if they were thinking that her interpretation might not be accurate. And, when she spoke, she was relatively loud and became more and more angered by the racism she recounted. By the end of the meeting, more than a few participants were noticeably uncomfortable when she spoke, which I assume might have discouraged some of them from offering their experiences. Also, her Jamaican accent is relatively thick, and it seemed that many of the other participants had trouble understanding what she was saying. Having her there, although her experiences were unique, definitely changed the dynamics of the focus group, and likely inhibited some of the other students from being as open.

I also noticed that when Steve (27-year-old, black, white, and Dominican, middle class, male) one of the participants who came to multiple meetings, was present, some respondents who were usually otherwise pretty vocal would become more quiet during discussions. Steve's presence seemed to change the dynamics of the meetings, as he also seemed to dominate the conversations. The way he carried himself and his style of speaking made others visibly uncomfortable and even intimidated to interject when he spoke. Steve is a local activist, and he speaks very eloquently and is very charismatic. Quite frequently, he seemed to make others either conform to his views or remain silent, even if they had previously expressed other perspectives in other meetings. Or, they would refrain from speaking on an issue if Steve began to talk. Steve often made others

seem to second guess how they perceived an experience if his views were somewhat discrepant from theirs. He also typically tried to talk with others about philosophy and/or religion, two of his majors in college, when meetings were finished. Overall, it was clear that the others were not well-versed in the topics he introduced, but it seemed that Steve enjoyed speaking about obscure issues that others clearly were not likely to understand. On another note, it appeared that more than a few of the participants were physically attracted to Steve, as when he came into the room, I noticed several occasions when a few of the women obviously were distracted by him being there, and appeared a bit self-conscious.

Luckily, I felt quite prepared and I was able to manage the issue of one or more participants dominating conversations during the meetings. As Jamieson and Williams (2003) outline, an effective moderator for focus groups is able to reduce group dynamic effects most adequately if she has had some experience conducting such research, is familiar with the methodology, practices the use of open-ended questioning and rephrasing, and has insightful discussions with experts in the methodology in preparation for the meetings. I met these criteria prior to beginning my research. But, one is never certain of particular group dynamic and personality issues that might affect the collection of data, so it was important that I continue to adjust my moderating style for each meeting (Jamieson and Williams 2003).

As the moderator, I learned to thoughtfully guide the discussions while making certain that all participants felt confident to effectively contribute to the conversations. I paid special attention to body language, facial cues, and any changes in participation

among individuals. I took note of these occurrences, and reached out to a seasoned

dissertation committee member for advice when necessary. Typically if a participant

were dominating a conversation, I would try to redirect the focus of the discussion.

Sometimes I would ask if anyone else had anything to add, or I would reintroduce the

target discussion issue, which seemed to work well.

Tension between Participants

I also observed some cases of tension between a few of the participants, which

seemed to be related to social class, or at least perceived social class, differences. For

example, Keisha (23-year-old, middle-class, black female) and Amber (20-year-old,

poor/middle-class, black, female) had very different ways of communicating, interacting,

and presenting themselves, and there seemed to be some efforts by Amber, at least at

first, to conform to Keisha's perspectives. I believe this social desirability bias in Amber's

responses, conforming to Keisha's, was related to Keisha's personality and self-

presentation style.

Keisha is careful and thoughtful with her use of grammar, and would likely be

considered as what some of the other students at other meetings described as "acting

white." Amber was less articulate, and appeared eager to impress Keisha and to be her

friend, but when she spoke about her experiences with racism, Keisha repeatedly told her

that she had not experienced the same forms of racism. Amber seemed to feel slighted,

even offended, by this. For the remainder of the meeting, Amber began to roll her eyes as

Keisha spoke, while Keisha continued to use eloquent speech and perfect grammar, with

strict posture and other social cues that alluded to her high social class upbringing. Amber apparently tried to build solidarity with Keisha, who was not reciprocating. This created some tension during the meeting, which I do not think Keisha even noticed. Because it is not the purpose of focus groups to attain consensus among members, but to gather candid perceptions that might differ among individuals and groups (Jamieson and Williams 2003), that Keisha did not conform to Amber's views reduced the likelihood for data contamination.

Another student who seemed to introduce tension into the meeting he attended was Randy, an out-spoken Hispanic-American male, who was sure to let everyone know how proud he is of his Hispanic heritage and cultural background. Some of the other students who were themselves immigrants, or who were children of immigrants, talked about how they were often embarrassed when their parents spoke a language other than English at the university or around town when they would visit. They also talked about the stereotypes about people of their race or ethnicity that they were happy to refrain from upholding. Randy, however, not only felt otherwise, but he also expressed his discrepant views in a way that seemed to make those with different beliefs feel a bit embarrassed for not feeling and expressing pride in their cultural background. Randy argued that people should not be embarrassed about their family's culture, and claimed that he is very proud of his family, causing some of the students to see this as a sort of attack and to withdraw from the discussion. While Randy was expressing a perspective different than those of many other participants, because he did so in an accusatory and off-putting manner, it made others refrain from further discussion on the issue. Most

times when Randy expressed his perspective, others would remain silent, and their body language suggested they were withdrawn and even annoyed.

Pre-Existing Groups

Another issue I encountered was the tendency for friends to affect one another's responses, or for the presence of a friend to prevent some respondents from offering candid accounts of experiences. Some literature suggests that individuals within a focus group should not know one another prior to the meetings (Reed and Payton 1997), while others insist that working with pre-existing groups is helpful because they offer a social context in which ideas are formed and decisions are made (Kitzinger 1995). Due to the relatively small participant pool, it was almost imperative that I relied on snowball sampling, which is common in focus group methodology (Roberts and Burke 1989). This made it difficult to avoid using pre-existing groups to gather my data. While I do not believe that this prompted any significant issues in data collection, I must recognize the bias which using pre-existing groups might have created.

Another issue that arose from snowball sampling was that Amber brought a friend, Brandin, (a gay black male) with her, who is not a student at the university, but is a student at a local community college. Although his experiences are quite valuable, allowing insight into some of the similarities and possible differences among experiences of students of color at a white university and a white community college, he is not a member of the named population. It is not necessarily accurate to suggest that his perspectives and experiences are generalizable to all black men at white universities or

community colleges, as he has other characteristics that color his views, including being of a low social class, being homosexual. But, since the meetings took place, he has enrolled in the university, making his experiences at the community college significant in that they expose the experiences of a student of color at a white institution before entering another white institution.

Kaya was very honest with me after a meeting in which her friend, Ne'Dra (21-year-old, black female), was present. She revealed that although Ne'Dra and she are very close, she was a bit uncomfortable opening up fully about her experiences with race with Ne'Dra around. It seemed that social desirability bias affected Kaya's likelihood of revealing candid experiences while Ne'Dra was present. She had mentioned briefly during the meeting that there are some black girls who talk "ghetto" around other black girls, but she revealed to me after the meeting that Ne'Dra is one of those girls, and that she finds herself adjusting how she speaks and behaves to conform to Ne'Dra's communication style and personality. She felt as if she could not discuss the issue as fully as she would have liked during the meeting because Ne'Dra is one of those people who she was talking about. Therefore, being close with other participants when discussing somewhat sensitive or personal topics might make the discussion difficult when those friends are the ones about whom they would like to speak, and whose behaviors apply to the discussion at hand. It was a difficult situation for Kaya, as she did not want to offend Ne'Dra, but luckily she opened up to me once we were alone.

For the second meeting, only four participants were present. Three of them arrived together and are members of the university's track team. The other participant,

John (27-year-old, middle-class, black male), did not know them, but was very outgoing and outspoken during the first meeting. But, it seemed that because the three track athletes knew one another, and they had experiences in common, and spoke of some of the same people and events, John, was more reserved than he had previously been. While offering somewhat different interpretations of experiences was common during meetings, the three athletes never did so. Often, one would speak of an experience, and the others would just nod as if that individual spoke for all of them. Typically, the males would look to the female to speak, and they would usually nod in agreement or add to her story. And, John began to assimilate into this dynamic, not sharing his own experiences to the same extent as he did in other meetings. I recall one time when he failed to acknowledge overt racism on campus after the female athlete reported not experiencing much of this form of inequality. But, in a previous meeting, John recounted an extreme instance of overt racism with his adviser. Perhaps John was not able to remember this at the time, but I suspect that "group think" and conformity could have affected his responses in that meeting.

"Groupthink" is a constant consideration during focus group meetings, but can be reduced by encouraging a diversity of opinions and by reducing dominance of one or a few voices during the meetings (Jamieson and Williams 2003). It is possible for participants to promote Groupthink through verbal cues, body language, and other intentional or unintentional means. Therefore, it was important that as the moderator, I was aware of the presence of any of these possible triggers, and that I was proactive to encourage participation by reminding the group that all of their voices are important in

my research. I found myself having to redirect when one or more members began to dominate the conversation a few times.

Social Desirability Bias

As previously discussed, social desirability bias and other positive reactive effects are likely during focus group data collection, as with other qualitative research methods. Social desirability bias has been defined as the inclination of individuals to deny socially disagreeable actions and behaviors and to admit to socially acceptable ones (Zerbe and Paulhus 1987). This bias entails individuals presenting themselves in a manner that reveals them in a more positive light than other presentations would (Chung and Monroe 2003), and the particular self-presentation of individuals depends on the other individuals present during data collection. In an effort to maintain her alliance with Ne'Dra, Kaya failed to reveal some experiences in her presence, producing socially-desirable responses until she and I were alone. Amber tried to conform to Keisha's responses, seemingly in order to develop a sort of solidarity between the two. Steve (27-year-old, black, white, and Dominican, middle class, male) commonly spoke of obscure issues and used esoteric jargon to project his views and experiences, likely in effort to appear educated and intelligent.

Another aspect of this bias involves interviewer effects, another form of nonrandom response error which often induces social desirability bias among participants. Such error is especially likely when research involves controversial or sensitive topics (Ellison, McFarland, and Krause 2011), such as race. Race of interviewer

has been found to influence responses of participants (Hatchett and Schuman 1975; Schaeffer 1980; Cotter et al. 1982; Tucker 1983). For instance, when blacks are interviewed by whites, they tend to provide less liberal or confrontational answers to questions dealing with racial discrimination, white privilege, and other race-related issues (Anderson et al. 1986, 1988a, b; Davis 1997a; Krysan and Couper 2003). In an effort to counter this possible bias, I reassured the participants that they should be as honest as possible, and that I sought objectivity, hoping to gain a perspective only they can provide, making their candidness crucial.

It is also possible that the data collected from these participants might be influenced or biased due to the fact that I was the instructor of a few of the students. Because they might see me as some type of authority figure or someone for whom they needed to behave in a certain way, it is possible that they were less forthcoming about their actual experiences and perspectives, maybe as to conform to the standards for which they thought I was expecting. But, I reminded them that there would be no reward or punishment for their participation, nor should they feel afraid to express honest views and experiences. I allowed them to use pseudonyms during the meetings so that I would not know who they were, but all of my students opted to use their actual names. And, after reviewing the transcripts, it does not seem that any of them sugar-coated any of their responses, nor provided responses that were softened as to avoid offending a white person. I was concerned that they might think I would take their responses or views about whites at the university personally, but I made efforts to explain that I would not, and that everyone should be as open and honest as possible. I also closely monitored my verbal

and nonverbal cues and language to ensure that the participants did not perceive any messages that might make them think I was offended or that might deter them from responding truthfully. It seems from the apparent candidness of their responses and discussions that these efforts were successful.

Future Research

This project sparked a host of questions that I intend to explore in future research. The overwhelming majority of my respondents experienced negative expectations from others at the university in various settings, which is consistent with larger cultural stereotypes about their groups. In fact, all of my participants belong to groups that society has largely and consistently devalued, demonized, marginalized, or subordinated. But, there are other minority racial groups that were not represented in my study about which American society has long held more positive expectations related to education. Asian-Americans, in particular, have been considered model minorities, a group to which other immigrant groups and people of color are often compared. It would be important and interesting to ascertain the experiences of Asian and Asian-American students in PWIs, to compare the perceptions and expectations, content of microaggressions, and other variables associated with racism that might vary from those of other, more socially-stigmatized, groups of color. This is not to say that Asian and Asian-American college students do not face discrimination in American PWIs, but it is likely that the higher expectations and more positive cultural stereotypes of Asians in US culture likely lead

experiences unlike those of blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and other socially devalued groups.

Exploring the experiences of Asian and Asian-American students in PWIs would enable a comparison of the types of treatment, expectations, and likely burdens placed on these groups by whites and others. The model minority stereotype has been effective in obscuring actual instances of discrimination of Asian students, so using the actual voices and perspectives of this group would be crucial. And, although they are perceived as highly capable academically, Asian-American college students experience more negative social evaluations from their peers (Huynh and Fuligni 2012). And their high achievement expectations might create in whites a feeling that their academic superiority is threatened, and their place in the social and academic hierarchy is not stable. These social evaluations and high academic expectations could possibly elicit emotional burdens that work in similar ways to those imposed upon other students of color.

It is also important to avoid a pan-ethnic classification when including Asians in any study, as those who have been placed into the socially-constructed category of "Asian" tend to have a vast array of social, economic, political, and other circumstances and needs. Therefore, this pan-ethnic group should not be treated as a single group for research purposes. But, the fact that many Americans tend to have trouble in, or do not care to, distinguish among pan-ethnic groups, just as those students who are considered "Hispanic" in my study revealed, it is possible that the other students might treat all "Asian" students similarly. This would make an analysis of the varied experiences of students of color, including the various groups in the category of "Asian," important.

Similarly, to explore the experiences of white students in predominately black universities, or colleges in which they are otherwise the racial minority would be illuminating. Similar to the perceptions of Asian and Asian-American students in PWIs, whites are regularly lauded as high achievers. But to ascertain if and how these cultural stereotypes are expressed and function in colleges with minority white populations will shed more light on how racism operates, and would be interesting in the study of white privilege in institutions where whites are the numerical minority.

Another future research possibility would be to work towards better understanding the complicated and complex ways in which intersecting characteristics of students create a unique academic, social, and emotional experience in PWIs. In particular, based on my research, I would like to further explore the unique experiences of students of color who have varying sexual orientations and immigrant statuses. These characteristics seem to add a unique dimension to the types of expectations and discrimination they face. A better understanding of the combinations and intersections of these variables, as well as others, would aid in awareness and inclusion efforts to provide a more equitable learning and social environment for students at PWIs. Also, with more knowledge here, it might be possible to develop a useful typology of Intersectionality microaggression, which is currently lacking.

This research took place in the US South, in the Bible Belt, with its unique cultural and social climate. It is likely that I would obtain substantially different results if I were to conduct this research in a different region of the US. To understand the ways in which racism and other systems of oppression work and are manifested in various

regions, within differing cultures, would be an important research contribution. And to conduct the research in universities located in areas that are more racially and ethnically diverse would be important. It is possible that, in some regions, social support exists, diverse expectations, and other cultural and regional variations, which might make for a different experience for students of color in those regions.

Whiteness as Property

Property ownership provides certain privileges and rights. These privileges apply to owners of nonmaterial property, as Harris explains: "The law has accorded 'holders' of whiteness the same privileges and benefits accorded holders of other types of property" (Harris 1993, p. 1731). Whiteness has a property value, and its core characteristic is "…the status quo as a neutral baseline…masking the maintenance of white privilege and domination" (Harris 1993, p. 1715). CRT theorists emphasize this property value of whiteness and the countless privileges it bestows.

One of the most frustrating aspects of white privilege is the tendency for individuals, namely whites, to constantly and stubbornly deny that it exists. Some cite social class as the main culprit of our hierarchical social arrangement, and others flat-out deny the workings of any non-meritorious system at place in the US. Although social class, of course, confers its own set of struggles, independent of, and intersecting with race, whiteness itself is an undeniable resource. Once it is recognized and acknowledged that race works as its own structuring agent to provide opportunities and privileges differentially among various social groups, it will be extremely difficult to combat

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racism's ill effects. What racist whites cling to is their insistence that they have no unfair privileges. This refusal to acknowledge their privilege as holders of whiteness is detrimental in efforts to advance towards racial equity. Paul Gorski sums up this sentiment below:

"Still, the acknowledgement feels like a triumph, like a step toward a more honest conversation. And that, after all, is the only real way to racial justice" (Gorski 2011).

Of the various privileges associated with whiteness, one of the most effective in maintaining white privilege is the absolute and undeniable right to exclude. This logic of exclusion of "others" in a systematic fashion has characterized and defined the US racial classification system since its foundation.

US Racial Classification System

Because race and racism are endemic to life in the US, race is a major structuring agent, built into the customary way society functions (Delgado and Stefancic 2001). It is an aspect of American life that is so normalized that it is often unnoticed as a substantial structuring agent (Dixson and Rousseau 2006; Ladson-Billings 2013b; Bonilla-Silva 1997). It appears that the perpetrators of these microaggressions adhere to a common dichotomous racial classification system. It enforces an "us" and "them" distinction that reinforces whiteness and English as normative and appropriate, letting racial minorities know where they fall in the classification system: in an othered, exotic, atypical group (Sue et al. 2007). This imposes a label upon them, which further distinguishes them from

the norm. They are not the typical American, but they are foreigners, even if they are native to the US, and they are marginalized at this PWI.

Racial stratification in the US has historically emphasized maintaining a white category and a diametrically opposed and qualitatively different black category. The traditional dichotomous classification system has always placed whites in a normative, non-racialized category, and all others in an *othered,* racialized category. But the recent and continued influx of immigrants into the US from Latin American countries has the potential to confound this classification (Rodriguez 2007). Some suggest that the black/white divide will remain, but the conceptualization of whiteness will widen to include newer, non-black Hispanic immigrants (Gans 1999; Lee and Bean 2004, 2007; Yancey 2003). Others argue that whiteness will remain an exclusive category, without the addition of Hispanics, with Hispanics separate from white and black (Gómez 2007; O'Brien 2008). Others have theorized that US racial stratification will become more complex, with a system ranking groups by skin color, or pigmentation. This would maintain whiteness as the privileged class, and would hierarchically organize others based on their approximation to white skin (Bonilla-Silva 2004).

Because race and ethnic divisions are not natural distinctions of human populations, they can be, and historically have been, manipulated through classificatory struggles. In these struggles, individuals and groups decide who should be able to categorize, which categories will be used, the meanings imposed upon these categories, and the consequences these labels should entail (Wimmer 2007). Traditionally the US has ascribed to a boundary centered framework, which insists upon an "us" and "them"

divisions among so-called races (Wimmer 2008). While language spoken and other cultural characteristics represent ethnicity, these are confused concepts in the US among much of the population. Racial boundaries have become associated with ethnic boundaries, as Americans understand race in terms of skin tone and cultural characteristics (Wimmer 2008).

Whites internalize this classification system that privileges them because it is embedded in every facet of American society. But, its insidiousness means that people of color are extremely likely to also adopt this system that subjugates them. As is evidenced by the conversations among the participants, this white normative classification system pervades the university, and is revealed in thoughts and behaviors of whites as well as people of color (Wimmer 2008).

"People know about the Klan and the overt racism, but the killing of one's soul little by little, day after day, is a lot worse than someone coming in your house and lynching you." (Samuel Jackson, 2011, NYTimes interview)

After listening to the students in my study converse with one another about the numerous varieties of racism and other forms of discrimination they encounter in various settings on and around campus, I have come to a few substantial conclusions. First, white racism is not always purposive or intentional, or at least it is not always considered to be so by the targets of oppression. The students perceive many whites to be unaware of the ways in which they can use words and behaviors to convey fear, distrust, dislike, and otherwise negative, discriminatory and hurtful sentiments. But, and related to another important conclusion, is that the effects of these even unintentional attacks can be lasting

and significant. Exotifying microaggressions, for example, tell the target that she or he is non-normative, and this is often internalized by the target and contributes to their marginalization in white spaces. Racism typically works in ways not always recognized by the perpetrator or the target, which brings me to another conclusion: there is a critical need to better understand the various and complex ways in which racism and other oppressions function in the daily lives of people of color in order to combat it and to eliminate its various and insidious effects that continue to provide some groups interpersonal, structural, and institutional advantages over others.

Another extremely crucial conclusion I have drawn is that there is a substantial misunderstanding and maltreatment of what diversity and diversity efforts should entail in institutions like the one under study. The university under study has announced concerted efforts to promote racial and ethnic diversity among its student body. But, it is not only the lack of racial and ethnic variety that is important in the daily and cumulative experiences of students of color, nor is it the lack of awareness that racism is a bad thing. Jon Stewart captures this sentiment in a quote from The Daily Show:

> The overwhelming condemnation makes it clear we have made enormous progress in teaching everyone that racism is bad. Where we seem to have dropped the ball… is in teaching people what racism actually is … which allows people to say incredibly racist things while insisting they would never. (Jon Stewart, April 2014 on The Daily Show)

Perpetrators should be trained to recognize and acknowledge their own prejudices and the stereotypes they hold. They need to be aware of the subtle and overlooked manifestations of racism that can affect their social growth, self-identification and self-esteem, their academic performance. Merely recruiting more students of color will do little to impact

the actual interpersonal, institutional, and structural processes responsible for educational

and other inequities. So, students of color, faculty of color, and administrators of color,

who actually live the effects of usually hidden and overlooked racism should be provided

a voice and a platform to instruct and to educate whites and other people of color on the

ways in which we all contribute to this unfair and racist process.

Because prejudices are so embedded in larger cultural ideology, many are

unaware of their own biases. And racism is so insidious and affects people in various

unnoticed ways, necessitating a complex, multi-faceted approach. People of color need to

maintain substantial authority over these efforts, and the majoritarian stories that typically

guide these efforts should be replaced by the voices and counter-narratives of people of

color. This will work to avoid interest convergence through superficial and flawed

training, policy, and other common so-called attempts to promote awareness and

inclusion among all students. Dave Chapelle (2009) explains an aspect of unrecognized

white privilege, and the need to educate whites of the host of in which this privilege

works to their benefit. This is necessary in order to effect change. Dave explains:

> Things like racism are institutionalized. You might not know any bigots.
> You feel like 'Well, I don't hate Black people so I'm not a racist,' but you
> benefit from racism. Just by the merit, the color of your skin. The
> opportunities that you have, you're privileged in ways that you might not
> even realize because you haven't been deprived of certain things. We need
> to talk about these things in order for them to change. (Dave Chapelle,
> 2009)

Similarly, students and faculty of color should be taught to recognize internalized

oppressions and ways to combat them. They should be empowered to use their

experiences to fight racism as part of a larger and multi-faceted effort to create

educational equity for all learners. They should also be trained to recognize the ways in which they, too, contribute to the subjugation of their own group. This brings me to perhaps the most troublesome of all conclusions, which is actually a reaffirmation of what research has consistently suggested: racism and other oppressions are extremely insidious and harmful, as many, even the victims, adhere to a harmful view of the US as a post-racial, colorblind, society. Because interpersonal and institutional racism reflect larger cultural stereotypes and ideals, it will necessitate large-scale and drastic changes in our cultural representations of all people, including whites.

Stereotypes in the media, for one, need to be adjusted towards responsible and fair representations. The notion of a colorblind society, along with the majoritarian tales used to support it, need to be replaced by truthful and realistic acknowledgments of various forms of, prejudices and discrimination. This lofty, but crucial, goal is necessary to combat injustices that exist at all levels, including educational institutions and the daily interpersonal exchanges that reinforce and reflect it. Even if whites acknowledge that this system is unfair, this ideology benefits them. This is expressed by Mark Benn, psychologist and adjunct professor at Colorado State University, below:

> It benefits me not to pay attention……. I never have to question whether or not my race is being held in question when I apply for a job. It benefits me not to question that (because) it makes it look like I got here on my own." - Mark Benn, a white psychologist and adjunct professor at Colorado State University.

Acknowledging racism and white privilege is not enough. There is a need for an effective structural overhaul that will bring about real change that will advance a more equitable racial ideology conducive to real change.

Other Considerations

<u>Immigrant Status and the American Dream</u>

Educational outcomes in the US for immigrant children and children of immigrants have been positive in more recent times, as they tend to achieve greater socioeconomic success than co-ethnic students of native-born parents (Portes and Rumbaut 1990, 2000). This has been attributed to an emphasis on respect for authority and family solidarity generally characteristic among immigrant families. These, along with a voluntary immigrant status, contributes to their positive outlook towards education and social mobility (Kao and Thompson 2003; Roscigno 2000).

While education is one of the most important factors in the economic and social mobility of immigrant youth in NC, many of these youth are being blocked from higher education through political, social, economic, and discriminatory means (Gill 2010). Undocumented immigrants do not qualify for any of the aid provided to low income citizens, and their human and social capital are usually extremely inadequate for helping their children attain access to education. Many times, the children must drop out of high school to help the family afford living expenses, and the situation is exacerbated by the excessively low wages offered to undocumented immigrants. But, even those with legal status face significant challenges, including the lack of adequate education in their home country and poor English skills, and trouble securing access to health care, educational opportunities, safe neighborhoods, and other resources.

This poverty and marginalization of most Hispanic immigrants, documented and undocumented, is associated with higher rates of crime and violence, alcohol and drug

abuse, disease, and intergroup conflict (Gill 2010). Many lack human capital essential in realizing the American Dream and to guide their children to do the same.

Although K-12 education is guaranteed to all students in NC by law, regardless of immigrant status, access to higher education is not. Since 2004, all 16 universities and most community colleges in NC allowed undocumented immigrants to enroll, but they must pay out-of-state tuition. Because of economic hardships facing a large portion of immigrants, and ineligibility for public assistance or educational loans, this impedes a large number of these children from taking advantage of this opportunity. And, a great deal of immigrant youth has trouble in American high school, with its cultural and social differences, as compared to schooling in their native countries. This, combined with ridicule from American students, makes it increasingly difficult for them to consider attending or to prepare for college. They are frequently unmotivated and deterred from aspiring to a college education due to the stresses of the financial burden of attending college, fear of deportation, and pressure to attain good grades. Lack of social support from the institution and the government have exacerbated the struggles countless immigrant youth face in the US and in NC (Gill 2010). For these reasons, the large influx of immigrant youth in North Carolina does not translate proportionately to a corresponding increase in immigrant attendance at UNC Westfield.

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BIOGRAPHY

Abby Reiter received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Virginia in 2002. She went on to receive her Master of Arts in Public Sociology at the University of North Carolina Wilmington in 2009. She earned her PhD in Sociology at George Mason University in 2016. She has taught Sociology courses at multiple institutions, and pursues research devoted to social justice. Her main areas of expertise and interest are race and racial inequality, gender issues, and interpersonal discrimination. She devotes time and energy to learning more about how various oppressions work, and to promoting awareness of, and pursuing an end to, these systems.

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[1] Respondents' social class and other demographic characteristics reflect self-reported categorizations.