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Racial Microaggressions Within White Spaces: Experiences and Mental Health Consequences Among Black Students And Faculty

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by

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ABSTRACT

Racial microaggressions are daily verbal and nonverbal injustices toward people of color. They are viewed as subtle forms of racism and racial discrimination, that take the form of micro-assaults, micro-insults, and micro-invalidations. While people of color, especially Black people can experience racial microaggressions within any social space, microaggressions are more likely to occur in predominantly white spaces. Prior research has shown Black students and faculty at predominantly white institutions experience racial microaggressions and their effects, including physical and mental health. school and work outcomes, and overall well-being. However, little research shows the effect of both populations at the same institution. This research is important for understanding the similarities and differences between the two groups at the same institution, and to better direct resources that will enable Black students and faculty to successfully navigate the institution. Using 18 in-depth semi-structured interviews, this dissertation captures the experiences and mental health consequences of Black students and faculty experiencing racial microaggressions at a large, predominately white, private university in the Southeast United States. Additionally, this study uses racial battle fatigue and critical race theory to explore educational and work experiences and analyzes the impact of racial microaggressions and associated mental health for students and faculty, respectively. These findings reveal similar themes to previous literature surrounding the effects of racial microaggressions on Black students and faculty at PWIs, while also highlighting new themes such as powerlessness and feeling unwanted and experiences from both groups and showcasing the similarities of such experiences by students and faculty at the same institution.

INDEX WORDS: Racial microaggressions, Black students, Black faculty, Mental health, Predominantly white institutions, Critical race theory

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the following:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Microaggressions are defined as, daily and subtle forms of racism towards people of color (Amos 2020; Brown 2019; Franklin 2019; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Sue et al. 2011; Torres-Harding, Torres, and Yeo 2020). They can be in the form of violence, such as micro-assaults and verbal attacks (i.e., micro-insults and micro-invalidations), or subconsciously formed stereotypes (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Nadal et al. 2014; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). Microaggressions are often negative stereotypes geared toward people of color (Miles, Brockman, and Naphan-Kingery 2020). Themes of microaggressions include the following: meritocracy, pathologizing communication styles and cultural values, cultural and ethnic insensitivity, ascriptions of intelligence, and being viewed as second-class citizens (Brown 2019).

Meritocracy is the idea that the harder you work, you will succeed within your work, which is not always the case (Brown 2019; Nadal et al. 2014). Black people have experienced working twice as hard to receive half the recognition as their White peers (Miles et al. 2020; Peteet, Montgomery, and Weekes 2015). Pathologizing communication styles and cultural values, as well as cultural and ethnic insensitivity, makes people of color's racial/ethnic background, history, and culture secondary to their White peers (Brown 2019; Endo 2015; Hill 2019; Nadal et al. 2014; Pizarro and Kohli 2020). Ascription of intelligence as a microaggression can be harmful because people of color constantly have to prove their value and intelligence, which can lead to imposter syndrome within academia (Brown 2019; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Nadal et al. 2014). Lastly, racial microaggressions can make people of color feel isolated and like second-class citizens within their country (Amos 2020; Brown 2019; Jayakumar et al. 2009; Kohli 2018; Rodriguez-Mojica, Rodela, and Ott 2020).

While microaggressions can impact people of color in similar aspects, there are race-specific microaggressions that Black, Latinx, and Asian American people experience differently. Black people have experienced being labeled as aggressive, unable to get along with others within the workplace, the angry Black woman narrative, and labeled as problematic (Arnold, Crawford, and Khalifa 2016; Grissom, Kern, and Rodriguez 2015; Newton 2023). Latinx people often experience microaggressions due to their bilingual background. Bilingualism has been deemed "un-American" and un-prestigious by White people, which reinforces the microaggression theme of being a second-class citizen (Amos 2020; Bernal 2002). Also, Asian American people have the lingering model minority stereotype, which places high levels of pressure on them to be perfect in every aspect of life (e.g., academically, socially, emotionally, etc.) (Law et al. 2019; Ochoa 2013). In addition to physical health issues (e.g., high blood pressure and obesity), microaggressions can also lead to mental health issues, such as elevated stress levels, depressive symptoms, anxiety, etc. (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Lilly et al. 2018; Lui, Espinosa, and Anglin 2022; McGee and Stovall 2015; Nadal et al. 2014; Sue et al. 2011).

Critical race theory can further explain why microaggressions are so prevalent within predominantly white institutions (Arnold et al. 2016). Within critical race theory, White people have had minimal effort and motivation to eradicate racism and discrimination within institutions (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). This results in placing people of color in an inferior role within predominantly white institutions and making them feel like second-class citizens (a major theme of microaggressions as previously stated) (Arnold et al. 2016; Bernal 2002). According to critical race theory, White people cannot understand the extent of harm that microaggressions have on people of color (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Considering predominantly white institutions were built without people of color in mind (Collins 2000), they were constructed with only

White males in mind (Newton 2023), this has led to people of color feeling out of place on campus and within classrooms (Collins 2000). All unmarked spaces were created for White men, and because it is presumed as the norm, this allows and supports racism to function (Newton 2023). Even the indirect symbols of higher learning, such as schools built with white pillars and ivory towers symbolically place White people in higher standing than people of color (Newton 2023).

Predominantly white institutions have implemented racial diversity task forces and implicit bias training to combat racism and racial microaggressions (Applebaum 2019). Presumably, the performative purpose of task forces and implicit bias training is to eradicate race/ethnic discrimination and disparities, which were (and are) found within these institutions (Applebaum 2019; Reinholz, Reid, and Shah 2022). For example, many USG institutions' racial equity plans highlight the urgency to address equity and diversity issues faced within the institution by mandating all faculty and administration to partake in implicit bias training (Georgia State University 2020). While implicit bias training can be impactful, racism, even as subtle as microaggressions, still runs rampant among these universities (Applebaum 2019). Racial diversity task forces fail to realize that students and faculty of color are navigating in predominantly white spaces, which were not designed with them in mind (Childs 2019; Newton 2023). The inclusion of people of color within predominantly white spaces and leadership roles is a start; however, there need to be systemic changes to retain students and faculty of color within these institutions (Bell 2021; Goffman 1959). Also, several members of these racial diversity task forces often do not recognize their implicit biases toward students and faculty of color, while they have mastered communicative gestures and tactics to make everyone feel respected and valued (Applebaum 2019). Yet, around their White colleagues and behind closed

doors, they have been known to display different behaviors (Goffman 1959). Racial microaggressions and racism have been engrained within these institutions, and unfortunately, the task forces and training seldom lead to long-term changes (Applebaum 2019; Bell 2021; Reinholz et al. 2022).

While task forces and trainings are becoming more available within institutions, people of color have used various adaptive and maladaptive ways to cope with microaggressions like self-control, confronting racism, seeking mentorship, self-criticism, withdrawal, stress, etc. (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Kohli 2018; McGee and Stovall 2015; Pearce 2019; Sanchez et al. 2018). Research has stated various coping mechanisms such as activism, familial comfort and support, and humor (Endo 2015; Franklin 2019; Payton, Yarger, and Pinter 2018). One way for predominantly white institutions to combat microaggressions are by creating safe spaces for students and faculty of color (Pittman 2012). Research has shown how safe and proclaimed social and academic spaces for students of color can act as sanctuaries on campuses (Hernández and Villodas 2020). These spaces can be racial/ethnic student organizations, classes, etc. Serving as a sanctuary, these spaces can empower students of color by adapting positive coping mechanisms against racial microaggressions, validating and strengthening their racial/ethnic identities, establishing community connectivity, and dismantling any prior notions of imposter syndrome (Haskins et al. 2019; Hernández and Villodas 2020).

While racial microaggressions can impact all people of color, the objective of this study is to explore the racial microaggressions Black students and faculty have experienced at a PWI and the impact on mental health. By using, racial battle fatigue and critical race theory as the theoretical frameworks this study helps fill in the gap of literature on the impact of racism on the mental health of Black students and Black faculty at a PWI. This work is important because it

not only demonstrates the negative personal impact on Black faculty; it also helps demonstrate their racial battle fatigue of the ‘Black tax’ at PWIs. Additionally, the racism embedded within classrooms and on campus inform how Black undergraduates manage racial battle fatigue and microaggressions. Overall, this study examines how both Black faculty and Black undergraduate students’ mental health and lived experiences are shaped by racism and microaggressions on a white campus.

1.1 Study Significance

This study focused on Black students' and faculty' experiences of racial microaggressions on campus and within the classroom. Prior research on racial microaggressions focused on specific groups of people experiencing racial microaggressions, such as Black female students, Black faculty, Black medical students, etc. However, this study helped fill in the gap of any connections between how Black students experienced racial microaggressions and how Black faculty experienced racial microaggressions at the same institution. Using 18 in-depth interviews with 11 students and 7 faculty, this study analyzed similarities and differences between the experiences of students and faculty at the institution. In addition, this study examined the effects of racial microaggressions on students who attend a PWI and faculty who work at a PWI that prides itself on being diverse and inclusive on campus and within the classroom. This study addressed the following research questions: (1) How do Black students experience racial microaggressions at a predominantly white institution? (2) How do Black faculty navigate racial microaggressions inside and outside the classroom? (3) How do racial microaggressions impact Black students’ college experiences on campus? (4) How do racial microaggressions inform Black faculty's work experience? (5) How do racial microaggressions affect the mental health of

Black students and faculty? (6) How does gender shape the lived experiences of racial microaggressions of Black students and faculty?

1.2 Theoretical Frameworks

Racial microaggressions can be further explored through two theoretical frameworks: racial battle fatigue and critical race theory. These theoretical frameworks will help explain racial microaggressions and their impact on Black students and faculty. This study focused on racial battle fatigue and critical race theory to answer the research questions.

1.2.1 Racial Battle Fatigue

Daily microaggressions can lead to racial battle fatigue (RBF), which is defined as emotional, physiological, and psychological distress caused by recurring race-based discrimination and occurrences (Arnold et al. 2016; Corbin, Smith, and Garcia 2018; Franklin 2019; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Lilly et al. 2018; Pizarro and Kohli 2020). Social-psychological and behavioral stress responses from RBF include anger, physical avoidance, impatience, poor school/work performance, exhaustion, psychological and emotional withdrawal, anger, escapism (e.g., drug or alcohol use), depression, anxiety, and acceptance of racist ascriptions (Arnold et al. 2016; Corbin et al. 2018; Franklin 2019; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Lilly et al. 2018; Pizarro and Kohli 2020). RBF can also cause physical symptoms and ailments such as sickness, headaches, elevated blood pressure, trembling, jumpiness, chronic pain, pounding heartbeat, and an overall weakened immune system (Arnold et al. 2016; Franklin 2019). As a result of microaggressions and RBF, Black students and faculty may lose their confidence, question their school or life’s career work and worth, worsen or develop health problems, deal with various stress factors, and may experience excessive coping (Arnold et al. 2016). Also, health effects from long-term exposure to microaggressions can not only be

detrimental to physical and emotional health but the psychological well-being of people (Franklin 2019; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). In predominantly white institutions, Black students and faculty may be experiencing racial battle fatigue, which can be seen through their physical and mental health. This study used racial battle fatigue to examine if Black students and faculty within the predominantly white institution for this research study experienced this form of distress and the impact on their mental health, as well as their educational and work experiences.

1.2.2 Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory analyzes and restructures the relationship between racism, race, and power within institutions (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Critical race theory has five main tenets: 1) interest convergence/material determinism, 2) difficulties addressing racism, 3) differential racialization, 4) social construction thesis, and 5) intersectionality and antiessentialism (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). This study will utilize three of the five critical race theory tenets (i.e., interest convergence, difficulties addressing racism, and intersectionality) to address the research questions. Interest convergence is when the incentive for White people to eradicate racism within institutions is minimal (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Within predominantly white institutions, with the unintentional focus being on White students and faculty, disrupting a system that was created for them does not appear to be a high priority (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Due to the creation of predominantly white institutions, White leadership may have difficulties in addressing racism on campus and within classrooms that Black students and faculty may experience (Collins 2000). Since White people have difficulties understanding the experiences of Black people, especially around racism and discrimination, there are challenges in disrupting the status quo (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). For example, White people have subconsciously used white habitus as a shield from racism and non-white people within predominantly white

institutions. White habitus is a racialized and socialized process that accustoms White people to specific feelings, emotions, and perceptions of different races (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Burke 2012). Within white habitus, White students and faculty live in a space where their views, senses, and cognitions are united through their race (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Racial solidarity is created among White students and faculty on predominantly white campuses, which gives them a sense of belonging, yet negative stereotypes are created around non-whites (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Burke 2012). White habitus in PWIs perpetuates prejudice and discrimination toward Black students and faculty and enforces privileges for their White peers and colleagues (Burke 2012).

Whiteness marginalizes Blacks in all white spaces, which leads to double consciousness. Double consciousness is defined as the "sense of always looking at oneself 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 1904:9). Through double consciousness, Black students and faculty are forced to see themselves through the lens of White students and faculty in PWIs (DuBois 1904). For Black students and faculty, there are challenges in navigating campus and the classroom as both Black and American, notably when negative stereotypes and racial microaggressions are heard daily (DuBois 1904).

Since race plays a part in everyday life and interactions, Black people may experience racial microaggressions and racism daily within predominantly white institutions (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Critical race theorists acknowledge how discrimination and racism negatively impact the mental health of Black students and faculty by questioning their academic identity, confidence, and overall mental efficacy within predominately white institutions (McGee and Stovall 2015). For my study, I used CRT to examine the whiteness at PWIs and racial battle fatigue to explore the racial microaggressions experienced by Black students and faculty. With

classrooms being white-centric, racism and racial microaggressions has an impact on the mental health of both Black students and faculty. The next section discusses microaggressions and explain the types of microaggressions Black students and faculty may face, as well as explanations as to why microaggressions may occur in academia.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Microaggressions

Racial microaggressions are defined as daily, layered verbal and nonverbal, behavioral, and environmental injustices toward people of color (Amos 2020; Applebaum 2019; Franklin 2019; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Kim, Kendall, and Cheon 2017; Marks and Çiftçi 2019; Miles et al. 2020; Sue et al. 2011; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). These purposeful, subtle forms of racism by White students and teachers, whether intentional or unintentional, creates a hostile school and work environment for people of color daily (Amos 2020; Applebaum 2019; Brown 2019; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Franklin 2019; James, Scott, and Temple 2020; Kohli 2018; Law et al. 2019; Lilly et al. 2018; Pittman 2012; Sanchez et al. 2018; Sue et al. 2011; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). There are three types of microaggressions: micro-assaults, micro-insults, and micro-invalidations (DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Nadal et al. 2014; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). Micro-assaults are purposeful attacks that inflict pain, like racial slurs and involve the conscious demeaning of one's culture and identity (Brown 2019; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Kohli 2018; Pittman 2012; Pizarro and Kohli 2020; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). Layered assaults are a form of micro-assaults, such as being deemed as "institutional passing" where Black faculty, who are lighter in skin color and may resemble the complexion of White people and have access to certain privileges (Pearce 2019). Micro-insults are subtle and unconscious forms of communication (Hernández and Villodas 2020; Torres-Harding et al. 2020).

People who use micro-insults typically lack racial and cultural sensitivity (e.g., "You are very articulate" and "You are a credit to your race") (Applebaum 2019; Brown 2019; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Kohli 2018; Pittman 2012; Sue et al. 2011). One micro-insult Black people

experience, regardless of career, is being told they have a job because of affirmative action (Pittman 2012). Micro-invalidations are communicative tactics that reject and deny the experiences of racial discrimination (e.g., "Where were you born?", "You speak good English") (Applebaum 2019; Brown 2019; DeCuir- Pittman 2012Gunby et al. 2020; Kim et al. 2017; Pittman 2012; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). Black people may experience feeling like an alien within their community (Brown 2019; Endo 2015; Kohli 2018; Villegas and Irvine 2010). Social invisibility and colorblindness have been experienced by Black students and faculty within the classroom and workplace (Brown 2019; Kohli 2014, 2018; Nadal et al. 2014; Pearce 2019; Pittman 2012; Rodriguez-Mojica et al. 2020; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). Color blindness diminishes and ignores the experiences of Black people; which results in disparities in success between Black faculty and their White colleagues (Kohli 2018). All forms of microaggressions can be seen as everyday occurrences; which result in Black people working in hostile environments and excluded environments (Applebaum 2019; Brown 2019; Jayakumar et al. 2009; Kohli 2018; Miles et al. 2020; Pearce 2019; Rodriguez-Mojica et al. 2020; Samuels, Wilkerson, and Dacres 2021; Sue et al. 2011). There are a few explanations for the existence of microaggressions.

2.2 Institutional Racism and Internalized Racism

One explanation for microaggressions is institutional racism. Institutional racism is defined as biased access to services, goods, and opportunities within society by a person's racial/ethnic background (Jones 2000). With whiteness being the norm in PWIs, institutional racism can be viewed as an inherited disadvantage of access by Black students and faculty (Apugo 2019; Brown 2019; Jones 2000; Kohli 2018). There are fewer people of color, especially Black people, in positions to change the academic system (Jayakumar et al. 2009; Jones 2000;

Kohli 2018). Unfortunately, some Black people who are in leadership positions also deal with structural barriers (Jayakumar et al. 2009; Jones 2000). Institutional racism can restrict access within academia such as professional growth (e.g., promotions, tenure) and academic opportunities (e.g., writing articles, taking specific courses, and collaborations) (Jayakumar et al. 2009). Institutional racism affects both students and faculty. Due to institutional racism, Black college students may experience racially hostile campuses (Applebaum 2019; Jayakumar et al. 2009; Newton 2023). Black faculty also deal with institutional racism, such as not being acknowledged or rewarded for their out-of-the-box research or alternative research methods (Jayakumar et al. 2009). Research has shown how institutions have a standard for all research faculty members to publish articles in specific journals, generally top journals in the field. However, those journals more commonly accept White scholars' work, as opposed to Black scholarship on account of the target populations of the research (e.g., people of color) (Allison 2008). With top journals primarily focusing on quantitative research and many Black faculty members focusing on qualitative research, it becomes problematic when the same standards are placed on Black faculty by predominantly white institutions (Allison 2008). Also, because of institutional racism, Black faculty may lack mentorship, encouragement, and network opportunities; which leaves them to their own devices academically (Apugo 2019; Jayakumar et al. 2009; Kelly and Winkle-Wagner 2017; Kohli 2018; Ross and Edwards 2016a; Samuels et al. 2021). Another prime example of institutional racism for Black students and faculty is intellectual inadequacy which can also be viewed as imposter syndrome (Haskins et al. 2019). Imposter syndrome will further be discussed in this paper. Institutionalized racism can lead to internalized racism. Internalized racism is defined as the acceptance by stigmatized and stereotyped racial/ethnic groups of negative and demeaning messages about their credentials,

abilities, and worth (Jones 2000). For Black people in academia, especially PWIs, internalized racism is embracing whiteness as acceptable and devaluation of the self (Jones 2000). Unfortunately, Black teachers who experience internalized racism through microaggressions may subconsciously displace those racial hierarchies onto their students and within the classroom (Kohli 2014). The experiences of internalized racism include embarrassment and wishing they were white (Jones 2000; Kohli 2014; Pearce 2019). This is not only harmful to students but also, to the teachers and can harm their mental health (Pearce 2019).

2.3 Implicit Bias

Implicit bias is defined as "automatic or habitual stereotypes connected to certain groups of people that affect the way individuals respond to the targeted group" (Applebaum 2019). Implicit biases are produced within the mind at an unconscious level, therefore, people are unaware of the influence it has on their behavior towards others (Applebaum 2019; Bell 2021; Matthew 2015; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). Implicit biases can lead to microaggressions (Applebaum 2019). Implicit biases can have a domino effect. First, unconscious implicit bias is formed within the mind due to behavior and environment. Second, this leads to negative stereotypes created about groups of people. Then negative stereotypes are shown through microaggressions (Applebaum 2019; Matthew 2015). Implicit biases have led to stereotypes such as Black women being labeled as hypersexual and Black men being labeled as criminals. These stereotypes have White people presume power to inaccurately judge and label Black people (Applebaum 2019; Matthew 2015). Unfortunately, these stereotypes are created from one's environment and social knowledge, which can lack any evidentiary support to explain the attribute or trait of the stereotype (Matthew 2015). Among the American population, there have been documented instances where implicit biases were in favor of White people and against

Black people (Matthew 2015). Throughout history, Black people have had implicit biases against them, which carries over into school, the workplace, their environment, society, etc. (Applebaum 2019). Not only are implicit biases formed unconsciously, but also automatic and unintentional, similar to microaggressions (Applebaum 2019; Matthew 2015). The next section I further discuss the major themes of racial microaggressions that Black students and faculty experience in PWIs.

2.4 Themes of Microaggressions

There are five main themes of microaggressions Black students and faculty experience within white spaces, especially, in academic spaces. Themes include the following: meritocracy, pathologizing communication styles and cultural values, cultural and ethnic insensitivity, ascriptions of intelligence, and being labeled as a second-class citizen (Brown 2019).

2.4.1 Meritocracy

The first theme is the myth of meritocracy, where Black students and faculty are fed this rhetoric that if you work hard and persevere, then you will succeed, regardless of race/ethnicity and culture (Brown 2019; Nadal et al. 2014). However, this is not always the case. There are several situations where students and faculty have worked longer hours to prove themselves to their peers, colleagues, and bosses (Brown 2019; Hart 2020). The myth of meritocracy makes Black students feel inadequate and frustrated within the classroom (Hart 2020). For Black faculty, the myth of meritocracy makes them feel burdened, overworked, frustrated and devalued within the workplace (Brown 2019; Kohli 2018; Pizarro and Kohli 2020; Rodriguez-Mojica et al. 2020; Sue et al. 2011). Because of this, many feel that they are placed at a different standard to their White colleagues, such as their language, behavior, and expectations (Brown 2019; Jayakumar et al. 2009; Kohli 2014). This myth of meritocracy has created stereotypes seen

within minority communities, such as lazy, unmotivated, shiftless, etc. (Brown 2019; Feagin 2013). There is a saying in the Black community, “As a black person in white America, you’ve got to work twice as hard to get half as far” (DeSante 2013). This saying was created because Black people are conditioned to work harder to prove their worth in the classroom and workplace, just to be viewed on the same lines as the “average” White individual (Miles et al. 2020; Peteet et al. 2015).

2.4.2 Pathologizing Communication Styles and Cultural Values

The second theme is pathologizing communication styles and cultural values (Brown 2019; Endo 2015; Nadal et al. 2014). Schools and education in the United States normalize whiteness as acceptable, such as their culture, communication, beliefs, and values; which also normalizes racial inequality (Apugo 2019; Brown 2019; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Kohli 2018; Rodriguez-Mojica et al. 2020). Black students and faculty may have this racial and cultural inferiority complex; where they constantly feel the need to assimilate into the white culture within the school system, especially when their emotional and verbal responses and communication styles are constantly being diminished and devalued (Apugo 2019; Brown 2019; Kohli 2014; Lui et al. 2022; Pittman 2012). Unfortunately, many Black students and faculty feel the need to communicate differently with their peers and colleagues, such as code-switching (Apugo 2019; Brown 2019; Pittman 2012). Code-switching "is an identity-shifting mechanism used to mask, alter, or soften one's authentic racial and ethnic identity in a particular environment" (Apugo 2019:54) Code-switching has been seen as a defensive mechanism to avoid negative stereotypes through micro-insults by their White peers and colleagues (Apugo 2019; Santiago, Nwokoma, and Crentsil 2021). Black people are often characterized as confrontational when they speak with directness. They are labeled as “the angry Black woman

(or man)" (Brown 2019; Kohli 2018; Pearce 2019). In addition to being identified as a defensive mechanism, code-switching has been seen to downplay the culture of Black people and assimilate them into whiteness (Apugo 2019). By using the linguistics of white culture, some White people feel more comfortable communicating and being around Black people (Haddix 2008; Santiago et al. 2021).

2.4.3 Cultural and Ethnic Insensitivity

The third theme is cultural and ethnic insensitivity (Brown 2019; Nadal et al. 2014). Black students and faculty experience their racial/ethnic heritage and identity as less than when they encounter culturally insensitive interactions with their White peers and colleagues, which are based upon racial stereotypes (Brown 2019; Hill 2019; Pizarro and Kohli 2020; Sue et al. 2011). While Black students are fed the rhetoric that all cultures, races, and ethnicities are valued on campus and are one big happy family, that is not the case. Black students may create organizations that highlight their race/ethnicity but are told that they cannot be exclusive; they must be inclusive and open to all students on campus. While that may not appear to be a problem, that allows people who are unknowledgeable of specific cultural practices or are disrespectful to Black people allowed within these spaces. Instead of the administration addressing racial issues within the school, Black faculty are told to bond with other faculty members because they are not team players and play the "race card" all the time (Kohli 2018; Pearce 2019). Black students and faculty experience issues, such as White peers and colleagues touching their hair (or hair deemed as unprofessional or a distraction), wearing specific clothing in the workplace, mispronunciation of their names, and behaving differently to avoid reinforcing stereotypes (Brown 2019; Hill 2019; Kohli 2014, 2018; Pittman 2012). This results in self-isolation; which can be seen as being subordinate or viewed as having a bad attitude; which is a

lose-lose situation for both students and faculty (Brown 2019; James et al. 2020; Kohli 2018; Pearce 2019; Rodriguez-Mojica et al. 2020).

2.4.4 Ascription of Intelligence

The fourth theme is an ascription of intelligence (Brown 2019; Nadal et al. 2014). Ascription of intelligence is when the dominant culture (i.e., white culture) perpetuates negative stereotypes of Black people being seen as ignorant or not as intelligent (Brown 2019; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Endo 2015; Nadal et al. 2014). Black students and faculty are constantly proving their work ethic and intelligence, giving their school credentials to others, and staying one step ahead (Brown 2019; Samuels et al. 2021; Sue et al. 2011). Ascription of intelligence can lead to imposter syndrome, also known as the imposter phenomenon. The imposter phenomenon is when high-achieving people who have obtained merits/degrees or are in higher education have fraudulently earned the degrees and deceived people into believing their level of intelligence (Haskins et al. 2019; Peteet et al. 2015). People, especially Black women, may attribute their academic success to affirmative action or luck (Haskins et al. 2019; Peteet et al. 2015). Because of U.S. history, the imposter phenomenon may stem from how intelligence and education were words used for White people and were earned and not applied to Black people (Collins 2000). Black people were not said to be smart or intelligent or belonged in certain spaces and institutions (Collins 2000). Because of how intelligence and education were monopolized by the White population then, now it is difficult for some Black students and faculty to accept the fact that they do belong in these spaces and are more than qualified to be in these institutions (Collins 2000). Black students may feel alienated or like uninvited guests at predominantly white institutions (Miles et al. 2020; Fanon 1967). Black women (students and faculty) have expressed difficulties in escaping the imposter phenomenon (Dade et al. 2015). The reason may be because

Black women have been made to feel intellectually inferior to their white counterparts (Dade et al. 2015; Fanon 1967). Unfortunately, the imposter phenomenon can not only hinder students and faculty within the classroom and workplace but also negatively affect mental and emotional well-being (Fanon 1967).

2.4.5 Second-class Citizen/Foreign Born

The fifth theme is feeling like a second-class citizen or the assumption of being foreign-born (Amos 2020; Brown 2019; Endo 2015; Nadal et al. 2014; Rodriguez-Mojica et al. 2020; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). Black students and faculty have stated experiences of not being protected by their school, their feelings and emotions are viewed as invalid, and feeling isolated or excluded from their peers (Brown 2019; Jayakumar et al. 2009; Kohli 2018; Rodriguez-Mojica et al. 2020), assumption of criminal status (Lui et al. 2022; Nadal et al. 2014; Torres-Harding et al. 2020), and incapable to holding high-status positions (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020). Black faculty' authority is often questioned by White students and parents (Allison 2008; Brown 2019; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Pearce 2019; Pittman 2012). Also, White parents and students may question whether the teacher is capable of teaching the students at an acceptable level or be able to relate (Ladson-Billings 1996; Samuels et al. 2021). White students may not feel that their Black teachers or professors are fair (Ladson-Billings 1996). Other experiences of microaggressions that Black faculty have experienced are being seen as the token Black person (Jayakumar et al. 2009), being asked about the behaviors of Black students (who are not their students), and being questioned about their teaching pedagogies (Hill 2019; Kohli 2018; Rodriguez-Mojica et al. 2020; Ross and Edwards 2016). Black teachers constantly are questioned and surveilled over their cross-cultural teaching pedagogies within the classroom (Amos 2020; Sue et al. 2011). School boards and deans question the relevancy and relatability of

cross-cultural teaching pedagogies within the classroom and how they can benefit all students and not just the students from their own racial/ethnic background (Amos 2020; Kohli 2018). In the next section, I will discuss how racial microaggressions affects the mental health of Black students and faculty. In addition, coping strategies, both adaptive and maladaptive will be discussed in how Black students and faculty handle racial microaggressions.

2.5 Racism's Effect on Mental Health

Race-related stressors and microaggressions have been linked to mental health issues, such as stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Lilly et al. 2018; McGee and Stovall 2015; Nadal et al. 2014; Sue et al. 2011; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). Microaggressions are associated with overall poorer mental health for Black students and faculty (Porter 2022; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). Studies have shown that Black students and faculty members who experience microaggressions have higher levels of anxiety, greater levels of depression, increased binge-drinking/underage alcohol misuse, negative affect, decreased self-efficacy, and lack of behavioral control (Lilly et al. 2018; Lui et al. 2022; Nadal et al. 2014; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). Unfortunately, depression is one of the most alarming consequences resulting from microaggressions (Lilly et al. 2018). For Black students, the link between racial microaggressions and alcohol misuse can interfere with their academic performance and perpetuate any existing inequities (Lilly et al. 2018).

2.5.1 Coping Mechanisms

Black students and faculty have been noted to deal with race-related stressors and microaggressions through coping mechanisms. Coping is a strategy that allows individuals to understand, reevaluate, and react to recent events and chronic stressors (Franklin 2019; Pearlin 1999). Coping strategies have been acknowledged as ways to deal with racial microaggressions.

Coping with racial microaggressions requires at least three skills: protecting the self, engaging in self-control, and confronting racist experiences (DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016). Protecting the self consists of collecting one's thoughts and talking to a friend; which are forms of psychological and physical safety (DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016). Students and faculty who engage in self-control, do not react detrimentally, but assess the situation and act accordingly (DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016). Confronting racist experiences mean confronting the aggressor and educating them on their inappropriate actions, words, and behaviors (DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016; McGee and Stovall 2015). Through these three skills, two types of coping strategies have evolved: adaptive coping strategies and maladaptive coping strategies (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016; Franklin 2019).

2.5.2 Adaptive Coping Strategies

Adaptive coping strategies, also known as engagement or approach coping strategies, are known as positive and healthy strategies for dealing with stress (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Sanchez et al. 2018). Adaptive coping strategies are also viewed as problem-solving methods of dealing with microaggressions (DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Lui et al. 2022; Sanchez et al. 2018). Types of adaptive coping strategies include communicating and confronting racism (McGee and Stovall 2015), seeking mentorship (Corbin et al. 2018; Kohli 2018), setting boundaries, discussing race within the classroom, joining a forum (DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016), forming professional networks, seeking religion/spirituality, seeking emotional support (Lui et al. 2022), cognitive restructuring (Sanchez et al. 2018), and engaging in self-care (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; McGee and Stovall 2015). Black students and faculty may confront racism through open forms of communication and dialogue with their White peers and

colleagues. Setting boundaries to deal with race-related stressors consist of not having emails set up on their phones and the "leaving work at work" mentality (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020). Black students' most common coping strategies for experiencing microaggressions are turning to religion or spirituality and receiving emotional support (Franklin 2019).

While Black students primarily turn to religion and emotional support, Black faculty cope with microaggressions with effective mentoring, counseling, and social justice activism on campus (Corbin et al. 2018; Payton et al. 2018). Mentoring is effective for Black women in academia because of the level of bonding and coping with others who have experienced similar situations (Corbin et al. 2018). Research has shown Black women students who have role models, do better in academia (Corbin et al. 2018) Other studies have shown self-efficacy has helped Black women cope with microaggressions within their careers (Corbin et al. 2018). Studies have shown adaptive/engagement coping strategies were positively correlated with better psychological well-being and overall more positive mental health (Hernández and Villodas 2020).

2.5.3 Maladaptive Coping Strategies

Maladaptive coping strategies, also known as disengagement or avoidance coping strategies are seen as negative and unhealthy (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016; Kohli 2018; Sanchez et al. 2018). Maladaptive coping strategies are typically passive measures people take; which take the form of pretending the microaggression was not experienced (DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016). Types of maladaptive coping strategies include the following: adding stress (e.g., taking on a larger workload, fewer breaks, etc.), self-criticism, physiological consequences (e.g., high blood pressure), feeling isolated, suppression/internalization of feelings (e.g., social withdrawal), and the refusal to confront

racism (e.g., behaviors, communication) (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Kohli 2018; Pearce 2019; Sanchez et al. 2018). Sometimes, Black faculty members increase their stress by working harder and longer hours. Also, they may overcompensate, such as working through lunch (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020). Black women in academia have coped with the angry Black woman narrative, by embodying the strong black woman narrative (Corbin et al. 2018). However, this narrative still dehumanizes and controls the image of the Black woman (Corbin et al. 2018). Overall, coping strategies have been shown to lessen or diminish the effects of racial microaggressions (Franklin 2019). Both black students and faculty experiences racism at PWIs and within classroom settings and cope in many ways. In the next section I will discuss Black students and the impact of racial microaggressions on their academic performance and campus life. Following, I will discuss Black faculty and the impact of racial microaggressions on their work experiences and job satisfaction.

2.6 Black Students and Racial Microaggressions

Microaggressions can negatively impact Black students. Racial microaggressions can increase a student's sense of perceived stress (Torres-Harding et al. 2020). The mere presence of racism within the classroom or on campus is a warning, that in the future a student may experience racial threats, discrimination, violence, limited opportunities, and unfair evaluations such as lower grades, poor academic evaluations, school police harassment, etc. (Torres-Harding et al. 2020). Overall, the cumulative effects of microaggressions for students may include decreased work productivity, school performance, and an increase in stress, anxiety, and levels of depression (Apugo 2019; Miles et al. 2020).

2.6.1 School Performance

For Black students, microaggressions can also be viewed as environmental, behavioral, and verbal. These microaggressions can challenge academic performance and mental health (Miles et al. 2020; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). Environmental microaggressions are defined as the lack of representation or exclusion within one's environment (Miles et al. 2020). The consequences and results of environmental microaggressions for Black students are feelings of self-doubt, lack of self-belonging, being silenced within the classroom as well as racial isolation and lack of representation within the classroom (Apugo 2019; Lui et al. 2022; Miles et al. 2020; Reinholz et al. 2022; Ross and Edwards 2016b; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). Black students experiencing environmental microaggressions may question their acceptance within predominantly white institutions and may consider transferring to a historically Black college or university (James et al. 2020). The lack of self-belonging and racial isolation can impact a student's academic performance (Payton et al. 2018; Sanchez et al. 2018).

Studies have shown Black students excel in classrooms with other Black students, especially Black teachers/professors (Childs 2019; James et al. 2020). Often, Black students are not recognized for their accomplishments in academia compared to their White counterparts due to microaggressions (Miles et al. 2020). Behavioral microaggressions occur when others' behaviors toward Black students display feelings of unwantedness within the space or show how they do not belong within the space (Miles et al. 2020). Behaviors include treating someone as inferior or a second-class citizen (Feagin 2013). Behavioral microaggression consequences include assumptions of being dumb and less competent, proving one's intellectual ability, self-isolation, stress, and being treated as an outsider (similar to the theme of second-class citizen) (Miles et al. 2020; Sue et al. 2011). Due to behavioral microaggressions, Black students may

experience the imposter phenomenon and not perform their best within the classroom (Peteet et al. 2015). Students may not reach out for help or assistance with assignments because of the fear of being intellectually inadequate (Peteet et al. 2015). Black students who are identified and treated as coming from disadvantaged backgrounds may have lower rates of success in school (Sanchez et al. 2018; Torres-Harding et al. 2020).

Verbal microaggressions are viewed as racist or unintentional verbal insults toward Black students and faculty (Miles et al. 2020). An example of a verbal microaggression would be asking someone to convey their point of view as a representative of their racial group in a class discussion (Miles et al. 2020). The consequences and results of verbal microaggressions include questioning one's identity. Many Black students have experienced the following: "how did you get a good grade on this?", "you should sing because you're Black" and "why are you pursuing this degree" (Miles et al. 2020; Sue et al. 2011). A student's academic performance may be affected by verbal microaggressions by questioning one's intellectual capabilities (Miles et al. 2020). While racial microaggressions may impact Black students within the classroom, there may be experiences of microaggressions on campus (Bell 2021; Delgado and Stefancic 2017).

2.6.2 Campus Experiences At a PWI

On campuses and in schools, Black students are often seen as aggressive and defensive (Newton 2023). Yet, Black students experience micro-insults, such as racist and sexist verbal attacks (e.g., "you are acting White"), from White students who use their white privilege to stigmatize and police their Black peers on campus (Delgado and Stefancic 2017; Newton 2023). These micro-insults can be internalized and affect the mental and emotional well-being of Black students. Microaggressions have been shown to impact the psychological and behavioral stress

levels of Black students within academia, especially at predominately white institutions (Franklin 2019; Lilly et al. 2018).

2.7 Racial and Gendered Experiences

Gender also plays a role in how Black women experience microaggressions. Black women within academia may feel the burden of being labeled as a "double-minority person" because they face challenges such as being Black in a predominantly white space and being a woman in a patriarchal dominant space (Dade et al. 2015). While race and gender intersect, especially for Black women, neither category is ignored (Dade et al. 2015). Black female students experience gendered racial microaggressions on campus (Newton 2023). Gendered microaggressions can lead to alienation, questioning one's racial and gender identity, difficulties with relationships, and stress (Corbin et al. 2018; Newton 2023). Black female students are at a double disadvantage when higher education was created with white males in mind (Newton 2023). Black female students are often stereotyped and labeled as the "strong Black woman". This stereotype ignores the obstacles and struggles they may experience on a predominantly white campus; which can lead to mental and emotional declines (Apugo 2019; Corbin et al. 2018). This can lead to silent struggle, where Black women are afraid to speak about their experiences due to the chance of being judged by others (Apugo 2019). Black college students, especially women, have also been shown to experience higher levels of anxiety due to microaggressions. This elevated level of anxiety may increase sexual risk behaviors (Marks and Çiftçi 2019).

Black women have experienced microaggressions, such as not fully being seen as colleagues, particularly by White women (Collins 2000; hooks 1999). Black women experience being seen as less than others and being over-sexualized within the classroom and workplace

(Sanchez et al. 2018; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). Black women are often judged for their hair with comments hinting at the appropriateness of the style within the workplace or the hairstyle being a distraction to other students within the classroom (Powell 2018). Research shows there are implicit biases against Black women and their hair, especially in its' natural state (Powell 2018). Not only are Black women discriminated against by their hair, but also their clothing. Clothing has been up for debate surrounding Black women about their clothes being too tight or revealing, especially in the workplace (Rosenthal et al. 2020). These comments and debates are double standards when compared to White women and other women of color in these institutions (Powell 2018). Black women are also associated with criminality (Matthew 2015) and are viewed as aggressive (hooks 1999).

2.8 Black Faculty and Racial Microaggressions

Racial microaggressions, not only harm Black faculty, but some have questioned their presence within predominantly white institutions (Kelly and Winkle-Wagner 2017). Due to microaggressions, some Black faculty have left the teaching profession altogether (Amos 2020). Some of the reasons for leaving the teaching profession include stressful work conditions, alienation, isolation, being overly scrutinized by their appearance and curriculum, judgmental manner and attitudes, and discriminatory treatment (Amos 2020). Black faculty not only experience race-specific microaggressions, but those very microaggressions have an impact on their job satisfaction and tenure/promotion opportunities (Jayakumar et al. 2009; Sue et al. 2011).

2.8.1 Lived Experiences in the Workplace

Black faculty have experienced specific microaggressions within academia, such as constantly being surveilled, working in hostile environments, jealousy and micro-invalidations from White colleagues of how they interact with Black students, negative attitudes and prejudice,

being judged by their clothes and skin color, etc. (Amos 2020; Kohli 2018; Samuels et al. 2021; Sue et al. 2011). Micro-insults and micro-invalidations regarding clothing and hair as being unprofessional are also experienced by Black faculty, especially women (Amos 2020; Pizarro and Kohli 2020). While many Black faculty members have experienced similar microaggressions in the workplace, there are also race-specific microaggressions experienced in predominantly white institutions. Black faculty at times feel unwanted within predominantly white institutions; especially when they hear micro-insults such as “you are an affirmative action candidate” (Dade et al. 2015; Franklin 2019). Black faculty have had experiences of being labeled as "the problem child" or "unable to get along with others" when they are trying to protect themselves and their time, knowing their limits and understanding their workload (Arnold et al. 2016). When Black faculty are gathered or talking in a group in academic institutions, White faculty have “joked” with micro-insults such as, “what are they up to” or “looks like trouble” (Dade et al. 2015). These microaggressions (and others) can have an impact on their job satisfaction and tenure/promotion opportunities for Black faculty.

2.8.2 Black Faculty’s Job Satisfaction

Black faculty who experiences daily microaggressions have lower levels of job satisfaction (Jayakumar et al. 2009). Examples include: feeling isolated, lacking support, being unheard, language and cultural barriers, and lacking mentorship and peer support (Apugo 2019; Jayakumar et al. 2009; Pizarro and Kohli 2020; Ross and Edwards 2016; Samuels et al. 2021; Sue et al. 2011), gender bias, (Amos 2020), invisibility (Endo 2015; Franklin 2019; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Pittman 2012), and unequal salaries (compared to white counterparts) (Jayakumar et al. 2009). Higher levels of dissatisfaction in academic spaces can lead to declines in mental health (DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016). Studies have shown that Black faculty who

are dissatisfied with their jobs are more likely to stay in their positions for the following reasons: 1) their scholarship is valued amongst their departmental colleagues and 2) given autonomy and independence (Jayakumar et al. 2009). However, how often does this happen? If Black faculty are told to be on a certain number of committees and boards, teach specific courses, and not given a voice, then what or where is the autonomy? For Black faculty, it can be difficult to be perceived as valued when dealing with daily microaggressions (Sue et al. 2011). Not only do Black faculty have limited autonomy and are often not rewarded for their scholarship, but many academic institutions reward and applaud White teachers for pursuing or engaging with antiracist education and issues on equity but criticize Black teachers and professors for pursuing the same topics. Even seen as being obsessed with race-specific topics (Amos 2020; Dade et al. 2015). Black faculty may also experience White students accusing them of conducting classes inappropriately or being inadequate to teach courses (Williams 1992). Some Black faculty may feel academia silences their voice when they speak up on racial issues and concerns, which negatively impacts their job satisfaction (Samuels et al. 2021; Williams 1992).

2.8.3 Tenure/Promotion

Job satisfaction for Black faculty can also depend on tenure and promotion opportunities. Black faculty being told they can achieve the same level of rewards and status as their White colleagues if they would only try harder or adapt to the status quo of the institution (Arnold et al. 2016). Adapting means accepting White cultural norms and silencing the cultural norms of other racial/ethnic backgrounds (Feagin 2013). Some Black faculty have noted receiving low assessments and performance ratings on their abilities, skills, and scholarship by their department and university (Dade et al. 2015). This can hurt promotions and advancements within their departments, especially if they are tenure-track professors, and question their chances of

receiving tenure (Jayakumar et al. 2009; Ross and Edwards 2016; Sue et al. 2011). However, the question arises is, whose standards are we assessing faculty on? White intellect is often viewed as the standard (Dade et al. 2015). Black faculty advancement within academia is and has been extremely slow compared to their White counterparts (Arnold et al. 2016). Challenges that Black faculty have encountered are lower journal article acceptance rates and obtaining tenure and full professor status at 4-year institutions (Arnold et al. 2016; Bell 1992). Black women's faculty and tenure are complicated due to the intersection of their race and gender. Black women faculty have to battle a patriarchal norm within academia and often struggle with the perception of being intellectually incompetent due to their gender, as well as their race being stereotyped as an affirmative action case (Kelly and Winkle-Wagner 2017). Black faculty who have lower ratings of job satisfaction or promotion opportunities often leave academia altogether (DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016; Jayakumar et al. 2009). Low levels of school and job satisfaction, due to racial microaggressions, can ultimately affect one's mental health.

2.9 Objective and Research Questions

The aforementioned literature displays the harsh realities that many Black students and faculty face experiencing racial microaggressions within predominantly white institutions. The physical and mental toll one experiences due to racial microaggressions can affect their health and impact their life course. This study examined how both Black students and faculty' mental health and experiences are influenced by racial microaggressions at a PWI. Therefore, within this study, the researcher conversed with both Black students and faculty members and discussed what experiences they may have faced and possible solutions to this dilemma. Applying the theoretical frameworks (i.e., racial battle fatigue and critical race theory), the overarching objective of this research study is to examine both Black students and faculty's experiences with

racial microaggressions and their impact on their lives. This research study addressed the following six research questions:

1) How do Black students experience racial microaggressions in predominantly white institutions?
2) How does Black faculty navigate racial microaggressions inside and outside the classroom?
3) How do racial microaggressions impact Black students' college experiences on campus?
4) How do racial microaggressions inform Black faculty's work experience?
5) How are racial microaggressions affecting the mental health of Black students and faculty?
6) How does gender shape the lived experiences of racial microaggressions of Black students and faculty?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The objective of this qualitative study is to assess the lived experiences of racial microaggressions from Black students and faculty. This study explores the educational and work experiences of Black students and faculty, as well as the mental health impact of daily racial microaggressions.

3.1 Participants

With the use of a purposive sample, 11 Black students and 7 faculty members were recruited from a large, predominantly white, private university in the Southeast, United States to participate in a qualitative study. Eligible participants self-identified as Black, age 18 or older, a current student or faculty member, willing to speak of their experiences of racial microaggressions, and have the cognitive ability to complete the interview independently.

3.2 Procedure

Recruiting Black students and faculty to participate in the qualitative study (which included a video conference interview with the researcher) consisted of the use of social media (Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn), an in-person campus visit, and email addresses. While Facebook and LinkedIn did not yield in participants, Instagram was lucrative in recruiting 11 Black students. The researcher attended a Black Student Alliance event on campus and engaged with students. Faculty members were recruited through email and shared university listservs. Once approval was granted through the Georgia State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to recruit participants, flyers were distributed on social media site platforms and campus. Flyers included the nature of the study, eligibility criteria, and the researcher's contact information to participate in the study. All participants who met the study's criteria, were emailed the informed consent, to read thoroughly on their own time. Once they emailed the researcher

with either a signature on the informed consent document or a written response indicating their consent, they agreed upon a time and date to complete a one-time interview with the researcher. The semi-structured interviews lasted between 45 minutes to 1.5 hours and were recorded, with the consent of the participant.

3.3 Interview Script

The recorded semi-structured video conference interview allowed participants the opportunity to explain in great detail their experiences of racial microaggressions within predominantly white institutions as either student or faculty members. The interview was split into two sections. The first section consisted of six questions that asked both students and faculty about their knowledge of racial microaggressions, specific experiences within the classroom or on campus, and if they have questioned their time at a predominantly white institution. For students, the second section of the interview centered around how racial microaggressions had impacted their school performance, relationship with professors, and residency on campus. For faculty, the second section of the interview centered around how racial microaggressions had impacted their work performance, relationship with supervisors, and job satisfaction. Qualitative data retrieved from the interviews helped identify similar themes experienced between students and faculty members, as well as the impact on their health and possibly life course.

3.4 Data Analysis

NVivo was used to analyze the qualitative data in this study. Through Google Meet, the interviews were transcribed through video and audio recordings. The researcher went through the transcriptions and code specific words or phrases that are related to the literature, as well as new wording and phrases. Field notes, which were taken during the interviews, were also analyzed during this time. Once all the transcriptions and notes were analyzed, common themes and

categories were created and compared amongst all the participants (specifically students compared to faculty members). The comparisons investigated the similarities of racial microaggression experiences among Black students and faculty. The findings showed how gender influenced the experiences of racial microaggressions among students and faculty. Comparing the experiences allowed the researcher to identify experiences based on position or environmental factors. Also, the themes and categories were integrated with the two theoretical frameworks (i.e., racial battle fatigue and critical race theory), and new patterns were developed regarding how students and faculty members experienced racial microaggressions. For this study, the names or identifiers of participants were not used within the findings and discussion sections. Instead, false names were used to help discuss the findings. In addition, gender was also analyzed from the findings.

CHAPTER 4: BLACK FACULTY

Within this study, three themes were found from the findings: ascription of intelligence, second-class citizen, and powerlessness. Ascription of intelligence and second-class citizen are two themes that were mentioned in previous literature (Brown 2019; Nadal et al. 2014), however, powerlessness is a newfound theme within this study.

4.1 Ascription of Intelligence

One of the themes that was found in the results was ascription of intelligence, which led to imposter syndrome for a few of the participants. For Black faculty members at a PWI, ascription of intelligence is seen as their White counterparts perpetuating negative stereotypes such as not being as intelligent or ignorant (Brown 2019; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Endo 2015; Nadal et al. 2014). Due to ascription of intelligence, some of the faculty were seen as intelligently beneath their White counterparts and constantly having to prove their intellect and work to their peers and superiors. Claude, one of the male faculty members expressed his concerns about his experiences with ascription of intelligence.

BK: “Have you been, or have you experienced a microaggression by your supervisors or superiors? Can you tell me about it?”

C: “Yes, I had a supervisor misread my entire CV, so they could justify an inaccurate assessment. I had to disprove every misreading so I could be evaluated correctly.”

BK: “How did this experience make you feel?

C: “I became depressed and exhausted. If you complete all this work, just to have it dismissed, what is the point of doing this work? It is a question I still contend with.”

Claude's supervisor misread his CV when giving an unfair work evaluation. Now, a supervisor of a professor in a college has degrees themselves, and misreading an entire CV suggests that the supervisor was negligent and demeaning to the faculty member. Claude had to prove his work ethic and accomplishments, his position within the institution, and more importantly, his self-worth. Due to the racial microaggressions from his work evaluations (as well as other experiences on campus and within the classroom), this led to the decline of his mental health. He started to deal with symptoms of racial battle fatigue such as depression and exhaustion. At the end of his statement, he questioned the purpose of the work that he is doing at their University. Claude questioned things like why he should work so hard and strive to be and do his best when it is going to be overlooked, dismissed, and possibly forgotten due to possible implicit biases exhibited by his superiors and colleagues.

Erin, one of the women faculty members, expressed her ill feelings of imposter syndrome, along with ascription of intelligence. Throughout her interview, she referenced some of her colleagues as "superstars" and used phrases and questions such as "Do I deserve to be here?" and "I could achieve as much" but questioned her statement. Imposter syndrome can be experienced by Black faculty on predominantly white campuses, especially women. While it was not discussed, Erin did not mention her experiences from college, her graduate studies, or even other institutions. However, at the University, she questioned her level of success by referring to her colleagues as superstars as if it must be a competition. Academia is hailed as collaborative and intersectional and everyone within a field is viewed as partners. However, this picture may not be upheld for Black faculty members at a PWI because of the daily racial microaggressions. For a terminal degree-holding faculty member to question their place within an academic institution, speaks volumes on the institution, not the individual. Even Darrell, another male

faculty member stated in his interview that “imposter syndrome is real”. Imposter syndrome can lead to a decline in one’s mental health and one may experience racial battle fatigue (Fanon 1967).

While both Erin and Darrell overall were satisfied with their careers and had no current plans to end their time in academia, there comes a point where stress can become overwhelming. From a critical race standpoint, imposter syndrome aligns with interest convergence. Interest convergence is when White people’s incentive to eliminate racism is minimal and there is a high focus on White students and faculty (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). For Black faculty at the University, being an overwhelming minority within the institution, White leadership and faculty members may not understand or feel the need to go out of their way to make their Black counterparts feel welcomed, wanted, or accepted on the same academic and social level as themselves. Academic institutions were originally built with only White people in mind and through time Black people were allowed to be in these spaces, but not always accepted within these spaces. PWIs unintentionally focus on their White faculty members in various ways (e.g., the number of White faculty members compared to Black faculty members, the disciplines and topics White professors teach as opposed to Black professors, their implicit biases against Black faculty, and their white habitus). Black faculty members understand they have the same degrees and accomplishments as their White counterparts, however, through racial microaggressions, they may question their presence within these institutions, as Erin and Darrell have mentioned in their interviews.

4.2 Second-class Citizen

Naomi, a woman faculty member has many experiences of feeling like a second-class citizen by constantly being disrespected by her White students within the classroom. She has

noted that during her years of teaching, White students have "quizzed" her on topics discussed during class; topics she has a PhD in and expert knowledge on. They have openly and verbally said disparaging remarks and have been overall disrespectful. She noted that a title is important, but it does not matter if her students address her as a doctor, professor, or Naomi if they are respectful and consistent across the board. However, when she hears her White students address White faculty men as "doctor" and they do not have the title yet call her "Ms." or Naomi and she indeed has the title, she feels slighted and disrespected. When asked how she felt about it, she said, "It probably made me mad, angry, and then disappointed." Now, these racial microaggressions can be due to White students' implicit biases about Black people for them to feel they do not have to give the same level of respect as their White professors or the white habitus of shared feelings, emotions, and perceptions with their White professors. Even Barbara, another woman faculty member said, "I understand privilege makes you have a different outlook on life." There is a privilege for White students and faculty, especially at a PWI. However, the racial microaggressions and powerlessness that Naomi and other Black faculty have experienced from White students are not okay (Allison 2008; Brown 2019; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Pearce 2019; Pittman 2012).

Black faculty men have experienced the effects of second-class citizenship on the University's campus. Both faculty men (Darrell and Claude) in this study, unfortunately, had the most examples (discussed throughout their interviews) compared to the Black faculty women. Darrell mentioned how throughout his academic career, White students would refer to him as "Mr." instead of Professor, even when he addressed classes on the first day of school. While having a PhD, he is not referred to his title or respected in the same instance by his White students, only by his students of color. He noted how he is tired of this particular

microaggression because he has worked hard for his title and is treated less than by his White students. Darrell expressed his tiresome about the matter, especially when he saw the same students give the proper respect to his White colleagues. Not only has he dealt with being treated as a second-class citizen by his name/title, but he has experienced students challenging his knowledge on topics and would not do the same to his White counterparts. Imagine, being an expert in a field and a novice learner questioning your expertise on the subject, simply because they cannot fathom a Black man having such knowledge to teach them. Darrell also had experiences of being a second-class citizen at the University with a colleague.

D: "Yes. When I first joined this institution, I made a request to another professor to work on a project, in which he agreed to do so. Well, when I asked about the project sometime later, he stated you're not my equal and we're not on the same professional track. Now, this is the same person who I asked before to work with and he posed no issue before and not to mention, we are on the same professional track. He apologized later about it. But honestly, I'm not surprised. It was just another layer of racism, and it is hard to differentiate between racial determination and issue of status."

Darrell noted that he cannot wear his emotions on his sleeve all the time because he is a Black man. While enduring and constantly experiencing racial microaggressions, Black men are expected to accept the circumstances and move on. The intersectionality of being Black and a man. Men are taught not to be too sensitive or show emotion, yet Black men cannot be seen as the angry Black man stereotype (Allison 2008; Brown 2019; Kohli 2018; Pearce 2019). Black faculty men must code switch in order not to be deemed as "unintelligent" or "ignorant" and not

raise concerns or challenge their peers and colleagues. Being a Black man in academia is challenging as stated by Claude.

C: “To undermine racial stereotypes about Black men and Black intelligence. But switching codes and challenging these stereotypes often result in more hatred, so you are in a double bind.”

Black faculty men like Darrell and Claude experience racial microaggressions daily because they are Black and are men in academia. As a Black man in academia, you can prove your intellect, but others will question your credentials such as where you received your degree or how you were hired in a place like this University (Allison 2008). As a Black man in academia, leadership may have difficulties addressing racism when you bring up your experiences in meetings because they cannot understand or imagine how you could have experienced such things and maybe you experienced racial microaggressions because you did something wrong first (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). As a Black man in academia, especially in a PWI, you are not allowed to live unapologetically because you deal with double consciousness, which was coined by W.E.B. DuBois (DuBois 1904). Even when Black faculty men challenge stereotypes like Claude mentioned, they may view themselves and their worth through the lens of their White counterparts, such as how White students treat them compared to how White students respect their White male professors. Black faculty men may view themselves through the eyes of others by how White faculty men are heard and held at a higher standard within meetings and work evaluations compared to themselves (DuBois 1904). Black faculty men must

work twice as hard to receive any recognition within academia (DeSante 2013; Miles et al. 2020; Peteet et al. 2015).

In reference to the phrase "you must work twice as hard to receive half the credit", both Darrell and Claude have used this phrase to mentally help them in their careers. Darrell uses the phrase as motivation and a "desire to be better; to be the best" and Claude states "It's the motto of my professional career. I've had to work twice as hard to receive any consideration." Darrell and Claude use this phrase, which is often heard in the Black community throughout one's life as fuel to be their absolute best, despite the opinions and rejections of the White academic community. However, it is believed that this phrase can have an impact on racial microaggressions within PWIs.

C: "Yes. I believe people are fully conscious of the asymmetrical power dynamics and distribution of privilege that exists. Microaggressions often emerge when you challenge this imbalance."

Claude noted how he believes the phrase "you must work twice as hard to receive half the credit" influences racial microaggressions within academia. Both Black and White faculty within a PWI are conscious of the imbalanced power dynamics and the distribution of privilege. Black faculty understand that to receive recognition, they must have twice as many publications as their White counterparts. They are required to constantly publish in top journals in their fields, which may be primarily gatekept by White scholars. For Black faculty to advance in their careers; they may need to do twice as much work (e.g., numerous committees and boards, mentees, publications, classes taught, etc.) to possibly be considered for a role that their White

counterparts only had to do the fraction of the work for the role. It is the privilege of White faculty to be in an institution that was built with them in mind. It is a privilege to be in a PWI and most of the people in leadership roles look like you. It is a privilege to unintentionally experience white habitus with your peers and supervisors, where your feelings and perceptions are the same about the different races in the institution. Unfortunately, this asymmetrical power dynamic leaves little room for interest convergence because why would White faculty and leaders want to eradicate racism and discrimination? They may view it as a disadvantage because they may feel they are losing power when they would be leveling the playing field for all.

4.3 Powerlessness

Powerlessness is a new theme within this study of the impacts of racial microaggressions on Black faculty at a PWI. Powerlessness can be felt in meetings, in the classroom, during work evaluations, salary negotiations, etc. Lydia had an experience within the workplace that made her feel powerless.

BK: “Have you ever experienced racial microaggressions on campus or within the classroom? And if so, can you think of a recent time or another time that stands out, where you experienced a racial microaggression?”

L: “I experienced a microaggression within a meeting. I was with three other people, and I mentioned something in the meeting and a colleague kept questioning me and my comments each time. Even though I knew the most about the topic. I did, however, address them shortly after as well as my supervisor but was told not much can be done.”

BK: “How did this experience make you feel?”

L: “I felt powerless from the experience. Like speaking up meant nothing at the time.”

Not only was Lydia repeatedly questioned by her colleague on a topic she is well versed in but was also challenged in front of others. In this meeting, a White woman questioned a Black woman on her intellect and knowledge about a subject matter; where she is considered an expert in (Allison 2008; Brown 2019; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Pearlin 1999; Pittman 2012). These types of experiences happen far too often with Black faculty women in academia. They are questioned by colleagues, students, and people on campus and quite frankly, Black women are tired. They are tired of having to work twice as hard to be viewed as the "average White faculty member" and tired of fighting the constant racial microaggressions. This form of powerlessness is not only tiresome, but degrading and diminishing to her intellect, self-esteem, and mental health. These feelings and emotions can overall lead to racial battle fatigue, which can have an impact on her mental health. Sharon, one of the women faculty members had an experience of powerlessness.

S: "Yes. It was a diminishing experience. After being disrespected by a colleague in power, and witnessing their promotion as a high-powered administrator, I realized the university didn't take my grievances seriously."

As a Black woman, navigating the space within academia can be challenging; especially at a PWI. As a woman, women are expected to follow and be submissive when there are men leaders in the rooms and institution. As a Black person, you are expected to not always pull the race card in meetings and work twice as hard to receive any recognition for the hard work that has been done. But, as a Black woman, you cannot be angry, upset, or show any emotions

because you will be labeled as an angry Black woman or "too difficult" to work with others (Brown 2019; Kohli 2018; Pearce 2019). Speaking up as a Black woman about their experiences of racial microaggressions is difficult because of either being ignored, silenced, or overlooked. There are times like Lydia's experiences when she spoke up and nothing happened. Only this time with Sharon, she quickly realized through the white habitus of her rude colleague and institution leaders, that their commonality allowed for the colleague to advance in the workplace and made Sharon's grievances go unheard (Bonilla-Silva, Goar, and Embrick 2006; Burke 2012). Unfortunately, experiences like this can lead to a decline in one's mental health (e.g., stress, depression) and racial battle fatigue.

Erin experienced a sense of powerlessness during a salary negotiation for her role at the University. While discussing this experience with me, she noted she "could be paid more" and the "negotiation was more of a struggle than it had to be". Salary negotiations can be challenging for Black faculty, for women faculty members, and the intersection of the two. Black women, regardless of the workplace or institution are underpaid compared to White women and men of any racial/ethnic background (Samuels et al. 2021). This University is no different. Black women are expected to work twice as hard, put forth twice the effort, and receive a mere percentage of the profit (Fanon 1967; hooks 1999). Naomi discussed in her interview how the advancement of Black women at the University is challenging. "Black women faculty for sure are doing copious amount of work…I mean, no matter what we do. Unpaid labor, oh my God, but we don't get any credit for it in our evaluations. Yeah so, it's not even twice as hard. It's like four times as hard to get half as far." Black faculty at a PWI, especially Black women are expected to teach a full workload, publish a certain number of articles in a year, be a part of committees, lead the discussion on DEI work, and mentor students. Yet, when evaluation time comes around, they

must prove all the work they have done in and out of the classroom. They must prove why they are deserving of a raise, promotion, or other advancement that they probably should have received years ago, while also being graceful and submissive. Being a Black woman is challenging because the intersectionality of the two (Black and woman) is not the same. On one side, Black women have commonalities with their fight and the racial microaggressions with their Black male counterparts because of their race, especially at a predominantly white institution. On the other side, Black women have commonalities with their women colleagues in striving and pushing through a patriarchal academic institution. However, to deal with racism, discrimination, and sexism all at once is demanding on one's overall health and well-being. Talking about feeling powerless is being a Black woman in an institution that does not value her worth or intellect, yet Black women have shown and proven they not only belong in these academic institutions but are extremely deserving to not only be at the table but have created their table and space.

Dealing with daily racial microaggressions is challenging for Black faculty, especially at a PWI. Faculty men like Darrell remind him that experiencing racial microaggressions within academia is a constant reminder that he is living to work. There is minimal joy in his work and position because of the institutional racism and discrimination he faces. He constantly must fight for his opportunities and prove he is worthy of advancement. He noted how he is "not satisfied with how good people are treated" and how human issues are dealt with within academia. The problem is that many of these issues are not thoroughly and thoughtfully addressed and therefore go unresolved. It leaves Black faculty in a position of being powerless and feeling unwanted within the institution.

While some faculty members confided in me their experiences of powerlessness, Claude disclosed two specific encounters of powerlessness on the University's campus. His first instance of powerlessness was experienced within the classroom.

BK: "Have you ever experienced racial microaggressions on campus or within the classroom? And if so, can you think of a recent time or another time that stands out, where you experienced a racial microaggression?"

C: "Yes. White, male student entered my class, put his feet on the table in recline, made a yawning noise during my lecture, and gave me a death stare awaiting a response."

BK: "Wow…so how was your health during this experience?"

C: "I felt I was in a no-win no no-win double bind because confronting the student would mean a battle with administration and my energy was already taxed. I decided to just accept the disrespect to prevent additional professional injuries."

Unfortunately, Claude was not only disrespected by his White student but also treated as a second-class citizen. He said he was in a no-win double bind because if he addressed the student, there could have been consequences with the administration if the student made any "allegations", but not addressing the student and allowing them to boldly disrespect the professor in his classroom meant his mental health took a hit. With his energy already being taxed, he may have already started to deal with racial battle fatigue. Being a Black faculty at a PWI is challenging because you demand respect because of your title and position, yet some White students and faculty ignore the request merely because of their white entitlement in academia. They simply overlook or try to behave as if racism does not exist in academia as if Black faculty

are supposed to be okay with simply being in the room. Racism, discrimination, and disrespect hold power over Black faculty and this power can lead to a decline in mental health and/or lead them to leave the institution altogether. The second experience for Claude was work evaluations at the University.

C: “A feeling of powerlessness because you can't preempt all racist impediments. The evaluation is the discursive realm of microaggression, the violence of the pen under the cover of objective assessment.”

Claude understands the power of the pen. He understands that an evaluation is reflective of his work and career. A negative evaluation can hurt or diminish his chances of promotion or advancement within academia. Evaluations can be crucial for Black faculty because regardless of their tenure, workload, publications, etc., in the back of their mind, they are wondering if their evaluations are just and fair or if implicit biases from their supervisors have played a role in the evaluation. However, a Black faculty member in a PWI may feel there is a thin line between fair and just and discrimination. Discrimination may come from their race, gender, or a combination of both. As a Black man in academia, Claude must navigate a realm that was not created with him in mind. Academia has a majority population of women. Not only is he Black, which is the minority in academia, but also a Black man. White leaders and supervisors’ implicit biases may impact the fairness of Black faculty evaluations and the problem becomes how one proves it. How does a Black faculty member prove their evaluation was unjust and unfair?

4.4 Mental Health

While not all the faculty participants' mental health was impacted by racial microaggressions, a few discussed the decline of their mental health over time. Naomi strongly expressed her emotions around racial microaggressions at the University, as well as the impact on her mental health.

N: "So I would say it's more of the mental health, like the stress, you know, the inability to sleep, you know, once people have micro aggressed against you or macro aggressed against you, you know, having to kind of excel in a toxic or precarious environment, work environment…"

Naomi expressed how the micro and macro aggressions she experienced on campus and within the classroom started to impact her physical and mental health. The constant stress of working in her toxic work environment impacted her sleep. Her stress stemmed from her emotions of being "mad", "angry", and overall "disappointed" in the microaggressions she was experiencing (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Lilly et al. 2018; McGee and Stovall 2015; Nadal et al. 2014; Sue et al. 2011; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). During our interview, numerous times she discussed how White students micro-aggressed her within the classroom with their lack of respect for her as a woman and professor and constant feeling of the need to speak up (Ladson-Billings 1996; Samuels, Wilkerson, and Dacres 2021; Williams 1992). She also noted she had to teach during the COVID-19 pandemic while being diagnosed with COVID-19. "I mean I had Covid. I still had to teach, and they were like, "Oh, you can still talk and sit up, so you can still teach." Not only did Naomi have to deal with the stresses of racial microaggressions

on campus and within the classroom but had to deal with them virtually during the pandemic. She was ill with COVID-19 and still expected to work. Due to the constant racial microaggressions on campus, within the classroom, and virtually from the University, she started to experience racial battle fatigue (Arnold et al. 2016; Corbin et al. 2018; Franklin 2019; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Lilly et al. 2018; Pizarro and Kohli 2020). Emotionally, she was drained. Physiologically, her body was tired (i.e., sleepless nights). Psychologically, she was exhausted by the recurring experiences of racism and discrimination. Due to her racial battle fatigue, she lost complete faith and confidence in anything changing. She could not imagine experiences improving because when she spoke up, the University was silent (Arnold et al. 2016). She lost hope in the University as a whole. As a result, unfortunately, she decided to end her career as a faculty member at the University. Darrell discussed his experiences of being a Black man in America.

D: "…you can't talk about bias and racism without racial microaggressions. I've experienced racial microaggressions as a law professor, law student, administrator, lawyer. It doesn't stop. I've been a Black man all my life. Ya know, the stupidity behind racial microaggressions is absurd. 10% is discrimination. I dread waking up in the morning and being a victim. It's a fearful concept…"

To be Black in a predominantly white institution can have the same feeling as being Black in America. Black faculty members may deal with racial microaggressions by superiors (e.g., deans, department chairs, etc.), colleagues, and students (i.e., white students) (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Not only do they have to fight for respect within meetings, in work evaluations,

and on-campus; but also, within the classroom by students, they are expected to teach (Allison 2008; Brown 2019; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Pearce 2019). Darrell is another victim of racial battle fatigue. While he expressed being a proud Black man, it can sometimes be dreadful or predictable to be in predominantly white spaces dealing with racial microaggressions. Darrell did not express anger or stress because of racial microaggressions, but mostly bothersome emotions surrounding the topic (Arnold et al. 2016). Continuing with the Black man's perspective of mental health on the University's campus is Claude, who conveyed his deep emotions about being a Black faculty member.

BK: "Has there been a time when your teaching pedagogies have been questioned by students or other faculty?"

C: "All the time. People are interested in discrediting me, proving my incapacity as a teacher, rather than receiving knowledge and instruction. I experience the classroom as a battleground; it's becoming exhausting and insulting."

BK: "What was it like for you? How did it make you feel?

C: "Unstable, frantic, and depressed."

Claude's experiences on campus and within the classroom have been battle after battle after battle. The classroom where he is considered the expert on the topics he is teaching, yet critiqued and questioned on his teaching pedagogies and knowledge by students who are considered pupils and young scholars in the field of academia. He is constantly being forced to prove his intellect to his peers and pupils, which is not just exhausting but disheartening. There is no space for vulnerability for him within this institution and this ultimately leads to racial battle

fatigue. Due to the constant racial discrimination within the classroom, he has become exhausted and depressed, which are stress responses from racial battle fatigue. As a result, throughout his interview, he has questioned his place within the institution and wonders if there is even a safe space for him long-term.

4.5 Coping Mechanisms

When it comes to racial microaggressions, the Black faculty within this study varied in their styles of coping. As stated within the literature review, there are two main coping strategies: adaptive and maladaptive (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016; Franklin 2019). With these findings, we will dive into how the participants fall into the two categories or strategies. Adaptive coping strategies are considered healthy and positive strategies for dealing with racial microaggressions (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016). People who use adaptive coping strategies may focus on addressing the issue and moving forward. Lydia experienced a racial microaggression during a meeting with colleagues. While the experience bothered her, she decided to address the microaggression with others.

BK: “So, were there any specific ways you coped with this experience.”

L: “I addressed it with leadership, and I was looked upon as complaining about something that was minute. And basically, left to deal with my own emotions regarding the incident. And I chose to leave it and not address it anymore.”

Lydia took the approach of a critical race theorist, by addressing the experience and allowing the other party (White colleagues) to understand the extent that their racial microaggressions had on her and bring awareness to their hand in the matter. While it is difficult

to address racism, Black faculty may feel the need to bring awareness to their White counterparts about the experiences on campus. Lydia decided to cope with her experiences of racial microaggressions by attempting to disrupt the status quo of her predominantly white institution. However, while her intentions were good and at the time, supposed to help her navigate her experiences and emotions while sharing with others the fact that this is not okay; it may have caused her to now revert to a maladaptive coping strategy of avoiding and ignoring situations altogether. Avoiding racial microaggression incidents and experiences may impact one's mental health. Erin has taken a similar approach to coping with racial microaggressions.

BK: "How do you cope and deal with these experiences of racial microaggressions?"

E: "It helps knowing in-depth about racial biases and the understanding of microaggressions that help."

Erin, while not explicitly stating it, understands that the white habitus of White people accustoms them to specific emotions, perceptions, and racial biases about Black people, whether they acknowledge it or not. White faculty, especially at a PWI has a sense of unity within meetings, on campus, and within the institution because of their race. There are similar viewpoints and emotions expressed within meetings and without Black faculty bringing awareness to it, continues as a status quo on predominantly white campuses and spaces. However, it is important for Black faculty like Erin and Lydia who understand the racial biases and experiences that may come from White colleagues and not just accept it, but vocally bring awareness to everyone in the room and note how it affects people of color.

Now, not all the participants engaged in conversation to cope with their experiences of racial microaggressions. Others chose physical coping mechanisms such as exercising and the gym. One participant, Claude, expressed using the gym as a positive way to release stress from his experiences of racial microaggressions and the necessity to do so.

BK: “Were there any specific ways you coped with the experience?”

C: “The gym helped me release.”

Sometimes, coping mechanisms may look avoidant such as going to the gym and not vocally addressing the experiences head-on, however, engaging in physical activity like exercise can improve one’s physical and mental health. Exercising allows a person to keep the body physically active while allowing the mind to process what has happened and consider the next steps. Fortunately, none of the study’s participants engaged in maladaptive coping strategies, which are considered unhealthy, negative, and avoidant ways to deal with racial microaggressions. Concerning racial microaggressions, addressing events and experiences head-on and in a positive state can be quite difficult, especially right in the moment.

CHAPTER 5: BLACK STUDENTS

Ironically, based on the data collected from this research, both faculty and students experienced two of the same experiences which were ascription of intelligence and being treated as second-class citizens while navigating the same predominantly white institution. For students within this study, the three themes found from the findings are treatment as second-class citizens, ascription of intelligence, and feeling unwanted. The first two themes are found within previous literature (Brown 2019; Nadal et al. 2014), however, feeling unwanted is a new theme found within this research study.

5.1 Second-class Citizen

The first theme I will discuss in the findings centered on feeling like a second-class citizen on the University's campus. Rayna, a student, had experiences of being a second-class citizen during her freshman year by a University professor.

BK: "Have you ever experienced racial microaggressions on campus or within the classroom?"

R: "In my English seminar this past semester…it was something really simple. It was just one of those, we were doing introductions and finding out where people were from. It's the whole where you from, where are you really from but only directed at the Black students. And there were only three, four of us in that class."

Rayna figured since it was the first day of class, the professor was going to ask everyone ice-breaker questions about their lives outside of the classroom. However, she did not expect this interaction to be geared towards her and other Black students. Rayna was not the only Black student in the classroom. She noted there were three to four other Black students and during that moment, that period, she felt like a second-class citizen or as if she was not supposed to belong in that space. To be questioned by a professor where she is from and not accept the original answer speaks to how Black voices are devalued in white spaces. For a White woman in a position of power to ask a young Black woman where she is from as if she does not belong is the epitome of white privilege and discrimination. This White professor assumed she was not from the United States based on the color of her skin as if Black people cannot be born here. For Rayna, this moment indicated that not only were her feelings and emotions viewed as invalid, but she felt a sense of isolation within the classroom because she was singled out by her professor and was questioned. She also mentioned how the professor did not ask any other student in the class that question, even though there were other students of color in the room. With most of the class being White as well as the professor, this created a white habitus (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006). The professor may have experienced white habitus with the other students in the room. Through their silent racial solidarity, there was an assumption that White students were from the US and thus they belonged (Burke 2012). Also, she was an older White woman professor, so she may have inherited negative stereotypes and biases against Black people. Her age may even play a role because of the time and era in the country she was growing up in. She may have experienced a time where segregation was the norm; where Black people were viewed and treated as second-class citizens compared to their White counterparts.

Kianna, another student I interviewed expressed how one semester during her chemistry class, a photographer came into the class to take pictures. She was not sure why photos were being taken or where they would be uploaded, but her professor was ecstatic to point the photographer in the direction of the one table that had all Black students in the class. Kianna felt like a second-class citizen during that class, having her pictures taken. It is quite interesting that institutions will express how racially diverse and inclusive they are on their website by displaying various pictures of people of color. The students were not asked permission for their photos to be taken; they were unsolicited photographs. By taking unsolicited pictures of students, you are taking away their right and agency to voice their opinions and/or concerns. The professor ignoring the other tables and coercing the photographer to the most "racially diverse" table in the room almost makes this scene performative. It sends a message that Black students are not viewed as students at the University but as second-class citizens who are allowed to come to the university. Paints an image of, "Hey look, we have Black students in our science classes too." This level of insincerity makes the students feel like second-class citizens within their school. It is important to showcase people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds on campus and on websites so people can be attracted to the programs and institutions. But it is important to note that doing it in such a way is performative and one must ask themselves, how do these students feel being the face of racial and ethnic diversity on the University's campus for chemistry? At this moment, their agency of free will was compromised and taken away. Unfortunately, this is another aspect of feeling like a second-class citizen as a Black student at a predominantly white institution.

Moreover, Terrell, one of the male students has many experiences of feeling like a second-class citizen while on the University's campus. Terrell expressed that while walking on campus daily, he experiences people brushing past him and blatantly pushing him while not

having the decency to apologize, say excuse me, or even look his way. They act as if he is invisible or not worthy of being treated like a human being (Brown 2019; Jayakumar et al. 2009; Kohli 2018). Their white entitlement and biases shape their minds to assume they can brush past Black people and not feel obligated to excuse themselves. His experience is an example of white habitus at work. White habitus normalizes social structures and actions for White individuals. As a society, Black people have been treated as inferior to White people and at times, not treated as human beings at all. White habitus for White students on campus excuses them from treating students like Terrell as human beings with decency and respect, but rather as "an object" in their pathway (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006). This experience of feeling like a second-class citizen is unfortunately felt by Terrell far too often on the University's campus. Nicole experienced feeling like a second-class citizen while walking into her dormitory building.

BK: "Have you experienced racial microaggressions, such as in student spaces or student housing or events or anything like that?"

N: "So there was this one time I was like right behind this um white girl and this white guy held the door for her and the second she walked through; he dropped the door, and I was like did he not see me? Like I was right there."

Nicole and her roommate talked about it with their sophomore advisor about the situation. Not only was the White male student inconsiderate for only holding the door for the young White woman, but oblivious to the actual presence of Nicole. Nicole was not only ignored by the White male student but also treated as a second-class citizen (Amos 2020; Brown 2019; Endo 2015; Nadal et al. 2014; Rodriguez-Mojica et al. 2020; Torres-Harding et al. 2020).

Society and chivalry have conditioned men to open and hold doors for women, yet Black women are often overlooked when it comes to how women should be treated. Nicole and the White female student are both women, yet only one was treated in such a manner. Nicole's Black woman-ness unfortunately made her undeserving of being treated with the same respect as the White female student. Not only is this an example of being treated like a second-class citizen, but a prime example of a gendered racial microaggression. Her treatment in this situation was based on both her race and gender.

The intersectional experiences of being Black and a woman oftentimes leave Black women vulnerable and invisible to others (Apugo 2019; Dade et al. 2015). As another student, Brittany, explained, being a Black woman has disadvantages in a lot of spaces. Black women are oftentimes dismissed within meetings and social situations, stereotyped as strong (which results in Black women being unable to express their feelings and emotions in safe spaces), and seen as invisible and inferior to people (Apugo 2019; Dade et al. 2015). Black women are viewed as inferior to White women as well as men from all racial/ethnic backgrounds in work, social, and academic settings (Fanon 1967; hooks 1999). However, Black women are also expected to do more because of their social identities of being Black and a woman (Corbin et al. 2018; Newton 2023).

Black students at the University have been treated like second-class citizens within their dormitories and Black spaces have been viewed as secondary. There is an area on campus called fraternity row or frat row and that is where fraternity, sorority, and special organizations' houses are located. The Black Student Alliance (also known as BSA) house resides on fraternity row. Each year, different students can choose to live in the house with other students instead of the traditional dormitories. Farrah, one of this study's participants discussed in her interview that

while she did not live in this house, she had a friend who did and visited that friend often during the school year. She noted how the BSA needs renovations on the inside and outside and not as visually updated as the other houses on frat row. All the houses are afforded a housecleaning company through the University's budget. However, Farrah mentioned how the house is not cleaned or maintained as much as the other houses. The BSA house, which is resided by Black students is not receiving the same treatment and respect as the other houses (resided by predominantly white students). Those students are treated as second-class citizens concerning their housing on the University's campus. From a critical race perspective, this is a form of racial discrimination because the one house not receiving the proper treatment is the house with all Black students (Lui et al. 2022; Sue et al. 2007). Unfortunately, the University's lack of awareness and care for this matter is not going to change the status or outcome of the BSA house. It is difficult to change the situation when the institution does not see the need (Delgado and Stefancic 2017).

5.2 Ascription of Intelligence

One of the themes many of the students experienced was ascription of intelligence. Ascription of intelligence is when white culture perpetuates negative stereotypes such as being ignorant or not as intelligent on Black individuals (Brown 2019; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Endo 2015; Nadal et al. 2014). This University is an academically rigorous institution; however, the University admits students who they believe can handle the workload. Yet, some of the participants in this study felt they were not academically where the other students were and maybe not deserving of being at the University.

Terrell experienced ascription of intelligence during two separate events. The first experience was in his biology lab. He was the only Black person in his lab group and the only person of color in the group as well.

T: “I did remember that in bio lab last semester. Um, there was a moment where I was the only Black student in my lab group. And I guess the white students felt I wasn’t holding my weight up in the class or doing work on time or something like that. And they expressed on a peer review form, and they reviewed me poorly. And there was no type of discussion about that or like any like holding me accountable before they did that, and it was just like we’re gonna all mark him as a poor lab mate. Despite me putting in a lot of work.”

Terrell worked hard in his lab group, but his White lab mates decided as a collective to review him poorly, which they knew would impact his school performance and grade. There was no conversation throughout the semester about the contributions from everyone in the group and they singled out the one Black student in the group. Not to mention, Terrell also stated how when he confronted the lab instructor (White male) about this, he justified the students’ actions by explaining how some people are non-confrontational. The instructor subconsciously socialized and racialized the students’ feelings and emotions about their Black lab partner and accepted their opinions as truth, which affirms whiteness and makes classrooms a white habitus. Terrell’s academic performance was questioned, his intellect was questioned, and there was nothing for him to do (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006; Burke 2012). He proved his work ethic by contributing to his group the entire semester, yet his lab mates collectively decided his efforts were lacking. This can lead to imposter syndrome for Terrell, where he starts to question his intellect and work ethic (Haskins et al. 2019; Peteet et al. 2015). Not only that but the fact that his entire lab group (all White students) poorly reviewed him may have led Terrell to engage in double consciousness,

where he viewed his intellect and self through their lens and not his own (DuBois 1904). This could have impacted his overall self-esteem as an academic scholar. For Black students, experiences like this can make them feel unqualified and inadequate to study at a place like this University. They may doubt their academic abilities and experience the imposter phenomenon; where they attribute academic success to luck and feel academically inferior to their White student counterparts (Dade et al. 2015; Fanon 1967). Unfortunately, these acts of racial microaggressions can ultimately lead to racial battle fatigue for Terrell, where his mental health is impacted (Arnold et al. 2016).

The second experience for Terrell was his chemistry class. Very few Black students were in his class. Even though he was struggling, he was scared to speak up in class. He did not feel comfortable asking questions in class or speaking to the professor. He felt his White counterparts had more resources and support compared to him. Terrell even avoided the professor's office hours because of his lack of trust and faith in the professor to help him and give him the tools he needed to succeed in class. Unfortunately, Terrell is not the only student that has avoided office hours. Black students may avoid their white professors' office hours because they are an extension of the white habitus. The white habitus creates a space where whiteness is praised and treated as the only important or determining factor of how students may feel (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006). Office hours for a white professor may be deemed as open for all students, yet, it is their own space that unintentionally creates isolation from Black students and a safe space for White students, through racial solidarity (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006).

Moreover, Yasmine had two different experiences of ascription of intelligence: one with a professor and another during a group project with peers. She explained

Y: “I’m in a Chinese class…but I wasn’t necessarily as sharp as I could have been coming into the class and the first class that I had I felt like the teacher just kept picking on me. Like constantly trying to get me to answer questions in Chinese and like asking me very like specific questions that she wasn’t asking other students; to try to test my knowledge…it was an undertone feeling as I was the only non-Asian person in the class.”

Yasmine discussed how she has taken several Chinese courses throughout her life but was not as sharp as she once was coming to the University. However, on the first day of class, the professor decided to single out the only non-Asian person and only Black person in the class by berating her with a series of questions throughout the class. After class, Yasmine admitted that maybe she needed more help, so she went to the professor after class and asked for additional resources. However, instead of receiving additional resources to be successful in the course, the professor told her she did not need any resources and that she was good. Yasmine mentioned how not only was she denied resources but felt slighted by the professor. Regardless of where a student stands in class or their racial/ethnic background if a student asks a professor for help and resources it is their job to provide resources. Professors are supposed to help students achieve greatness and success within a class, not hinder them. The professor’s own implicit biases against Yasmine made her question if a Black student “belonged” in the class or had the intellect to match the other students in the class (Applebaum 2019; Bell 2021). Unfortunately, Yasmine had to go through this experience, where the professor made her question her knowledge and intellect, not only for the class but school overall. She admitted that there were times she felt anxious going to this class because of the racial microaggressions and this may have led to racial battle fatigue for Yasmine. These feelings are a result of PWIs association with anti-blackness. Institutions use anti-blackness as a scapegoat for the social and

mental treatment of Black people. “Microaggressions, tokenism, impostership, and racial battle fatigue attest to the psychological torment regularly visited upon Black humanity in higher education” (Dancy et al. 2018:188). Unfortunately, because anti-blackness erases and ignores the feelings and experiences of Black people, they are left with traumas that may or may not be resolved (Dancy, Edwards, and Earl Davis 2018; Dancy and Jean-Marie 2014).

Additionally, during one of Yasmine’s classes, she had to work on a group project. One student in particular, a White female student felt the need to criticize and condescend Yasmine on everything she spoke about and contributed to the group. She made remarks about Yasmine’s intelligence and questioned every single step Yasmine made in the group. The White female student only criticized Yasmine’s contributions yet was silent with the other group members. Yasmine was the only Black student in the group. These experiences made Yasmine question if she was good enough and felt discouraged. She admitted to questioning if she was good enough for the class and the school. This is also a gendered racial microaggression specifically towards Black women in that we are not meant to be in academic spaces, so our voices are diminished (Newton 2023).

Not only do Black students experience criticism for their intellect but may experience imposter syndrome. Imposter syndrome is very real and unfortunately can impact Black students at PWIs academically, mentally, and emotionally (Fanon 1967). Not only did Brittany experience imposter syndrome, but so did Rayna, Valerie, Aaliyah, and Marie. Valerie expressed how her high school experience was different from her White peers.

V: “My school only had like only offered six APs in total, when there were kids probably taking like six college credits in like a year.”

Marie expressed feelings of imposter syndrome because of the lack of experience she obtained while in high school.

M: “I felt like less experience, less intelligent because a lot of times, people come to the University having a wealth of experience and a lot of things and I have to like, step back and remind myself like we both got into the school because of our ability…doesn’t make you more intelligent than I do. I just didn’t have access to that.”

All these participants expressed how rigorous the University was and how they felt they were a bit behind, had less experience, and were not prepared. The University is known to create challenging courses, especially their science classes. Professors and counselors have been heard saying things like, “This University likes to weed people out of the medical field or medical school”. However, the MCAT, medical school applications, and medical schools will weed people out if they cannot handle the workload. It is not the University’s job to weed people out. It is not the University’s job to tell Black students they cannot make it academically. Black students at this University experience things like imposter syndrome because the institution fails to fully support their students when they have asked time and time again for support and resources from students, professors, faculty, etc. (Collins 2000; Fanon 1967; Miles, Brockman, and Naphan-Kingery 2020). If the white habitus did not exist, then maybe students like Terrell could have had a voice in class and his biology lab partners would have respected him as a fellow student. If racial microaggressions did not exist, maybe Yasmine would have felt comfortable revisiting Chinese as a second language instead of being bombarded by the professor. If racialized stereotypes did not exist, maybe Brittany would have known how deserving she was of a University scholarship, and imposter syndrome for other students would

be minimal. It would be minimal because the institution would recognize and acknowledge the role it has played in downplaying the discrimination that Black students experience in PWIs and instead give the same level of support, resources, and respect that White students have to Black students at their institution. Whiteness is normalized and praised within PWIs (Apugo 2019; Brown 2019; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Kohli 2018; Rodriguez-Mojica et al. 2020). Black students must fight for spaces, such as the University's Black Student Union space and a Black women's floor in one of the residential halls. Black students must constantly fight to be seen and heard within the classroom and speak out when professors and faculty acknowledge the intelligence only of their White students. Black students constantly must prove they are worthy and deserving to be in the same space as their White counterparts. Black students in PWIs need to be reminded, that they are deserving to be a student at that institution.

5.3 Feeling Unwanted

One finding that has not been discussed in previous literature is the theme of feeling unwanted. Feeling unwanted is one of the effects of racial microaggressions for Black students at a PWI. Black students may feel unwanted at and within a PWI because of the white habitus. The white habitus allows for White people (professors, faculty, staff, and students) to embody racial solidarity with one another and because of this racial solidarity, Black people are socially isolated from their White counterparts (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006). The isolation of White people at a PWI promotes the ignorance of being "color-blind" or ignoring the issues, discrimination, and experiences of the Black people on that campus (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006; Burke 2012).

Five of the students (Olivia, Aaliyah, Marie, Farrah, and Brittany) all had experiences of feeling unwanted within class or lab groups. Farrah noted how in her science lab, her partner (a White student) would not take her comments or suggestions seriously and blatantly (through

their actions and behavior) did not want to work with her. Brittany talked about how she was the only person of color in her chemistry lab group, and they were constantly taking over the group projects. Even the small groups that were formed in her chemistry class were the same where her White peers were impatient and unsupportive of her for taking more time to answer quiz questions. She felt she did not or could not contribute to the group, which affected her grade. Olivia discussed how during her group work, she was ignored by the other group members and did not feel like part of the group. Marie explained how she was partners with a White, male student and he decided he wanted to do all the work on his own and wanted no help or feedback from her. Aaliyah was in a group with two White male students and every comment, suggestion, or idea she gave was questioned every step of the way. She felt she did not belong and felt unwanted. She even admitted to toning down her language and dialect and started to dress differently. As a Black student at a PWI, working with White students is to be expected, especially with course and/or group work. Unfortunately, Black students are also aware and sometimes warned (by other students) that there are going to be challenges that come with working with White students such as feeling undervalued, unappreciated, ignored, etc.

However, how Black students are treated within groups and spaces by White students is nonsensical, especially since they all were admitted to the same academic institution. White students overtly display and express their entitlement to Black students, which forces Black students to deal with double consciousness. Black students view themselves and sometimes worth through the lens of White students and that can impact how they navigate the institution and can also impact their mental health (DuBois 1904). These constant racial microaggressions and experiences can ultimately lead to racial battle fatigue; where Black students may experience social-psychological and behavioral stress responses like depression, anxiety, escapism,

withdrawal, and/or overall acceptance of racist ascriptions (Arnold et al. 2016; Corbin et al. 2018; Franklin 2019; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Lilly et al. 2018; Pizarro and Kohli 2020).

Brittany discussed how a White male graduate student (who was teaching her course) made her feel unwanted within the class.

BK: "Do you recall a time when racial microaggressions impacted your school performance and what was that experience like for you?"

B: "Yes, there was a math class that I was taking at the time. The professor was a graduate student, a white man and I went up to him after class and during office hours for help. Well, one time when I went to office hours he said, "You're not trying to grasp the concepts and you just want to copy answers." I was shocked because I just wanted help."

Phrases such as "you're not trying to grasp the concepts of this" and "you just want to copy answers" are crude and disheartening to hear from an educator. Hearing such words made Brittany not only feel unwanted, but she also experienced ascription of intelligence, when her intellect was questioned by a White male graduate student. Brittany admitted that she broke down in tears in the lab, which she stated as a Black woman tries to avoid doing in predominantly white spaces and ultimately withdrew from the course. Black women are constantly stereotyped and policed for their actions within institutions (Corbin et al. 2018; Dade et al. 2015; Fanon 1967; hooks 1999; Newton 2023). If they express any emotion, they are stereotyped as angry, weak, unfit, etc. However, White women are allowed to speak and react to their experiences, whereas Black women are condemned. Black women try not to show their vulnerability in the presence of White people because they will not be treated in the same manner

as a White woman. Instead of helping and supporting the student, this White male graduate student decided to belittle and tear down this young Black female student through his actions and behavior. It is unfortunate that Brittany withdrew from the course and had such an awful experience. Sadly, this is not the only experience and occurrence of racial microaggressions that Brittany or other Black students have (and may have) experienced on the University's campus. From a critical race standpoint (Delgado and Stefancic 2017), the White male graduate student not only made Brittany feel like a second-class citizen and unwanted but also intellectually inferior to himself and the other students in the class with accusations of not trying to learn and wanting to copy answers (Brown 2019; Fanon 1967; Jayakumar et al. 2009; Kohli 2018; Miles et al. 2020; Rodriguez-Mojica, Rodela, and Ott 2020).

A student asks for help and instead of taking time to listen and assist (because that is what should happen from an educator), he instead uses excuses and avoids helping the student. This can ultimately reflect his lack of knowledge of the subject. He may only know how to teach one way and if students do not understand concepts from your teaching pedagogies, then it is the job of an educator to pivot and try new methods. This reflects his implicit biases towards not just Black students, but Black female students and assuming they cannot learn and are intellectually beneath White students (Dade et al. 2015; Fanon 1967; Peteet et al. 2015). Also, because of his ignorance, he does not understand the racist implications he has created. It raises the question; if a White male student or a White female student asked for help in the same course, would he have reacted in the same manner?

Additionally, Yasmine had a specific experience of feeling unwanted in one of her classes. She explained how, like many students, she was running late to a particular class. This day in class, the students were told by the professor they were going to work in groups. Well,

with Yasmine arriving late to class, she did not have the option to formulate her group and had to join an already created one. Now, this class was predominantly white and there was only one other Black student in the class. The professor announced in front of the class that Yasmine needed to join a group and asked if anyone wanted her in the group. Yasmine explained how she looked toward the only other Black student for help and camaraderie, and he did not say anything, as did no one else in the class. She was forced to just join a group. Imagine, walking in a room of peers and no one wants you to be in their group; to feel like an outlier and nobody. That is what Yasmine experienced within the classroom.

BK: "How were you during this time?"

Y: "I felt unwanted…Ya know I don't know how I even overcame some of those feelings. I think it was just a thing of time and finding my community and finding people that related."

Black students are aware that predominantly white institutions are made mostly of white students and faculty and are aware that there are very few people of color on campus. They also understand that these institutions were not made with them in mind; however, they do not expect to feel overwhelmingly unwanted and unvalued in these spaces (Dade et al. 2015; Miles et al. 2020). Black students have lived experiences of racial microaggressions and use that knowledge on how to navigate institutions. This is also a reminder to institutions that just because there are two Black students in a class, cohort, or space together, does not mean that discrimination is gone, or they at least have "someone" with them. Not all Black people or students are going to get along or work together. This goes for all races and ethnicities. Just because people are of the

same race or ethnicity, does not mean they are automatically friends or share the same struggles or experiences. Yasmine, being a Black student, looked at the only other Black student for solidarity, but did not get it. As a Black student, it may be normalized to feel excluded or unwanted from White groups or spaces, but there is a deeper hurt to experience the same level of being unwanted by others in your same racial group. For Yasmine, this experience of feeling unwanted may have impacted her mental health.

Outside of feeling unwanted in a lab group, Farrah also felt unwanted within a specific, curated chemistry class. The Chem Plus program was designed to help students who the University felt were going to struggle in the regularly designed chemistry courses. It is inferred that the University thought some were going to fail their chemistry class and needed extra help and attention to be successful in chemistry. However, there are many flaws in this design. One, the University predicted a graduating 2.6 GPA for all people who were enrolled in the Chem Plus course. This is a flaw because quantitatively, an institution cannot assume how a student will do in their courses and their final GPA outcome based upon tests and high school requirements. Two, the University assumed most people who would fail the introductory chemistry course were Black female students. This is an issue because to assume a Black female student cannot excel in chemistry courses and advance in science courses is to stereotype and place implicit biases about Black women overall, which is an example of gendered racism. While the majority of faculty and researchers of chemistry are White, that does not discredit or ignore Black women who are in this profession. Three, because the University made this course invite-only, it was biased and viewed by other students as a remedial course. Non-Black students did not want to work with the students in the Chem Plus class and avoided forming study groups with them. Black students in the Chem Plus class were isolated from other students taking the

other chemistry courses. The isolation may have impacted their overall academic performance in their chemistry course (Payton et al. 2018; Sanchez et al. 2018) This stigmatized and belittled Black female students who were taking this course. Farrah noted how it is difficult being Black at the University and pre-med. To have all these stigmas surrounding you and your university doubting your academic abilities to succeed is disheartening.

Unfortunately, Farrah noted that some of her friends left STEM and chemistry altogether after the experience because of the stigma, racial microaggressions, and overall lack of support from the institution and faculty for this course. Due to this course, Black female students may have started to experience racial battle fatigue that may have affected future school performances and impacted their overall mental health (Arnold et al. 2016; Corbin et al. 2018; Franklin 2019; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Lilly et al. 2018; Pizarro and Kohli 2020). From a critical race standpoint, the curators of this course let their implicit biases and discrimination be known that Black female students needed this course because otherwise, they would fail. Because of this, they don't see how racism within this situation needs to be eradicated because they truly believe it is in the best interest of the students. The class had an overwhelmingly large proportion of Black female students, which insinuates that the university knew White students would excel, primarily because the institution was created with them in mind (Childs 2019; Newton 2023).

The University invites students to engage and participate in excursions, activities, and events catered to their interests the summer before their freshmen year. Farrah, participated in one of the events and it was an outdoor event; where they did an excursion to promote team building and took the group to an unknown location. This unknown location was a plantation in Savannah, Georgia. None of the students knew or were aware that they were going to go to a plantation; it was not disclosed on the agenda. Farrah explained how they were looking at slave

cabins and reading about plantation owners. Roughly 10-15 percent of the group identified as Black. She talked about how when they realized where they were all the Black students gathered and felt extremely uncomfortable with being on a plantation. This raises the question, how oblivious do the organizers of the event and the institution must be to think this is okay; to not think of the ramifications and mental health consequences that can ensue from being on a plantation as a Black person?

With the University being a predominantly white institution, the university event organizers may or may not have fully understood what being on a once-slave plantation can do to one's mental health. With this event, white leaders and organizers may have difficulties with the blatant racist undertones from such an event (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Farrah even told me that one student asked a leader why they were brought to a plantation as an event and the leader had no response; they were speechless. White people have used the white habitus to shield themselves (feelings, emotions, social detachment) from racism and discrimination that when it is presented to them, they are ignorant and unaware of the impact on people of color, specifically Black people (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006; Burke 2012). For an outdoor excursion that is organized by the university year after year, there is no good reason to take students to a slave plantation. Yes, it is a section of history, however, the university must enclose that information to all students so they can be mentally and emotionally prepared. It also gives students an option to excuse themselves or not participate at all. However, as Farrah said, "it is hard to fix racism." Unfortunately, racial microaggressions and discrimination took a toll on the overall mental health of the student participants of this study.

5.4 Mental Health

Mental health is important, and it is imperative to take good care of it. However, during periods of constant racial microaggressions, sometimes mental health takes a backseat to the discrimination and racism one has faced. Many of the students have expressed feelings of stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms, which are emotions seen in other studies. However, some of the students also felt frustrated, weary, and overall drained. Feelings can take a toll not just on their mental health but physical health as well.

For some, their freshmen year was deemed stressful. Yasmine noted how she got sick a lot this specific year for her because she was not taking proper care of herself. She had an array of emotions such as loneliness, stress, and feeling unwanted. Yasmine even mentioned how mentally, she was not in a good space. One of her classes increased her stress and anxiety every time she stepped foot in class because of the racial microaggressions directed at her by her professor.

Y: "Um I do think it was pretty bad. Like when I got to college, I got sick a lot…But also, I don't think I was taking proper care of myself. Um, I think I was overextending myself. So that means I wasn't sleeping. Well, I wasn't eating very well because of like anxiety and like just feelings of loneliness and unwantedness during that time."

Unfortunately, due to the stress of classes and being Black at the University, her mental health was compromised, and she was not coping to the best of her abilities. Yasmine was probably experiencing racial battle fatigue (Arnold et al. 2016; Franklin 2019). For some students, mental health was deemed as poor. Students like Aaliyah, Farrah, Kianna, and Marie

expressed feelings of strain, anxiousness, overthinking, frustration, and wearisome. Overall, their mental health was stated as not their best. Unfortunately, this was a common consensus among many of the student participants in this study. The University is an academically rigorous school; especially for students who major in science courses and are on the pre-med track. However, for Black students, there are additional stressors such as racism, discrimination, and racial microaggressions they experience daily that White students do not have to experience (DuBois 1904; Delgado and Stefancic 2017; McGee and Stovall 2015). Also, for these Black women, sexism is yet another stressor they must deal with and battle with on campus and within the classroom (Apugo 2019; Corbin et al. 2018; Dade et al. 2015; Newton 2023).

Additionally, Valerie's mental health was not the best mainly because of how White students perceived her. Last year specifically she felt sad overall.

BK: "How was your health during this time?"

V: "And I think at first last year, it kind of made me sad, like worried like what am I doing that's making people think like I'm someone to be scared of or like not approachable or like, you know, just someone that they could talk to."

As a woman, it can be challenging to be present within institutions, especially as a Black woman. Valerie noted how she was offended because it was assumed she was mean and unapproachable when she felt she was a nice person. Black women often get judged and stereotyped as unfriendly, rude, unapproachable, etc. However, that is mainly because society has created these implicit biases against how Black women are without giving Black women the chance to show their true selves (Corbin et al. 2018; Newton 2023). Society wants women,

especially Black to always smile while in public. An example is how men will walk past a Black woman and say phrases like, “Why aren’t you smiling”, “Just smile” or “Can you smile for me” as if Black women can’t walk around and simply be present. This can be seen on predominantly white campuses and institutions. White students assume just Valerie is not walking around with a smile plastered on her face and that she is automatically unapproachable. Valerie was inadvertently labeled as an angry Black woman. Black women are given this negative stereotype typically by White people when they are characterized as confrontational when they speak with directness and show assertiveness in the classroom, or workplace, or are perceived as “difficult” to work with others (Brown 2019; Kohli 2018; Pearce 2019). Yet, when White women speak up and voice their opinions, concerns, or emotions around experiences and topics they are rewarded. The angry Black woman narrative negatively depicts Black women for simply being present in society (Brown 2019).

Brittany discussed how the level of stress she was experiencing, while familiar, took a toll on her mental and physical health. Her school load was challenging, which meant she had to spend more time studying for her coursework. Due to racial microaggressions (like others) where non-Black students did not want to study with her, she was forced to deal with more stress and anxiety and unfortunately, was sleeping less. She noted during that semester she spent most of her time in the library studying. Brittany was isolated from her friends and peers during this period. Isolation can also lead one to question their intellectual abilities and impact mental health (Miles et al. 2020; Sue et al. 2011). Sleep is important for various reasons and one of those reasons is to allow the brain and mind to rest, retain information, and reset (Pizarro and Kohli 2020). With the lack of sleep, it started to affect her overall school performance and mental health, which are symptoms of racial battle fatigue.

There were times in Nicole's academic career when her mental health was not the best. At times, she felt she was doing something wrong in her classes because she did not feel smart enough. Even so, many days she did not want to or feel up to going to class. She was extremely tired and exhausted and her attention span within class was bad. Some days she was unable to participate in class discussions and felt mentally drained.

N: "Like maybe it feels like I don't really know what I'm talking about when they try to correct me. And it kind of makes me think I'm not smart enough or like I'm not doing something right. That kind of just affects your mental health. It makes you not want to go to class and makes you not want to participate in the class work."

With these feelings of not feeling smart enough in this academic setting and environment, tiresome, lack of attention, and mentally drained, Nicole started to experience racial battle fatigue. These are all social-psychological and behavioral stress responses from racial battle fatigue, which ultimately affected her school performance. All the feelings and emotions Nicole was experiencing were more than just adjusting to the academic life at the University; it was the countless racial microaggressions she experienced time and time again of feeling like a second-class citizen, having to work twice as hard as a Black student, etc. This amounted to her feeling defeated in ways academically and tired of mentally fighting this battle (Arnold et al. 2016; Franklin 2019; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Lilly et al. 2018; Pizarro and Kohli 2020).

One of the male students, Terrell, noted how his mental health was relatively low and self-rated his health a four during his time at the University.

BK: "How was your health during this time?"

T: “I would say it’s pretty stressful, because as a Black student like you want to speak up for yourself but also you don’t want to be labeled as the angry Black man on campus. So, it’s often difficult trying to navigate how to respond to microaggressions on campus in a way that’s productive and isn’t gonna make you look crazy.”

Imagine wanting to address situations and experiences that impact your mental health but being afraid of being labeled an angry Black man because of your race. Society has stereotyped Black men and women as the “angry Black person” when expressing discrimination and racist behaviors toward them, but when White people do the same, they are justified for their feelings, emotions, and actions (Brown 2019; Kohli 2018; Pearce 2019). There is no label or stereotype for when White people, especially in predominantly white spaces, express anger. Because of the white habitus of their peers, they are not only justified for their feelings but emphasized as well (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006; Burke 2012). Not to mention the intersectional experiences of being a Black man in America. Black men are viewed as violent because of their race and gender; especially within predominantly white spaces (Lui et al. 2022; Nadal et al. 2014; Torres-Harding et al. 2020).

5.5 Coping Mechanisms

One of the most common coping strategies students engaged in was simply being around other Black students outside of the classroom and being surrounded by the Black student community. These counter spaces are safe spaces; where students can engage with other Black students about their experiences on campus and find solace (Ong, Smith, and Ko 2018; Solorzano and Villalpando 1998; Solorzano and Yosso 2002; Yosso and Lopez 2010). Five of the students noted in their interviews how surrounding themselves with the Black community and having friends who look like them allowed them the freedom to be themselves and feel safe.

One student, Terrell, mentioned how talking to other Black students was helpful and a healthy coping strategy.

BK: "Were there any specific ways you coped with the experience?"

T: "I feel like talking to other Black students is pretty helpful. Yeah, because we all like to experience the same things. So, it's comforting knowing that I'm not the only one, and instead of expressing that anger towards other people. We get to express it together in a community bonding moment. So, kind of like productive anger."

Terrell used an adaptive coping mechanism, which was surrounding himself with other Black students on campus. With this strategy, he utilized the techniques of discussing race, joining a forum, and seeking emotional support (DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016; Lui et al. 2022). Another student also noted how she found comfort in engaging with other Black students but specifically sought out upperclassmen for advice on how to navigate the University as a Black student. This form of mentorship for Black students is crucial for their mental health. While it may not eliminate, it can help them navigate and pivot during times of racial microaggressions and how best to handle situations (Corbin et al. 2018; Kohli 2018).

Nicole and Farrah discussed how the Black student community (Kelly and Winkle-Wagner 2017; Ong et al. 2018) was helpful with their studying outside of the classroom because typically non-Black students did not want to study with them.

F: "So it would be all of us banning together to take these quizzes, like even if maybe not all of us could take it at the same time…It was nice being around Black students and having that collaboration, but it wasn't by choice, but by survival."

Farrah made a valid point when she said it was by survival. As a Black student maneuvering in predominantly white spaces, it is important to understand how you will be perceived in situations and what is the best approach to succeed and thrive in these spaces. It is important to note that regardless of the situation, through the white habitus and implicit biases, White people will subconsciously band together (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006; Burke 2012). This means that Black students must understand that one strategy to successfully operate in white spaces is to align themselves with others as resources for social and emotional support. These adaptive coping strategies can have a positive impact on one's overall mental health (Hernández and Villodas 2020).

Moreover, while most of the students identified their coping mechanisms as talking and immersing themselves within the Black community, one student engaged in journaling. Nicole talked about how she lives in a Black women's hall, which is one floor of a dormitory dedicated to Black women residents. This Black women's initiative is fairly new for the University. Nicole discussed how the racial microaggressions impact her and her friends and one specific day of the week, they engage in self-definition journaling.

N: "I live in like the Black woman's hall. So, everyone in my hall is Black, which is the best decision I made coming here. We have self-care like on Tuesday; we had a self-definition meeting. We journaled about like who we are and that's something really important to me."

Journaling has been viewed as a healthy therapeutic activity to release stress and anxiety surrounding life's challenges and events. Journaling is an adaptive coping mechanism because it

allows the participant to express their feelings and emotions healthily, while also centering one's thoughts on paper. "Black women's presence on campus is overlooked and undervalued or, in other words, erased and invalidated by white students on campus" (Newton 2023:8). Black women not only experience racial microaggressions but also gendered discrimination as well (Apugo 2019; Corbin et al. 2018; Dade et al. 2015; Newton 2023; Ong et al. 2018). Spaces like the Black women's hall and initiatives like journaling about themselves allow Black female students at a PWI to escape the white habitus and engage with other Black women about their experiences, as well as uplift one another (Ong et al. 2018). Black women's spaces are a safe space and a necessity for Black women to escape the patriarchy as a whole and the white habitus (Kelly and Winkle-Wagner 2017).

While most of the students displayed adaptive coping mechanisms, one, Aaliyah noted how she felt she did not cope well with racial microaggressions during her time at the University. Mostly, she avoided situations and experiences to speak out against micro-aggressors, which can be viewed as maladaptive. Avoidant coping strategies are seen as negative and unhealthy because they are viewed as passive measures, where people pretend the racial microaggression did not occur (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016; Kohli 2018; Sanchez et al. 2018).

BK: "How was your mental health during this time?"

A: "I think about it a lot more being here than I did at home. Like how I'm being perceived by others and I kind of feel like that put a strain on me. Like made me really anxious about what people think about me and I kind of like overthink social interactions…that has had a negative effect on me."

BK: “How did you cope during this time?”

A: “I don’t really think I do. I don’t think I do a good job at it at all. I don’t think I’m good at coping. Like I tell myself just be normal…Most of the time, just like avoid situations and then it kind of like spirals into something…I feel like I need to get better and like addressing situations and being more confident in my ability to do that.”

Unfortunately, everyone did not positively deal with racial microaggressions. Aaliyah admitted to avoiding situations at times, which is viewed as maladaptive (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020). However, in the case of racial microaggressions, it is hard to consistently react or be proactive in situations because we are human. Black people are allowed to shield themselves from the constant and daily racism and discrimination that is overtly in their faces. There may be times when the situation is too cumbersome, and you want to move on, or you are so exhausted due to racial battle fatigue that you pick and choose your battles. Yet, this can be seen as a form of resistance (Solorzano and Bernal 2001; Yosso * 2005). Deciding what you can mentally handle, deciding what you want to fight for at that moment, and deciding if it is worth your energy are all forms of resistance. Resistance to racial microaggressions and discrimination can be viewed as an adaptive coping strategy because understanding what you can handle and prioritizing your mental health is a way of setting boundaries (DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016). If Black students and faculty addressed every instance of racism, discrimination, and racial microaggressions in every aspect of their lives, they would live in a state of mental exhaustion with no joy or happiness. That is no way to live and such a disheartening quality of life.

Within this study, Black students felt like second-class citizens, experienced ascription of intelligence, and felt unwanted while on campus and within the classroom by their White peers

and professors. Between being questioned by peers and faculty on their intellect, being socially outcasted by White students, and feeling ignored by the institution, there were many experiences of racism and discrimination they encountered. Unfortunately, these experiences negatively impacted their physical and mental health, which led to them experiencing racial battle fatigue. However, many of the students utilized social groups, friendships, and Black spaces as a refuge from racist and discriminatory encounters to improve their mental health; as well as other ways to cope such as journaling and resistance.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Overview of Faculty Results

Black faculty in this study experienced racial microaggressions in the classroom and on campus and unfortunately, impacted their overall mental health. Ascription of intelligence was a common theme found in the results of the Black faculty participants. Claude's entire CV was misread by a supervisor to justify a work evaluation, Erin experienced imposter syndrome by comparing herself to her White colleagues, and Darrell noted how imposter syndrome is present within the minds of some Black faculty at PWIs. While all the faculty are deserving to be at the University and are more than qualified, the university at times did not make them feel intellectually accepted, welcomed, or seen. They started to question their worth and started to compare themselves to others, such as the number of publications they had, their overall work ethic, and their desire to even teach at the University. Because of the racial microaggressions they encountered, they questioned their presence within this institution and whether staying was worth their time or patience.

Some of the Black faculty experienced feeling like a second-class citizen in the classroom, in meetings, and on campus. Some of the faculty like Darrell and Naomi were verbally disrespected by White students, had their teaching pedagogies questioned, and addressed as intellectually inferior to their White colleagues. Unfortunately, this theme was experienced majorly by the Black male faculty members. Darrell and Claude both explained how they had difficulties addressing the leaders and their White colleagues at the University and felt the need to code-switch to better protect themselves from negative stereotypes and racial

microaggressions. They both used the phrase “you must work twice as hard to receive half the credit” as fuel and motivation for their careers; one for survival within academia, and two as motivation to be better than their White counterparts and prove people wrong as Black male scholars.

Powerlessness was a theme found in the results of the Black faculty participants. Participants like Lydia and Sharon shared their experiences of racial microaggressions with their White colleagues and superiors to address the situation and find solutions. However, they were left feeling ignored and overlooked as a Black woman in academia. Black women are often overlooked because of their double disadvantage of being Black and being a woman. Faculty are encouraged to speak up to address situations, yet if you are a Black woman, you are encouraged to be silent. Erin experienced powerlessness when she knew it was time for a conversation to be had involving her salary. She knew she was being underpaid and wanted to open the line of discussion to be paid her worth. However, there was pushback throughout her salary negotiation, and she felt powerless. Faculty like Claude and Naomi were met with feelings of powerlessness while in the classroom from White students. They were presented with blatant disrespect and rudeness from their White students and left with an internal mind battle of, “Should I address the situation now and deal with the consequences or ignore the current situation and hope I am not jeopardizing my mental health at the end?” Powerlessness has impacted the mental health of some of this study’s participants which led to racial battle fatigue.

Gender also played a role in the faculty’s experiences of racial microaggression at a PWI (Apugo 2019; Corbin et al. 2018; Dade et al. 2015; Newton 2023). While both men and women experienced the effects of second-class citizenship, the male faculty members expressed more concerns and emotions surrounding this theme. They experienced feeling like second-class

citizens in the classroom, as well as with colleagues. They were mislabeled (e.g., name/title) and challenged often by their White students, as well as treated as intellectually and socially beneath their White colleagues. Darrell and Claude often felt the need to work harder than their peers, which motivated and stressed them out all at the same time. The Black male faculty members expressed the challenges of being a Black man in academia and how they must code-switch and challenge racial stereotypes about Black men and their intelligence to survive academia, especially a PWI.

6.2 Overview of Student Results

Some of the Black student participants experienced feeling like a second-class citizen within the classroom and on campus. There were times when the student participants felt like a second-class citizen while simply existing on campus. Terrell has been brushed past and bumped into while walking on the University's campus daily, while Nicole was treated as an invisible person when a White male student closed the door once the White female student walked into the dormitory building. Others like Rayna were asked the one question that Black people have been asked time and time again by White people, "Where are you from, no, where are you really from" by a White professor in class and feel as if her answer was not accepted by the professor by stating the United States. Kianna felt violated by her professor who allowed a photographer to take pictures of the one Black student table in her class without her consent. Also, the BSA house in general was not given the same care and attention as the other student organization houses.

Ascription of intelligence was one of the major themes found within the students' results. Black students felt intellectually inferior at times when White students and professors constantly questioned their knowledge. Students like Yasmine, Valerie, Marie, Aaliyah, and Rayna have

felt intellectually inferior compared to their White counterparts in the classroom. Constantly being criticized for your knowledge and intellect is not only disheartening but makes one question their intelligence. White students decided they were intellectually superior to Terrell and were convinced he did not deserve a decent grade within their biology lab. Yet, he contributed the same (if not more) amount of information, time, and effort to that of his lab mates and was wrongly dismissed by his White male instructor. Instances like this make Black students feel they cannot handle the workload that the University provides even know they were admitted to this institution because of their knowledge, skill, and potential.

Findings from this study revealed a new theme of feeling unwanted, which was not found in previous literature studying the effects of racial microaggressions and discrimination towards Black students. Many of the students in this study felt overwhelmingly unwanted at the University by White students, faculty, and the institution itself. There were instances where students expressed how the university either deliberately or subconsciously made them feel unwanted and as a second-class citizen as a Black student. For instance, when the university decided that Black students were going to walk the land of a slave plantation without verbal warning or consent from the students at a University-led event to encourage students and inspire them to be students and scholars. The purpose of the events is to persuade students to attend the University and make them feel like they belong to the university before the first day of class. Yet, this particular event made them unwanted and uncomfortable, and not belong in this space. Or when they strongly suggested that students (mainly Black female students) take a remedial chemistry course because of their certainty that without said course, they would fail and not succeed as a scholar. Unfortunately, many of the students in this study expressed feelings of

being unwanted on campus and within the classroom. Sadly, feeling unwanted and isolated can (and has) led to racial battle fatigue for some of the student participants.

6.3 Similarities and Differences between Students and Faculty

The findings of this study reveal similarities and differences between Black students and Black faculty at the University. One similarity this study highlighted was how both Black students and faculty experienced racial battle fatigue. Racial battle fatigue is the result of constant and daily experiences of racial microaggressions and the physical and mental exhaustion that follows. For Black faculty, many of their experiences of racial microaggressions were either pressed upon them by their White colleagues and students or by trying to advocate and change a system that is not broken; but a system that was not created to benefit them whatsoever (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Their feelings of feeling powerless within their institution and unsure how to either navigate the space or decide if it is time to move on. For Black students, those feelings of being unwanted within an institution by White students, professors, and white spaces. Constantly proving they belong and feeling burned out within the process. Students and faculty both experienced ascription of intelligence and feeling like second-class citizens on the University's campus. Those experiences of constantly proving your intellect, proving your worth, and wanting to be treated like a human being take a mental and emotional toll on people (Miles et al. 2020; Sue et al. 2011).

Another similarity is how both students and faculty had experiences of the strong Black man/woman narratives. The strong Black man/woman trope suggests that Black men and women can handle all physical, emotional, and social situations and are expected to maneuver through life without expressing (verbally or behaviorally) their emotions to any experiences. This phrase or narrative is not a badge of honor or a compliment; but a hurtful realization that Black men and

women are not allowed to show their vulnerability to the public or simply feel emotions as human beings (Apugo 2019; Corbin et al. 2018). Students like Brittany and faculty like Darrell expressed how in the classroom or on campus, they are expected to not wear their emotions on their sleeve and move on because they are Black, and in Darrell's case, a Black man. Unfortunately, students and faculty are not able to express their valid emotions about experiencing racial microaggressions, yet their White counterparts are given the space and freedom to express their range of emotions without being negatively stereotyped.

One difference this study highlighted was the themes experienced by students and faculty. The students in this study experienced feeling unwanted by peers and the institution, while the faculty experienced powerlessness. This difference may be due to the individual's status and age. Most students are young adults (~18-22) who are on their own for the first time in their lives and want to be in spaces where they belong. They are learning about themselves and understanding their needs and wants in life. Faculty are adults who have established themselves in the world and want to be seen, heard, and respected as their colleagues and peers within the workplace. Because of racial microaggressions and institutional racism, it is difficult for Black faculty at a PWI to obtain the same level of power as their White counterparts.

6.4 Overview of Participants' Mental Health

Overall, the mental health of all the participants was affected due to the racial microaggressions they experienced either in the classroom or on the University's campus. Both students and faculty had similar experiences when it came to their mental health. Racial microaggressions have been known to negatively impact one's mental health and our participants were no different (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Lilly et al. 2018; McGee and Stovall 2015; Nadal et al. 2014; Sue et al. 2007; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). The students expressed feelings of stress

and anxiety, while depressive symptoms can also be inferred in this situation (Lilly et al. 2018). Students like Terrell and Yasmine tried to speak up for themselves about their experiences to instructors and professors yet were dismissed and required to handle the situation on their own. Many of the students (Aaliyah, Yasmine, Brittany) dealt with mental health issues because of the racial microaggressions surrounding ascription of intelligence; where their White peers ignored or talked down upon their intellect and academic contributions to their groups (Brown 2019; DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016; Endo 2015; Nadal et al. 2014). Also, feeling like a second-class citizen on a campus where they pride themselves on being diverse and inclusive can be mentally draining. Unfortunately, it can be deduced that many of the students in this study experienced racial battle fatigue, where the cumulation of racial microaggressions started to weigh heavy on their mental and emotional health (Arnold et al. 2016; Corbin et al. 2018; Franklin 2019; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Pizarro and Kohli 2020). Also, some like Yasmine and Brittany started to lose sleep and the racial microaggressions had a negative impact on their physical health (Arnold et al. 2016).

For the faculty participants, there were similar experiences of ascription of intelligence and feeling like a second-class citizen as it pertains to their mental health. With the faculty participants, White students disrespecting them and treating them as second-class citizens within the class, where they are in control heavily weighed on some like Claude and Naomi (Allison 2008; Brown 2019; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Pearce 2019; Pittman 2012). Faculty like Erin, who had to constantly prove her intellect, credentials, and publications to be promoted within the institution is tiresome. For Black faculty to see their White colleagues have fewer publications, teach fewer classes, just do the bare minimum and constantly be praised for their contributions negatively impacted their mental health (Brown 2019; Jayakumar et al. 2009; Kohli 2014; Miles

et al. 2020; Peteet et al. 2015). However, the biggest challenge for the faculty was the sense of feeling powerless within academia. Some faculty like Lydia and Claude who spoke up within meetings and to supervisors about the racial microaggressions and injustices they experienced, were dismissed. Feeling powerless and not in control can take a toll on one's mental health and for faculty like Naomi lead to racial battle fatigue (Lilly et al. 2018; Lui et al. 2022; Nadal et al. 2014; Torres-Harding et al. 2020). However, for some, the racial battle fatigue became so cumbersome that it forced one out of an institution altogether.

6.5 Overview of Participants' Coping Mechanisms

Leaving an institution can become a coping mechanism for some, which it was for one participant. Other participants in this study coped by discussing race-related events with others, leaned on friends for social and emotional support, and spoke to those who micro-aggressed against them. Some participants engaged in more internal coping strategies such as journaling about recent events and going to the gym. Both of those strategies are also viewed as adaptive coping strategies, that have also been seen to improve one's physical and mental health (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016). However, there were participants who either engaged in maladaptive avoidant coping strategies or did not explicitly discuss how they cope with racial microaggressions.

Much of the literature discusses how maladaptive coping strategies are considered negative practices for their mental health, however, I would disagree. Black people throughout time have experienced racism and discrimination and are told to turn the other cheek or fight for what is right. Yet, fighting can mean different things for people. Some may fight with their voices, and some may decide to mentally shield themselves from racist experiences, which is considered resistance (Solorzano and Bernal 2001; Yosso * 2005). Resistance is a form of

fighting that is thought of as passive but it is a way to set boundaries to protect one's mental health (DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby 2016).

6.6 Sociological Implications

Previous research on racial microaggressions focused on specific groups: Black college students, Black faculty, Black medical students, Black women professors, etc. However, there is little research that focuses on both Black students and faculty. Not to mention, both students and faculty attending/working at the same institution. This research is necessary to understand the similarities and differences between the two groups at the same institution and better understand how to provide beneficial tools and resources for them to navigate and succeed within the institution. The University has prided itself on being diverse and inclusive for years, yet, according to the participants of this study, it is just a mirage. The University is diverse because they consistently admit students from all racial/ethnic backgrounds from around the world, however, their inclusivity is lacking. From the faculty perspective, the University hires Black faculty yet turns a blind eye when they speak up about experiences of feeling like a second-class citizen and feeling powerless on campus and within the classroom. Black faculty from this study did not feel included when it came to the politics of the university. From a student perspective, the University "welcomes" students from all racial/ethnic backgrounds yet ignores students' pleas of racial inequality and discrimination in the classroom and constantly feels unwanted in a place that places White students on a pedestal. The overall campus culture creates spaces for Black students and faculty (e.g., BSA house, Black women's hall, DEI, and task force initiatives, etc.), but allows their white superiority mentality and white habitus to interfere and diminish any real progress to make Black students and faculty feel valued, respected, and wanted at the institution.

This specific study helps to shape the lived experiences of racial microaggressions from Black students and faculty at one PWI in the southeast region of the United States. Utilizing both racial battle fatigue and critical race theory, this study highlighted the effects of racial microaggressions on both groups and revealed how both students and faculty experienced feeling like a second-class citizen and ascription of intelligence. While there were differences found among the groups' results, the similarities emphasize how regardless of identifying as a student or faculty, certain racial microaggressions may be experienced at a predominantly white institution. Racial battle fatigue (Arnold et al. 2016; Franklin 2019; Hernández and Villodas 2020; Lilly et al. 2018; Pizarro and Kohli 2020), the strong Black man/woman narrative (Apugo 2019; Corbin et al. 2018), feeling unwanted and powerless, ascription of intelligence (Brown 2019; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Endo 2015; Nadal et al. 2014), and treated as second-class citizens (Amos 2020; Brown 2019; Endo 2015; Rodriguez-Mojica et al. 2020; Torres-Harding et al. 2020) were experienced by both students and faculty in this study. All these themes and commonalities reveal that Black people in a PWI will always be treated as outsiders and inferior to their White counterparts. These themes show how Black students and faculty try to push the narrative of what it means to be a student or faculty member, challenge the negative stereotypes of Black people, and prove they are intellectually and socially deserving to be in this space. However, that will never be enough because of the superior mentality of White people and their shared white habitus. Black people will always be treated as second-best compared to their White counterparts and powerless within these spaces. Unfortunately, because academic institutions were created with only White people in mind, the institution itself is set up to fail Black students and faculty (Childs 2019; Collins et al. 2021; Newton 2023).

Ascription of intelligence and feeling like a second-class citizen is a burden Black people face within PWIs and unfortunately, due to interest convergence, there is a lack of priority or care by White leaders to eradicate racism and discrimination or minimize the physical and mental impact of the experiences. Critical race theorists have noted that interest convergence and the difficulties of whites addressing racism, it is difficult for Black people to thrive within these spaces, and it is their due diligence to address the matter. However, because of racial battle fatigue, many Black students and faculty are mentally exhausted from the sheer thought of tackling such a cause. Within this study, some participants addressed racial microaggressions head-on and spoke up in situations, yet the results showed how White superiors and colleagues handled the situations poorly (if at all).

6.7 Conclusion

To conclude how racial microaggressions have impacted Black students and faculty, I would like to quote one of my participants. “Yesterday is a memory, tomorrow is a mirage, and today is what only exists.” This quote perfectly sums up how racial microaggressions will occur not just in predominantly white institutions but also in society. “Yesterday is a memory” reminds me of how Black people in the United States remember slavery and how Black people were treated during post-slavery years and the Civil Rights era. During the time of how Black people were treated not so much the microaggressions, but the macroaggressions that were outwardly experienced and expressed. A time when it was expected to be treated differently solely because of the color of their skin. Black students and faculty may revert to this thinking when experiencing racial microaggressions within these institutions; treated as a person, who is considered inferior in the sense of intellect and power. “Tomorrow is a mirage” reminds me of how Black people view the future of racial microaggressions here in the United States. This

"post-racist" or "post-racial" society that White people try to implement in the minds of Black people is a mirage or illusion.

Unfortunately, racism and racial microaggressions (and macroaggressions) may not ever leave because of the implicit biases that White people have over Black people and the white habitus as their shield against the racist experiences such as racial microaggressions that Black people have (and continue to) endure. Bonilla-Silva stated, "White habitus creates an atmosphere in which hypersegregation seems proper, thereby justifying inequality and maintaining the existing racial hierarchy" (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006:233). The white habitus creates this illusion that the White race is superior to all other races, especially the Black race. Black students and faculty understand that the comments, remarks, underlining tones, behaviors, and actions are sometimes expected within these institutions because of their white peers' ignorance of their own implicit biases about Black people and negative stereotypes. However, "today is what only exists" is how racial microaggressions may be in PWIs and society. At this moment in time, racial microaggressions thrive in PWIs because of whiteness and the white habitus. Regardless of status (student or faculty) you will experience racial microaggressions. A status or position cannot shield a Black person from experiencing racial microaggression within a predominantly white institution, but it is time that we try to if not eradicate them, at least provide the resources and tools for Black people to endure and cope while allowing White people to recognize their part in all of this and have room for consequences and growth amid it all.

6.8 Limitations and Future Directions

Within this study's scope, three important limitations are found within this study. The first limitation is that the results and findings from this study are limited to one private institution and cannot be assumed or generalized to all predominantly white institutions in the United

States. Studying and analyzing the experiences of Black students and faculty at other PWIs may yield different findings with the following factors in mind: the type of institution (private or public), the location, and the size of the university. While it may be implied that Black students and faculty from PWIs around the US experience racial microaggressions, not all may experience themes such as ascription of intelligence, second-class citizenship, racial battle fatigue, and the strong Black man/woman narrative. Other themes from previous literature or new themes may emerge from the experiences of Black students and faculty at other predominantly white institutions. Future studies can research and examine the effects of racial microaggressions on Black students and faculty at multiple PWIs and do comparisons of this and others' research results. The second limitation is that the results and findings are limited to Black students and faculty who reside in the Southeast of the United States. These findings cannot be generalized to predominantly white institutions in other regions of the country. Since this institution is in the Southeast region of the United States, racial microaggressions and discrimination may look different compared to other public, private, or rural locations. Findings from predominantly white institutions in other parts of the country may yield different findings. Future studies can explore the mental health consequences and effects of racial microaggressions by incorporating the geographical location of Black students and faculty in the US. The third limitation is the sample size of this study. This study had a total of 18 participants (11 students and 7 faculty members); which may be deemed as low and future studies should recruit more participants from both populations to further examine themes, mental health consequences, and effects of racial microaggressions on Black students and faculty at PWIs.

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