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An examination of racist and sexist microaggressions on college campuses

Charisse Camilla Levchak
University of Iowa

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AN EXAMINATION OF RACIST AND SEXIST MICROAGGRESSIONS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

by

Charisse Camilla Levchak

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Sociology in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

August 2013

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To my Creator, my mother, my husband, and countless individuals who have made this journey blessed and beautiful.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was made possible because of the participants who sacrificed their time in order to share their experiences and beliefs with me. They played a crucial role, not only for this study but also in terms of advancing research in the bourgeoning areas of microaggressions. The information that they provided is invaluable and will be crucial in understanding covert and overt acts of aggression and violence throughout society, but particularly on college campuses.

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Graduate Studies Research Award for financially supporting the dissertation process.
ABSTRACT

Higher education has been linked to upward mobility in recent decades. Higher education has particularly served as a road to upward mobility for disadvantaged racial and gender groups. While United States colleges and universities strive to make their institutions, programs, and departments more diverse, students who are racial minorities still experience racism and those who are women still experience sexism. Colleges and universities are often considered bastions of progressive liberalism that will challenge racism and sexism; however, the seeds of American racism and sexism that were planted at the country’s inception and that were sustained by the blatant subjugation of people of color and women continue to generate race-based and gender-based oppression within present-day American society and within America’s academic institutions. Therefore, racism and sexism are important to explore, since their presence in educational institutions serves to reify racial and gender based boundaries in achievement and well-being.

To this end, research has inadequately determined the prevalence of overt and covert oppression within academic institutions. Using a sample of college students at a predominantly White institution with a dominant sports and fraternity culture, and a diverse institution without a dominant sports and fraternity culture, I: 1) examine the prevalence of covert and overt racist and
sexist experiences among college students and develop models of their occurrence by gender and race; 2) test double jeopardy and multiple jeopardy theory by finding out if women of color experience more racism and sexism than other groups; 3) examine the prevalence of racist, post-racist, sexist and post-sexist beliefs among college students and develop models of their origins by race and gender, 4) examine how environmental context has an impact on students’ experiences and beliefs by comparing college students at a predominantly White institution and at a diverse institution; and 5) conduct a path analysis in order to test the causal relationships between demographic factors (race, gender and institution type), experiences (racist and sexist victimization) and attitudes/outlook (racist, post-racist, sexist, post-sexist, campus climate and stress).
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Higher education has been linked to upward mobility in recent decades. Higher education has particularly served as a road to upward mobility for disadvantaged racial and gender groups. While United States colleges and universities strive to make their institutions, programs, and departments more diverse, students who are racial minorities still experience racism and those who are women still experience sexism. Colleges and universities are often considered bastions of progressive liberalism that will challenge racism and sexism; however, the seeds of American racism and sexism that were planted at the country’s inception and were sustained by the blatant subjugation of people of color and women continue to generate race-based and gender-based oppression within American society and its academic institutions. Therefore, racism and sexism are important to explore, since their presence in educational institutions serves to reify race-based and gender-based boundaries in achievement and well-being.

Even though laws, policies, and procedures are in place to protect targeted group members from blatant manifestations of racism and sexism, it is often
difficult to detect and to remedy modern day oppression due to its intricate and insidious nature. The Civil rights movement of the 1960’s and the Women’s Liberation movement of the 1970’s influenced legislation (e.g. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972) that was crafted to protect people of color and women from overt manifestations of racism and sexism (although it is arguable how effective these policies and their implementation have been). However, these measures are ineffective at protecting targeted groups from forms of oppression that are more underhanded – such as covert microaggressions.

*Microaggressions* include both overt and covert forms of hostility that can be verbal, non-verbal, or visual. Race-based microaggressions are acts of aggression directed towards people of color because of their race, while gender-based microaggressions are directed towards women because of their gender. Microaggressions can result in feelings of frustration, anger, sadness, belittlement, and alienation. This can lead to depression, anxiety, and trauma (Nadal 2008). For students, experiencing microaggressions can derail short-term and long-term scholastic and professional goals. Microaggressions can also compromise one’s well-being and negatively affect one’s academic experience. For groups who have historically been subjugated, microaggressions on campus can negatively impact their chances of obtaining upward mobility through
higher education. This harmful impact can be even more detrimental for individuals who fall into multiple low social status groups.

Furthermore, microaggressions are strongly related to racist, post-racist, sexist, and post-sexist beliefs. I define these terms in the following ways: 1) a racist belief is a view that people of color are inferior to White people; 2) a sexist belief is a view that women are inferior to men; 3) a post-racist belief is a minimization or denial of present-day racism; it is also a perception that racism existed in the US during a past period, but racism does not exist in contemporary America; and 4) a post-sexist belief is a minimization or denial of present-day sexism; it is also a perception that sexism existed in the US during a past period, but sexism does not exist in contemporary America. Post-racism and post-sexism are terms used by individuals prominent in popular culture, such as social commentators, television reporters or print media pundits. Post-racism and post-sexism are not terms typically used and defined by social scientists; however, I find these definitions useful in illuminating modern forms of racism and sexism as well as contemporary racist and sexist beliefs. Racist and sexist beliefs in contemporary America have morphed into covert views and expressions, as well as so-called “informed beliefs”. In some current social circumstances, I posit that racism and sexism have become acceptable, as long as one does a politically correct and “educated” nod to racism and sexism in past
US culture. These definitions demonstrate how racist and sexist beliefs can persist, and also have evolved into more nuanced concepts – as long as one acknowledges past offenses, one can deny present realities.

Also, note that the definitions do not include a clear-cut time threshold for when these new kinds of racism and sexism emerged. For example, some media persons claim that these kinds of beliefs came into being after Barack Obama was elected President; others assert that they began after the Civil Rights era. It is out of the scope of the present study to discern exactly when post-racism and post-sexism became part of American culture. I will assume that these beliefs are present now, and are based on vague notions of “sometime past” when it would be perceived that racism and sexism existed, and also perceived that it does not exist today.

Microaggressions are connected to these concepts in two main ways. First, racist, post-racist, sexist, and post-sexist beliefs often preempt racist and sexist microaggressions. Microaggressors, or perpetrators, usually hold these beliefs and prejudices before they commit an oppressive act or microaggression. Second, when individuals hold post-racist or post-sexist beliefs, it is likely that they will ignore or excuse the occurrence of the microaggressions they committed, witnessed, or are privy to since they are invested in the idea that racism or sexism is dead.
In other words, people who hold post-racist or post-sexist beliefs: 1) deny and minimize present-day oppression by suggesting that racism or sexism are no longer major social problems, 2) they engage in racist or sexist behavior, and 3) when they are confronted about their behavior, they say that their behavior is not problematic since racism or sexism does not exist. Although a lack of awareness may be the cause of post-racist or post-sexist beliefs, it is likely that many who hold these beliefs do so with the intent to excuse their oppressive behaviors. When racist, post-racist, sexist, and post-sexist beliefs are present within academic institutions, they may lead to the manifestation of microaggressions and inequalities within the school.

Fortunately, affirmative action policy and efforts to increase diversity in institutions attempt to level the playing field for individuals by removing racist and sexist barriers that would otherwise block people of color and women from pursuing and achieving upward mobility through higher education. However, affirmative action policies only address a small portion of diversity issues in relation to higher education. Creating a diverse student body is one issue but retaining a diverse student body and guarding students from microaggressions on campus is another issue. In other words, we need policies, procedures, programs, and practices that will increase, retain, and protect a diverse student body.
Policies that combat race-based microaggressions should be implemented in all schools, but particularly in predominantly White institutions. At predominantly White institutions, underrepresented students oftentimes face discrimination and segregation from the White majority. They also lack the support, security, and solidarity that are needed to ensure a successful and safe academic experience (Price et al. 2009; Wilson and Constantine 1999). Research shows that the majority of identified perpetrators who committed violence toward minority students were White males who were oftentimes fraternity members (Ehrlich 1998; Perry 2010:267). Perpetrators also included faculty members and people without campus affiliations who were connected to White supremacist or other extremist groups (Ehrlich 1998; Perry 2010:267). The Anti-Defamation League (2008) reports that nearly one third of hate crimes occur on school grounds (Anti-Defamation League 2008). Levin and McDevitt (1993) present a typology of hate crime perpetrators. They explain that most perpetrators engaged in crimes for a variety of personal reasons such as “defending their territory”. Levin and McDevitt (1993) also discuss the concept of “retaliatory” hate crimes. Retaliatory hate crimes occur when White people believe that there is a wrongful intrusion of racial minorities into “White” environments and, in an attempt to preserve their territory, Whites lash out. In their study, Stotzer and Hossellman (2012) write: “Given that colleges and
universities are traditionally White domains, the increase of racial/ethnic minorities could potentially trigger resistance to their increasing presence through race-based hate crimes and other forms of ethnoviolence”.

Policies that combat gender-based microaggressions should be employed in all schools, but especially in schools with a prominent sports culture and a prevalent fraternity presence. Research shows that women at schools with a prominent sports culture and strong fraternity presence may be more likely to experience sexism in the form of sexual assaults and sexual aggression from male student athletes and fraternity members (Murnen and Kohlman 2007). Research also shows that membership in all-male groups like sports teams or fraternities is associated with attitudes related to sexual aggression and sexually aggressive behavior (Murnen and Kohlman 2007). Additionally, Murnen and Kohlman (2007) found a relationship between athletic participation and hypermasculinity, rape myth acceptance and self-report of sexual aggression. They found a similar relationship between fraternity membership and hypermasculinity, rape myth acceptance and self-report of sexual aggression. Humphrey and Kahn (2000) explain that while some athletic teams and fraternities do not foster environments that are conducive to sexual violence, others do. They distinguish between high-risk and low-risk sports teams and fraternities. High-risk groups usually live in group housing, and they hold unregulated parties where there is
alcohol and skewed gender-ratios. Humphrey and Kahn (2000) argue that the lack of regulation, intoxication and skewed gender ratios foster environments that are conducive to sexual violence and party rapes. Humphrey and Kahn (2000) also found that, compared to members of low-risk groups, members of high-risk sports teams and fraternities reported significantly higher levels of sexual aggression and hostility toward women and higher levels of male peer support for sexual violence toward women (Humphrey and Kahn 2000).

The challenges that students of color face at predominantly White institutions and the difficulties that women experience at schools with a dominant sports and fraternity culture need to be addressed. More specifically, students of color may experience more race-based microaggressions at predominantly White institutions, and women may experience more gender-based microaggressions at schools with a dominant sports and fraternity culture. Since microaggressions can be detrimental to student’s personal, academic, and professional well-being, academic institutions must work to eliminate both race-based and gender-based microaggressions on college campuses.

Racist and sexist microaggressions can not be disregarded. When oppression is ignored, it can not be prevented, reported, or eradicated. More specifically, if microaggressions are not addressed in academic institutions, people of color and women may experience higher levels of stress, lower
academic achievement, and lower well-being. In turn, this decreases their chances of upward mobility. Although there have been advancements for women and people of color, microaggressions, systems of oppression, and struggles for liberation continue to be present day realities within the United States. Manifestations of privilege and oppression still occur on the individual, institutional, structural, cultural, and systemic levels of society, particularly within our academic institutions (Hardiman and Jackson 2007). Therefore, it is extremely important to evaluate the current manifestations of oppression and microaggressions that occur within academic environments.

1.2 Purpose of The Study

To this end, research has inadequately determined the prevalence of overt and covert microaggressions within academic institutions. Research has specifically failed to examine the experiences of students of color with race-based microaggressions at predominantly White institutions. Similarly, research has inadequately examined women’s experience with gender-based microaggressions at institutions with a dominant sports and fraternity culture. While schools differ in a host of ways that can affect students’ well-being, it is essential to examine the experiences of students of color with race-based microaggressions at a predominantly White institution and at a racially diverse institution. It is also essential to examine women students’ experiences with
gender-based microaggressions at a school with a dominant sports and fraternity culture and a school without a dominant sports and fraternity culture. I define these crucial study parameters in the following ways: 1) a predominantly White institution: the majority of students are White (greater than 51% of student body); 2) a diverse institution: the total number of minority students enrolled is greater than 51% of student body (even if White students are the largest racial group, they do not outnumber minority groups when all minority groups are combined); 3) a dominant sports culture: sports are essential to the identity of the school and are important to the administration and students. Sports culture is deeply embedded into campus life in the forms of game days (the university community and other football fans attend home football games) and tailgating (where individuals who attend home football games begin celebrating the sports event – oftentimes beginning early in the morning and continuing throughout the day). Sports may generate a lot of revenue for the school; and 4) dominant fraternity culture: fraternities have a strong presence on campus. Fraternities have their own dedicated fraternity housing on or near campus. These distinctions are important in determining if race-based and gender-based microaggressions manifest differently depending on institution type. If there are differences in the manifestation of racism and sexism based on institution type,
policy and practice can be tailored to eradicate forms of oppression that are more likely to occur as a result of the institution type.

Even though the institutions used in this study differ in a variety of ways, they fit the study parameters very well and are good sites for studying race-based and gender-based microaggressions on college campuses. The first school, The University of Iowa, is a Midwestern, predominantly White college with a dominant sports and fraternity culture (U.S. News and World Report 2013). At The University of Iowa, approximately 77% of the student body is White (which fits the predominantly White parameter), while sports and Greek Life are described as being major elements of campus life (this fits the dominant sports and fraternity culture) (University of Iowa Admissions Website 2013; University Communication and Marketing Website 2013; U.S. News and World Report 2013). The second school, The University of Illinois at Chicago, is located in a large, diverse urban area and does not have a dominant sports and fraternity culture (Ramirez 2009). Approximately 60% of the student body is composed of students of color (University of Illinois at Chicago Office of Institutional Research 2013). The school is also described as not having a dominant fraternity or sports culture – since there is no fraternity housing on campus, and there is not a large sports program (Ramirez 2009; University of Illinois at Chicago Campus Programs Website 2013).
An overarching research question of this study is whether or not race-based and gender-based microaggressions will manifest differently at institutions that differ in terms of the above diversity and gender parameters. More specifically, I ask if: 1) race-based microaggressions will be more prevalent at a predominantly White institution; and 2) if gender-based microaggressions will be more prevalent at an institution with a dominant sports and fraternity culture. Using a sample of college students at a predominantly White school with a dominant sports and fraternity culture and a diverse institution without a dominant sports and fraternity culture, I: 1) examine the prevalence of covert and overt racist and sexist microaggressions among college students and develop models of their occurrence by gender and race; 2) test double jeopardy and multiple jeopardy theory by finding out if women of color experience more racism and sexism than other groups; 3) examine the prevalence of racist, post-racist, sexist, and post-sexist beliefs among college students and develop models of their origins by race and gender; 4) examine how environmental context has an impact on student’s experiences and beliefs by comparing college students at a predominantly White institution with a dominant sports and fraternity culture and at a diverse institution without a dominant sports and fraternity culture; and 5) conduct a path analyses to examine the relationships between demographic factors (race, gender, and institution type), experiences (racist and sexist
victimization), and attitudes/outlook (racist, post-racist, sexist, post-sexist, campus climate, and stress). The research questions are influenced by the current literature on microaggressions, racism, sexism, post-racism, post-sexism, and campus climate.

1.3 Importance of the Study

This study contributes to scholarship in sociology, social work and other social sciences that focus on the well-being of students and the fostering of healthy campus environments. The study also helps to illuminate the relationship between exposure to microaggressions and student’s well-being and stress. Research in this area will contribute knowledge to the field of sociology by examining how environmental context is related to students’ experiences and beliefs. This study will also add to research in the sociology of gender by revealing gender differences in exposure to microaggressions. It will also contribute to double and multiple jeopardy theory by examining the experiences of racism and sexism among women of color. It also explores the concepts of post-racism and post-sexism. This will be one of the first studies to conceptualize the notion of sexist microaggressions, since microaggressions have traditionally been used to describe racist behaviors. Not only is this line of research relevant, it is also timely as we strive to understand and eradicate acts of violence within our schools, workplaces, and throughout society. Finally, the
research provided a space for survey participants to share their experiences without judgment or revictimization.

This research could also inform future policy, programming, and practice. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination based on sex in education programs and activities that receive federal funding – it also protects students from sexual harassment and sexual violence. However, two shortcomings of Title IX are that it fails to capture many covert forms of sexism, and it is not explicitly written to protect students of color from overt or covert racism.

To ensure that equal opportunity policies are implemented correctly and efficiently, “Dear Colleague” letters are occasionally issued from the Office for Civil Rights (Office for Civil Right website 2011). Since this research chronicles common forms of overt and covert microaggressions, it can be used to inform future “Dear Colleague” letters that address both racism and sexism within federally funded institutions and programs.

To stay in compliance with federal policy like the Clery Act and Title IX related institutional policies, procedures, programs, or training are set in place. Schools can incorporate this research on microaggressions and campus climate in their policies and programs to generate positive change on campus and to increase the retention of women and students of color. Diversity and bystander
intervention training programs can also benefit from this research on microaggressions by teaching individuals how to identify microaggressions and how to safely interrupt them.

In summary, this research will add to the bourgeoning area of microaggressions. The knowledge gained through this study has the potential to inform policy, programming, and practice that can impact the lives, well-being, and success of all students – but particularly women and racially underrepresented students.

1.4 Summary of Chapters

This dissertation is divided into the following chapters. Chapter II reviews relevant literature on trends, explanations, and empirical analyses of modern day racism, sexism, and microaggressions throughout society and particularly within the academy. Chapter III will include a description of the data. Chapters IV through VIII will discuss the methods and results that are directly related to the four main hypotheses. Chapter IX provides an interpretation of the data, including the studies strengths, limitations, and implications for policy, programming, procedures, and practice that can directly address issues of racism and sexism within academia.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Two contains literature on the explanations, trends, empirical analyses, and theory regarding contemporary manifestations of racism and sexism. It also specifically addresses the racism and sexism that some students experience within the academy. Major trends will be addressed as well as the limitations of the current body of literature.

The following literature review supports the overarching premise that racist and sexist microaggressions are major problems throughout society and specifically within academic institutions. The literature review also shows that claims of post-racism and post-sexism are unfounded.

The review begins by providing a background on the legacy and continued presence of racism and sexism within society. I then present the concepts of post-racism and post-sexism and show that claims about racism and sexism being dead are groundless. Next, I present the concept of microaggressions. I discuss the prevalence of racist and sexist microaggressions in academia. I introduce the three main types of microaggressions: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. I also present the specific forms of microaggressions that I use as variables: 1) racist microassaults (overt racism), 2) sexist microassaults (overt sexism), 3) racist microinsults and
microinvalidations (covert racism), and 4) sexist microinsults and microinvalidations (covert sexism). I demonstrate how microaggressions exemplify the continued presence of racism and sexism and refute claims of post-racism and post-sexism. Finally, I present theory showing how students of color and women are especially targeted by racist and sexist microaggressions.

2.1 Background on Racism and Sexism

Since this dissertation examines racist and sexist microaggressions, it is essential to first examine race and gender as social categorizations and social statuses. The study also examines students’ racist and sexist beliefs, so it is essential to review literature on stereotypes and prejudices. In this section, there is also a discussion on how systems of oppression and privilege sustain racist and sexist microaggressions. This section concludes with a discussion on the role of cultural competence in reducing racist and sexist microaggressions.

2.1.1 Social Categorization and Social Status

To understand the complex nature of racist and sexist microaggressions, it is necessary to first understand race and gender as social categorizations and social statuses. Race and gender are primary social categories and are associated with physical markers that are visible and easily identifiable (Blaine 2007). Gender is a performance and is also associated with social cues and behaviors.
Physical or external similarities among a particular group of people may also lead others to believe that members of that group share internal qualities too (such as traits, abilities, or backgrounds) (Blaine 2007). We place individuals into primary categories spontaneously and uncontrollably; consequently, it has been argued that the instantaneous categorization of other people based on race and gender is unavoidable (Ito & Urland 2003).

Social categorization often leads to beliefs and expectations about how we think group members should participate within the private and public realms of society. Beliefs and expectations about group members participation soon results in the development of socially prescribed roles (Blaine 2007). For instance, the ideology of the separate spheres is the manifestation of beliefs and expectations that men are better suited for work outside of the home, and women are natural homemakers and caretakers who are not suited for work outside of the home (Land 1980). Furthermore, this ideology resulted in the socially prescribed roles of men being breadwinners and women being homemakers and caretakers.

Social status can be defined as the ranking, prestige, and privilege given to an individual “with respect to a socially important characteristic” (Hurst 2004:35). As a result, some people have low social status, while others have high social status (Hurst 2004:35).
For the purposes of this research, the main social categorizations that are examined include race (Black, White, Asian, and Latino) and gender (women and men). In this study social status is examined through a Critical Race lens where White Americans are viewed as having a higher social status than African Americans and other ethnic minorities (Penner and Saperstein 2008); as well as a feminist lens where men are viewed as having a higher social status than women (Renzetti & Curran 2002:3).

2.1.2 Stereotypes and Prejudices

Stereotypes are overgeneralized and distorted beliefs about social groups. They can emerge as a result of personal exposure. When we know little about the members of another group, we rely on personal contact or observations of them to inform our beliefs about the whole group (Rothbart, Dawes and Park 1984). More specifically, our personal exposure to individuals contributes to stereotypes in six main ways: 1) social roles (where we assume that an individual’s association with a given social role corresponds to inner qualities); 2) just world beliefs (the assumption that an individual’s disadvantage is their own fault, instead of them being victims); 3) illusory correlations (viewing unusual behavior by atypical group members and believing that all group members participate in that given behavior); 4) socialization (stereotypes throughout society, that teach and reinforce stereotypical beliefs throughout the
life course; 5) subtyping (allowing people to preserve the stereotypes about a
given group by labeling stereotype-inconsistent individuals exceptional or
unique; and 6) ultimate attribution error (when explaining the behavior of out-
group members we tend to cite inner, dispositional causes, but when we explain
our own actions, or those of a fellow in-group member, we cite situational and
circumstantial factors).

Prejudice can be defined as an unjustified negative judgment of an
individual based on their social group identity (Allport 1954). There are two
main components of prejudice. The first involves: 1) an automatic component of
prejudice, where well-learned attitudes and responses occur automatically when
an individual encounters a member of a disliked or hated group; and 2) a
controlled component of prejudice that involves our own personal beliefs about
people from other groups (Blaine 2007).

An important framework to use when examining prejudice is the
justification-suppression model of prejudice. The model explains that: 1) during
socialization, parents, peers, and the surrounding environment offers negative
attitudes and beliefs about people from various groups; 2) as adults, we are
aware that expressing prejudice has a range of consequences that range from
being socially inappropriate to being illegal in some instances; 3) consequently,
we learn how to suppress our prejudice by various means (such as avoiding
members of the disliked group, exerting control over our own thoughts, or simply denying that we are prejudiced – which is similar to a “colorblind” attitude) (Blaine 2007; Crandall & Eshleman 2003).

Brewer (1999) adds that prejudice also occurs when an individual with power or resources prefers their in-group more than an out-group and then consequently divides resources in a preferential way. Lastly, it is also important to note that the expression of prejudice has changed overtime, being more covert than it was in past times. For example, Blaine (2007) explains that “modern prejudice refers to any expression of prejudice that is subtle, easily justified and, hence, difficult to detect”.

Not only is prejudice more covert, but in this study, I argue that racism and sexism have also become more covert. Since many microaggressors want to avoid the social or legal consequences of being exposed as racist or sexist, they commit acts that are less obvious and more underhanded. Also, according to the justification-suppression model, many microaggressors may avoid members of a disliked group, which may lead to segregation of different racial or gender groups throughout society and within schools. In this study, I also argue that stereotypes and prejudices influence racist and sexist microaggressions. It is likely that individuals who hold racist and sexist notions about a group may act in microaggressive ways towards that group. For instance, a student who holds
racist beliefs about African American students may be more likely to say or do racist things towards African American students.

2.1.3 Oppression

It is important to understand the concept of oppression, since racism can be considered race-based oppression and sexism can be considered gender-based oppression. Johnson (2006:118) explains that for every social category that is privileged, one or more other categories are oppressed in relation to it. Oppression can also be understood as social forces that press upon people, hold them down, and keep them from pursuing a good life (Bell 2007). According to Bell (2007), oppression is restrictive, hierarchal, complex, and internalized. Oppression: 1) restricts both self-development and self-determination; 2) it indicates a hierarchal relationship where privileged groups reap benefits from the disempowerment of subaltern groups; 3) is complex – where an individual may face subjugation on one dimension (ex. race), but may experience privilege on another dimension (ex. class); and 4) it is within the human psyche – and is thus internalized.

According to Young (2000), there are five specific forms of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence – but for the purposes of this dissertation, I will specifically focus on violence as a form of oppression. Violence operates as a form of oppression when members of
some groups live with the knowledge that they must fear random, unprovoked attacks on their persons or property, which have no motive but to damage, humiliate, or destroy them.

Both dominant group members and subaltern group members can hold stereotypical views of subaltern groups (Tatum 1997). Internalized oppression can be explained as “[t]he repeated, everyday experience of being treated as an inferior [that] produces a public image of being an inferior, which may be internalized as an image of self-inferiority” (Deutsch 2006:18). Deutsch (2006) goes on to explain that subordinate group members often “find themselves defined by the dominant others…[and] must interact with the dominant group whose culture mainly provides stereotyped images of them, they are often under pressure to conform to and internalize the dominant group’s image of their group” (Deutsch 2006:15).

Aside from internalizing the dominant groups’ image of their group, it is my argument that internalized oppression may lead to subordinate group members evaluating themselves and their fellow group members in a prejudiced way. Such prejudices may result in discriminatory hiring practices that favor dominant group job candidates over other subordinate job candidates. Additionally, internalized oppression may lead subordinate group members into believing that the United States is currently a post-sexist and post-racist society –
even though investing in such ideals only benefits dominant group members. Internalized oppression is an umbrella term that encompasses the concepts of internalized domination and internalized subordination. Internalized domination occurs when members of the dominant group “accept their groups socially superior status as normal and deserved” (Hardiman and Jackson 2007). An example of internalized domination is: a male student who believes that only men are good at math and science (Hardiman and Jackson 2007). Internalized subordination occurs when members of a subjugated group “internalize dominant social messages of inferiority about their group” (Hardiman and Jackson 2007). An example of internalized subordination would be a woman who always defers to male group members to make leadership decisions for their group work assignment.

It is also important to highlight both vertical and horizontal dynamics of oppression. Vertical dynamics of oppression includes interactions between advantaged and subaltern groups that reinforce and maintain oppression (Hardiman and Jackson 2007). An example of vertical dynamics of oppression would be a women being stalked by a male classmate on campus. Horizontal dynamics of oppression includes interactions among dominant group members as well as interactions among targeted group members that maintain and reinforce oppression (Hardiman and Jackson 2007). An example of horizontal
oppression among members of an advantaged group includes a male student who ridicules another man in class for supporting feminism (Hardiman and Jackson 2007). An example of horizontal oppression among members of targeted groups would be a Latino security guard who follows a Black student around a store as if she will steal something.

For the purposes of this dissertation I will specifically focus on race and gender oppression, and I argue that such oppression is manifested as racist and sexist microaggressions. I also argue that students who are both African American and women are susceptible to experiencing a compounded form of racist and sexist violence within academic institutions.

2.1.4 Privilege

Privilege exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they have done or failed to do (Johnson 2006:21). Peggy McIntosh highlights two forms of privilege: 1) unearned entitlements and 2) conferred dominance. Unearned entitlements are “things of value that all people should have, such as feeling safe in public spaces...” furthermore, when “an unearned entitlement is restricted to certain groups...it becomes a form of privilege” (Johnson 2006:23). Conferred dominance gives one group power over another. An example of conferred dominance would include the notion that men are the
dominant gender group, and should be the head of their families, as well as leaders in their communities (Johnson 2006). Moreover, the invisibility of privilege allows it to become manifested on many levels of society and in many different ways; moreover, until privilege is identified, it cannot be combated. For the purposes of this research, I will solely focus on White privilege and male privilege.

2.1.5 White Privilege

To begin a discussion on White privilege it is necessary to first address the concept of Whiteness. Leonardo (2002) explains that “Whiteness is not a culture but a social concept”. Gillborn (2005) explains that those “implicated in Whiteness rarely even realize its existence [or] their own role in its repeated iteration and resignification”. Bonnett (1997) makes the connection between Whiteness and White privilege in the following quote:

“Whiteness has developed, over the past two hundred years, into a taken-for-granted experience structured upon a varying set of supremacist assumptions (sometimes cultural, sometimes biological, sometimes moral, sometimes all three). Non-White identities, by contrast, have been denied the privileges of normativity, and are marked within the West as marginal and inferior” (Bonnett 1997:188).
White privilege can be defined as unearned advantages that White people gain from People of Color’s disadvantages within a White supremacist society (Jensen 2005). Furthermore, White privilege leads to an intentional or un-intentional lack of awareness as it pertains to racial inequities (where dominant groups are privileged and where subordinate groups are oppressed). Moreover, these inequities can be manifested in a variety of ways such as preferential treatment that favors White people over People of Color, forced assimilation, subjugating racial minorities, granting unearned rights and privileges to dominant group members only, and believing that the United States is currently a post-racism and post-racist society where inequalities are ignored (even when doing so only meets the needs of dominant racial group members).

Johnson (2006) explains that White people are the recipients of White privilege, solely as a result of having White skin. Mindrup et al. (2011) explain that when confronted about their White privileged status, Whites have had various reactions that ranged from the behavioral to the emotional. Mindrup et al. (2011) explains that regardless of the reaction, Whites were most interested in maintaining the status quo, where they could maintain their privilege. Furthermore, silence or not having conversations about racism and privilege aids in maintaining the status
quo, especially in a society that “actively suppresses conversations about racism and privilege” (Johnson 2006).

Neville et al. (2001) created a model of White privilege that identifies 7 main components and processes of White privilege. According to the paper, White privilege: 1) differentially benefits Whites; 2) exists and operates on both micro and macro levels of society; 3) includes unearned advantages; 4) provides immunity to social problems; 5) embraces White power and social dominance; 6) is usually unacknowledged and invisible to its recipients; and 7) leads to psychosocial consequences and costs to recipients.

2.1.6 Male Privilege

Male privilege is defined as unearned “advantages that men gain from women’s disadvantages” within a patriarchal society (McIntosh 1993:1). Similarly to White privilege, male privilege leads to an intentional or unintentional lack of awareness as it pertains to gender inequities where men are privileged and where subordinate gender groups are oppressed. Moreover, these inequities can be manifested in a variety of ways, such as preferential treatment that favors men over women, subjugating gender minorities, granting rights and privileges to dominant group members only, and believing that the United States is currently a post-sexist society where inequalities are ignored (even when doing so only meets the needs of male dominant group members).
In this study, I argue that students of color, who attend predominantly White schools, will face racial oppression, while their White counterparts experience White privilege. Similarly, women who attend a school with a dominant sports and fraternity culture (sports-centered/hypermasculine) may experience sexism while their male counterparts receive male privilege. I also argue that the discrimination and microaggressions that students of color and women experience will undoubtedly result in them having a poor opinion of campus climate and higher stress levels.

2.1.7 Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is an essential tool in the fight against oppression on the individual, institutional, structural, cultural, and systemic levels of society. Cultural competence involves ‘learning about the history and shared characteristics of different groups and using this knowledge to create bridges … [and to] increase understanding with individual[s]’ (Dean 2001:625). Cultural competence includes understanding that individual, institutional, structural, cultural, and systemic factors intersect to create a wide range of life experiences that allow some people to live advantaged and privileged lives while others live disadvantaged and underprivileged lives (McIntosh 1993). Furthermore, it is apparent that individuals who are invested in post-racist and post-sexist beliefs are unlikely to be culturally competent.
Anand (2000) provides a list of basic skills that individuals need to interact in a culturally competent way. They include: being aware of one’s culture, biases, and values; being aware of and being willing to change one’s own biases and biased behaviors; obtaining culture specific knowledge; having knowledge of barriers that subjugate targeted group members; building meaningful cross-cultural relationships; being able to adapt to diverse environments; being able and willing to act as an ally for others; effectively communicating with others who are different from you; and the ability to mediate cross-cultural conflicts (Anand 2000).

Taking the above information into account, cultural competence training could be very helpful in institutions where there are low retention rates of employees and students of color, where acts of violence have been committed against members of subaltern groups, where supervisors practice tokenism (Acker 1999) and where there are few mentors of color to help minority employees and students. In predominantly White institutions, cultural competence may also help to combat stereotypes, discrimination and maltreatment that members of the majority group may practice toward members of subaltern groups.

In this study, I explore whether or not individuals who are culturally competent are less likely to hold post-racist, racist, post-sexist, and sexist beliefs.
Additionally, if this research reveals that individuals who exhibit high levels of cultural competence are less likely to hold racist, post-racist, sexist, and post-sexist beliefs, then this research would be beneficial to institutions who would like to reduce racism and sexism on campus. Such institutions could offer cultural competence training to reduce negative beliefs and values.

2.2 Contemporary Racism and Sexism

Since this dissertation examines racist and sexist microaggressions, it is essential to first explore contemporary forms of racism and sexism. I also address the notions of post-racism and post-sexism and show why the concepts are illogical. Next, I connect the concepts of racism and post-racism as well as sexism and post-sexism. I then discuss microaggressions and expand on the current theory in the field. Then, I discuss the relationship between institutional and social hierarchies. This part of the review shows the difficulties that students of color experience at predominantly White schools and the difficulties that women experience at schools with a dominant sports and fraternity culture (sports-centered/hypermasculine). I also address the relationship between stress and microaggressions. The section concludes with a discussion on racism, sexism, and microaggressions in school.
2.2.1 **Racism**

Systems of oppression and struggles for liberation have been a part of the United States social structure since the country’s formation. The country’s establishment and development were accomplished through conquering and oppressing several racial groups. The United States was established through the domination and subjugation of the Americas’ First Peoples (Roppolo 2003); and, for centuries, African people and their descendants were enslaved, tortured, and forced to provide free labor in order to ensure the growth and prosperity of the budding nation (Franklin and Higginbotham 2010). After slavery was abolished, restrictive laws and practices were enforced to ensure that African Americans and other people of color remained subjugated and oppressed scholastically, professionally, financially, and socially (Franklin and Higginbotham 2010).

According to Bell (2007), race emerged within the United States to justify the dominance that people defined as White had over people defined as non-White. Throughout history, this particular domination has been exhibited through racial oppression or racism. Racism can be defined as a set of “institutional, cultural and interpersonal patterns and practices that create advantages for people legally defined and socially constructed as White, and the corollary disadvantages for people defined as ‘non-White’ in the United States.
(Bell 2007).” Racism can also be defined as “behavior and actions, whether personal or institutionalized, that create a hierarchy of races” (Blaine, 1997).

According to Bonilla-Silva (2003), “new racism” is a more subtle form of racism where individuals rationalize racially unfair situations and where racism is more covert and concealed than in previous times. Bonilla-Silva (2003) argues that this form of racism serves to preserve White privilege. In his work, he suggests that racism should be conceptualized as a systemic issue that is found on all levels of society and that racism also has the ability to change depending on the social context and the historical period. In other words, racism can be manifested differently depending on the social space and time. Unlike some scholars who believe in the declining significance of race or that we live in a post-racism society, Bonilla-Silva argues that racism has not only endured the Civil Rights era, but it has transformed and remains a major systemic social problem.

He also has done an in-depth analysis of the concept of color-blind racism. Color-blindness or color-blind racism can be defined as the attempt to hide racism by eliminating racial discourse and not considering racism as the root of contemporary racial inequality. Bonilla-Silva (2003) argues that color-blind racism: 1) denies discrimination (ex: racism stopped existing after the Civil Rights Movement, and “We have a Black President’’); 2) hides racism under the cloak of liberalism (ex. If I’m a liberal, then I can’t be racist); 3) naturalizes racial
matters (ex. it’s natural for White students to socialize among themselves on campus and not to socialize among students who are racial minorities); and 4) it relies on cultural explanations to explain oppression (ex. if Black students would only try harder, they would be successful).

Another form of contemporary racism is laissez faire racism, defined as the notion that Black Americans are responsible for their own economic dilemma and are therefore unworthy of any handouts or special government support (Bobo et al. 1997). This form of racism dismisses any systemic, structural, cultural, or institutional causes of racism, and “blames the victim” by suggesting that Black Americans are solely responsible for the causes and effects of the racism that disadvantages them. Laissez faire racism also ignores the fact that the disadvantages that racial minorities experience creates advantages and opportunities for dominant group members.

Others have described contemporary forms of racism as “Racism 2.0” (Wise 2010). Wise (2010:15) argues that there has been a shift in society from “Racism 1.0 to Racism 2.0, an insidious upgrade that allows millions of Whites to cling to racist stereotypes about people of color generally, while nonetheless carving out exceptions for those who, like [President] Obama, make us comfortable by seeming so ‘different’ from what we view as a much less desirable norm”.
Weaver (2011) uses the term *liquid racism* to describe the difficulty of identifying behaviors as racist, particularly when racist behaviors are presented in a so-called humorous way. Weaver (2011) explains that racist humor “… is fluid, difficult to collect or identify because it may escape or dissolve before it can be contained, and is explicitly encouraged or given coverage in mass media.” He argues that hidden intentions also fuel liquid racism. This relationship is seen, particularly when an individual tells a racist joke or does a racist impersonation of a subjugated group member with the intention of being offensive – but if they are confronted about their behavior, they can hide their true intentions by saying that they were simply joking. Liquid racism is powerful because it provides the aggressor or antagonist with a way to hide their racist behavior by labeling their behavior as a “joke”. In other words, with this form of racism, aggressors’ jokes are similar to a Trojan horse because the jokes initially appear harmless even though the jokes can cause a great deal or embarrassment and pain.

Here, I propose another form of racism I call “obstructive racism” where racists use physical or non-physical barriers to block the progress of people of color. It is usually covert in nature. When obstructive racists are called racist, they simply deny allegations. Obstructive racism can range from blocking promotions to blocking legislation. An example of this can be seen in how President Obama’s efforts to generate change have been blocked seemingly
because of his racial status. The President’s opponents have questioned whether his birth certificate was real, have called him un-American, and have tried to block most of his efforts to generate change that would benefit the American people. The failure of President Bush’s administration to help victims of Hurricane Katrina is also an example of obstructive racism, given the predominance of people of color among those trapped in New Orleans following this natural disaster.

For the purposes of this study I argue that students of color will report incidences of covert and overt racism, more than White students. This will validate the experiences of such individuals who are often accused of being “oversensitive” or have had their concerns dismissed outright. It will also help to inform institutional policy on how to protect such students instead of re-victimizing them.

2.2.2 Sexism

Gender is a social and cultural accomplishment that is achieved through both mindful and unconscious efforts. In other words, we “do” or perform gender – through public and private actions and interactions (West and Zimmerman 1987; Butler 2004; West and Fenstermaker 1993). Individuals gain acceptance and approval when they perform gender in normative or socially appropriate ways (masculinity by men and boys, and femininity by women and
However, when gender is performed in ways that are not normative, individuals risk ridicule, sanctions, punishment, and even death (Halberstam 1998; 2005). It is also necessary to note that in terms of social status, being a man is associated with a higher status than being a woman. This gender hierarchy is the basis of sexism.

Restrictive gender norms and ideals have led to the subjugation of women, resulting in men having more freedom, status, and power in both the private and public realms of society. During the Industrial Revolution, the ideology of the separate spheres and the family wage were created, and they reinforced gender inequality in both the home and the workplace (Land 1980).

Sexism can be defined as the systematic oppression of women on institutional, cultural, and individual levels of society (Hackman 2010). Sexism can also be defined as: “a system of advantages that serves to privilege men, subordinate women, denigrate women-identified values and practices, enforce male dominance and control, and reinforce norms of masculinity that are dehumanizing and damaging to men (Hackman 2010).

Correspondingly, patriarchy fuels sexism and is defined as an ideology of male supremacy that justifies male dominance and the subordination of women in all aspects of society. Male dominance is often manifested as hypermasculinity. Hypermasculinity, or the exaggeration of stereotypical male
behavior, is often performed within environments that reward such behavior. Hypermasculinity is often achieved through participation in male-centered activities, fraternities and through involvement in sports teams at sports centered academic institutions such as Division I schools. Consequently, research has shown that academic environments that have a dominant sports culture are more likely to have a campus climate that is hypermasculine (Miller 2008; Gage 2008; Murnen and Kohlman 2007). Research specifically shows that membership in all male groups like sports teams or fraternities are associated with attitudes related to sexual aggression and sexually aggressive behavior (Murnen and Kohlman 2007). Murnen and Kohlman (2007) found a relationship between athletic participation and hypermasculinity, rape myth acceptance and self-report of sexual aggression. They found a similar relationship between fraternity membership and hypermasculinity, rape myth acceptance and self-report of sexual aggression.

Research also shows that men who adopt “traditional” masculine characteristics (as determined by the Bem Sex Role Inventory 1974) enjoy women-targeted jokes more than they enjoy male-targeted jokes (Abel and Flick 2012). Therefore, men with traditional or hypermasculine characteristics may participate in sexist behaviors or will be less likely to intervene when sexist behaviors occur.
Crawford (2003) argues that humor can be used to enforce gender construction, norms, stereotypes, and conformity – with jokes being used to illuminate men as masculine and women as feminine. Crawford (2003) explains that humor and jokes can also result in gender deconstruction – when traditional gender roles are critiqued. However, in a hypermasculine environment, it may be more likely to hear jokes that reinforce gender stereotypes and objectify women than jokes that challenge traditional gender norms. Jokes can also promote or downplay gendered violence, by presenting a serious issue under the guise of humor or lightheartedness.

In this study, I hypothesize that women who attend a sports centered, hypermasculine institution may experience more overt and covert sexist aggression than women who attend an institution that is not sports centered. This research will reveal the various ways that women experience sexism and can be useful in informing policy that can protect women from gender-based aggression within academic institutions.

2.3 Post-racism and Post-sexism

In this section, I explore post-racism and post-sexism and explain why the concepts are problematic. I specifically argue that post-racist and post-sexist beliefs are connected to racist and sexist notions and microaggressive actions.
On one end of the spectrum, there are people who subscribe to the notion that the United States is a post-racist and post-sexist society. These individuals minimize or deny present-day racism and sexism, and they argue that racism and sexism are not major social problems. On the other end of the spectrum are people who believe that cultural competency (an awareness of cultural differences and respect for those differences) is needed more than ever – especially since modern oppression is more insidious and hidden than ever before. The concepts of post-racist and post-sexist beliefs are fairly new, so this research will be crucial in highlighting the determinants of such beliefs and in expanding the literature in this area.

On the surface, the terms post-racism and post-sexism appear innocuous. The concepts suggest that racism and sexism are no longer major social problems and that race and gender equality is a present day reality. However, the terms are problematic because racism and sexism are not only major social problems, but they are becoming more insidious and complex over time. When individuals make claims about post-racism or post-sexism, they are discrediting the legacy and the continued presence of racism and sexism in our society. Furthermore, the act of discrediting the existence of racism and sexism is itself an act of oppression. Lastly, individuals who make post-racism and post-sexism claims are most likely privileged. If an individual doesn’t experience a particular form
of oppression, they can more easily deny its existence. In this section, I will discuss post-racism and post-sexism – as well as the connection between racism and post-racism, and sexism and post-sexism.

2.3.1 Post-racism

Although there have been time periods within the United States when efforts such as the Civil Rights Movement have reduced prejudice and discrimination, racism still remains a major issue within the United States. The existence of racism is apparent when we consider the following racial disparities (where people of color are disadvantaged in comparison to White individuals): the racial income and wealth gap (Oliver and Shapiro 2006); college completion rates (Knapp 2012); residential segregation (Denton 2006); unemployment rates (Ritter and Taylor 2011); and incarceration rates (Carson and Sabol 2011). Even though racism is still present, Lipsitz (1998) revealed that 70 percent of Whites believed African American’s “have the same opportunities to live a middle-class life as Whites”. Furthermore, believing that the United States is a post-racial society may be explained by color-blindness, not the disappearance of racism.

Even though it is apparent that racism still exists, there are some social and political commentators who argue that racism is no longer a major social problem. Daniel Schorr (2008) argued that the ascendance of Barack Obama as a
presidential candidate meant that the United States had entered a post-racial era. Schorr’s commentary proved to be inaccurate, and unrealistic. Pettigrew (2009) explains that racism erupted and intensified during Barack Obama’s campaign. Racist acts included physical assaults, threats, intimidation, cross-burnings, and racist graffiti; as well as racist comments that were made by several political figures and commentators (Pettigrew 2009). The presence of racism throughout the campaign proves that Schorr’s argument about post-racism is inaccurate.

McWhorter (2008; 2010), another social commentator, argues that racism is no longer an issue and that the United States is currently a post-racist society. McWhorter (2010) argues that America is post-racist because the contemporary treatment of Black people is not “grievously biased and unjust”. McWhorter (2008) also argues that racism is not one of Black America’s most urgent problems, and “[t]his is a time when we can afford to let the past be the past”. McWhorter’s arguments minimize the continued racial struggles that Black people experience, and it ignores the individual and structural barriers that are biased and unjust.

Although some believe that the United States is post-racist, Gusa (2010) argues that the denial of racism is dangerous because it ignores the continued reality of racial hostility and discrimination. Gusa (2010) explains that “schools and colleges are the third most common setting for racial bias hate crimes” and
are a major cause for the high attrition rate of Black students matriculating at predominantly White colleges and universities. He specifically highlights harrowing reports about racism on college campuses in the Post-Obama election, such as: Black college students reporting increased harassment in their residence halls; violent and negative graffiti written on campus walls about President Obama; a poster of the first family defaced with racial slurs and death threats; and (in the guise of humor and free speech) “ghetto parties” taking place on college campuses where White students dress in ways that interpret Black stereotypes and have even dressed in “black face”.

These incidents highlight the need for a greater racial awareness – particularly at predominantly White institutions. Administrators need to understand that the behaviors that take place on their campuses often reflect the racial climate and racial interactions that take place in society at large. Moreover, in order to increase retention rates and the quality of life among students of color, administrators could be more proactive in addressing the marginalization and chilly climates that students of color experience.

This study aims to document experiences of racism, and highlight the inaccuracy of post-racist beliefs and practices, with the anticipation that appropriate interventions can be implemented to rectify issues of racist microaggressions, instead of ignoring them.
2.3.2 *Post-sexism*

Women have made great strides in political and professional realms. Women are enrolled more than men in college and are outperforming men in undergraduate programs (Goldberg-Dey and Hill 2007). Given such progress, it may be tempting for some to suggest that sexism is dead and that we live in a post-sexist society. However, a deeper analysis reveals that sexism is interwoven on all levels of society, and it has severe consequences (Hackman 2010). The existence of sexism is apparent when we consider the following gender disparities (where women are disadvantaged in comparison to men): the wage penalty for motherhood (Budig and England 2001; Correll et al. 2007); the gender pay gap (Goldberg-Dey and Hill 2007) and sexual assault victimization (Armstrong et al. 2006).

Although it is apparent that sexism still exists, there are some social commentators (Sommers 1995; 2000; Bernard 2007; Kleinfeld 1998) who minimize or deny present-day sexism and who argue that sexism is not a major issue within contemporary society. Sommers (1995; 2000) argues that feminism has given privileges to women and girls at the expense of taking privileges away from men and boys. She also argues that feminist theory and methodology is flawed and that feminist research can not be regarded as truth. Bernard (2007) argues that in many arenas women are more prosperous and successful than
men in contemporary United States society. She goes on to argue that when feminists say that women are subjugated they are being untruthful and are exaggerating. Bernard (2007) contends that sexism is not as serious as the breakdown of the nuclear family, out of wedlock births and a lack of personal responsibility. Kleinfeld (1998) argues that women and girls are privileged; and that women’s advocacy groups wrongly portray girls and women as deserving special treatment and specific policy attention.

Regardless of the widespread cultural messages suggesting that sexism is a thing of the past, research reveals that sexism remains pervasive in the lives of many women. According to one study, the average woman reported one to two sexist experiences per week (Fischer et al. 2010).

This study aims to document experiences of sexism, and to highlight the inaccuracy of post-sexist beliefs and practices, with the anticipation that appropriate interventions can be implemented to rectify issues of sexist microaggressions.

2.3.3 Linking Post-Racism and Racism, Post-Sexism and Sexism

The belief that racism and sexism are dead is connected to several racist and sexist notions such as: just world beliefs, color-blind racism, gender-blind sexism, and liquid racism or sexism. People who hold just world beliefs assume
that an individual’s disadvantage is their own fault. The concept of just world beliefs is very similar to laissez faire racism, which argues that Black Americans are responsible for their own economic dilemma and are therefore unworthy of any government help (Bobo et al. 1997). In other words, just world beliefs, laissez faire racism, and laissez faire sexism suggests that there is no such thing as racism and sexism, only poor individual choices made by people of color and women. Similarly, personal experiences may lead individuals to invest in notions of post-racism and post-sexism. For instance, a person who enjoys gender and racial privileges might not fully understand or be concerned with the oppression that women and people of color experience, and, as a result, they may argue that racism and sexism are non-existent.

Post-racism and post-sexism beliefs are also very similar to color-blind racism. Color-blind racism attempts to hide or ignore racism and it denies the occurrence of discrimination (Bonilla-Silva 2003). Adopting a color-blind or gender-blind perspective allows an individual to easily make the claim that racism and sexism no longer exist. The rationale is that everyone is the same regardless of race or gender – there are no differences, there is no discrimination, and everyone is treated the same. Therefore, society is post-racist and post-sexist. This form of racism and sexism paired with post-racist and post-sexist
beliefs is very dangerous since it effectively denies individual and societal level discrimination, oppression, and privilege.

Liquid racism describes racist behaviors that are presented in a supposedly humorous way (Weaver 2011). With liquid racism, an individual can hold post-racist beliefs and still actively spread racism. Since liquid racists claim that they don’t believe in racism, it is very likely that they believe that their jokes are harmless, even though their jokes can be very damaging. Liquid racists or liquid sexists may also believe that women and people of color are too sensitive and that their over-sensitivity is what is truly problematic.

In this study, I will determine if individuals who hold post-racist beliefs also hold racist beliefs and if those who hold post-sexist beliefs also hold sexist beliefs. I will also determine if individuals who hold post-racist and post-sexist beliefs earn low cultural competence scores.

2.4 Microaggressions

To understand contemporary oppression it essential to first understand the concept of microaggressions. In this section, I explain what microaggressions are, and I introduce new concepts and perspectives that are related to microaggressions. I introduce the three main types of microaggressions: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. I also present the specific forms of microaggressions that I use as variables: 1) racist microassaults (overt
racism), 2) sexist microassaults (overt sexism), 3) racist microinsults and microinvalidations (covert racism), and 4) sexist microinsults and microinvalidations (covert sexism). I also show how microaggressions exemplify contemporary racism and sexism. Additionally, I show how the presence of microaggressions refutes claims of post-racism and post-sexism.

Microaggressions can be defined as insults (verbal, nonverbal, physical and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously (Solorzano et al. 2000; Martin 2011). Scholarship on aggression has typically focused on overt or blatant forms of violence. However, the concept of microaggressions encompasses both overt and covert forms of aggression. Sue (2007) theorizes that there are three forms of microaggressions: 1) microassaults, 2) microinsults, and 3) microinvalidations. Microassaults are overt in nature, while microinsults and microinvalidations are covert in nature. Microaggressions can result in feelings of frustration, anger, sadness, belittlement, and alienation, which can lead to depression, anxiety, and trauma (Nadal 2008). Although microaggressions have mainly been used to discuss race, in this dissertation they will be used in relation to race and gender.

Microassaults are similar to “old-fashioned” racism, where people behave and speak in blatantly racist ways, (ex. the use of a racial slur to attack someone or striking a person with the intent to harm them because of their race) (Nadal...
Microinsults are “statements or actions that indirectly belittle a person of color and are often unconscious and unintentional”, (ex. being surprised that a person of color is “articulate” or being surprised that they “write well” – underscores racial stereotypes that people of color are not intelligent); and in terms of actions, a microinsult may include a student of color being watched on campus as if they are a criminal, a thief, or dangerous (Nadal 2008). Microinvalidations “are statements and behaviors that negate or nullify a person of color’s experiences or realities” (Nadal 2008). Examples of microinvalidations include a student of color being told that they are “too sensitive about race” or an individual telling a student of color that they “don’t see race” (Nadal 2008). Nadal (2008) explains that such declarations are harmful because the perpetrator ignores the person’s racial experiences and reality, and the perpetrator denies that they are capable of perpetuating racism.

In this study, I use a microaggression scale that will gauge student’s experiences with: 1) racist microassaults (overt racism), 2) sexist microassaults (overt sexism), 3) racist microinsults and microinvalidations (covert racism), and 4) sexist microinsults and microinvalidations (covert sexism).

I advance the literature in the growing area of microaggressions by adding three new theoretical components. First, I differentiate microaggressions that take place in private versus public spaces, then I analyze the relationship
between aggressors and those who are victimized, and finally I discuss responses to microaggressions.

2.4.1 *Microaggressions: Private and Public*

*Microaggressions*

Thus far, the literature on microaggressions has failed to address the relationship between private spaces, public spaces, and microaggressions. This is an important distinction since oppression and privilege manifest differently depending on the social context and space. Therefore, microaggressions that happen in a safe space may have different implications than microaggressions that occur in a public space.

Microaggressions that take place in supposed safe spaces can be emotionally or psychologically damaging, since most individuals would expect to feel comfortable and secure within a safe space, and a violation in such a place can potentially lead to long-term trust issues. Safe spaces are based on individual opinions and experiences. For example, every year, new college students descend on campuses. Many live on campus, especially during their first years in college. These students and their parents expect the college campus to be a safe space, and a space where learning can take place in an environment that is free from overt and covert microaggressions.
For instance, one college student may feel as though their dorm room is a safe space, since they are surrounded by friends and colleagues that they trust, while another college student may have been sexually assaulted in their dormitory and no longer feels comfortable anywhere on campus. Another college student may have been called racially derogatory names by his dorm mates and doesn’t feel comfortable in his dorms.

As for public spaces, people tend to be more guarded. One of the earliest messages transmitted to children by their parents, families, and educators is not to talk to strangers and to be careful “outside” or outside of safe spaces, such as the home or school (even though abuse or violence in these spaces can result in a safe space transforming into a hazardous space). Even though many people are guarded in public spaces, microaggressions still occur. For instance, microaggressions in a public space can range from verbal harassment to a physical or sexual assault; they can be subtle or blatant. However, they are usually fleeting (except for instances of stalking) since there is usually no relationship between the aggressor and the victim (although, it is possible that the microaggressor and victim know each other and for the microaggression to occur in public). For instance, a woman can be walking down the street and is verbally harassed or catcalled by a person she does not know. This would be a public microassault committed by a stranger. The same women could be
walking down the street and is verbally harassed by a classmate. This would be a public microassault committed by an acquaintance.

Microaggressions can cause stress regardless of where they occur. However, microaggressions that occur in safe spaces may lead to a reduced sense of security, which subsequently results in more stress. For instance, a microaggression experienced within a dormitory (safe space) may be more damaging or stressful than a microaggression that occurs in a mall (public space).

In this study, I argue that microaggressions that occur on college campuses are damaging and cause high levels of stress, since students expect their campus, dormitory and classrooms to be safe spaces. I hypothesize that students who report high levels of microaggressions on campus will also report high levels of stress. I also argue that the effect of microaggressions on stress will be higher for women and students of color.

2.4.2 Microaggressions: Aggressor and Target Relationship

Current literature on microaggressions has also failed to elaborate on the relationship between the aggressor and the victim. In this research, I am suggesting that there are different relationships that should be acknowledged in the context of microaggressions, and different types of microaggressors (individuals who commit the microaggression). There can be the following
microaggressors: 1) intimate microaggressors; 3) acquaintance microaggressors; and 3) outsider microaggressors.

An intimate microaggressor can include family members, close friends, spouses, and anyone with whom an individual has a close relationship. An example of an intimate sexist microinsult would be a parent telling their daughter to: “Make sure that you get a ‘Mrs. Degree’ in college”. While they tell their son to: “Study hard, and do your best!” This promotes the ideology of the separate spheres or the notion that a woman should be a dedicated wife, homemaker, and caretaker, while a man should invest in his education so that he can be the primary breadwinner in his family. It also suggests that men are more focused, capable, and successful college students, while a woman’s primary focus is finding a partner and getting married. Hearing negative messages like this from an individual who is close can be very damaging – especially since there is an expectation that we should be able to trust and depend on close relationships for support and encouragement.

An acquaintance microaggressor can include classmates, dorm mates, co-workers, supervisors, or instructors. An example of an acquaintance microinvalidation could be when a Latina student reports to her instructor that she feels racially targeted in class, and the instructor replies by telling the student that she is “too sensitive” and that it’s all in her head. In some cases, it may be
difficult or risky to interrupt the microaggressive behaviors of an acquaintance microaggressor, especially if the acquaintance is in a position of power like a supervisor or instructor. Reporting an incident can even lead to revictimization or retaliation that can affect the short-term and long-term quality of life of an individual.

Unknown or outsider microaggressors include individuals that we do not know. A common example of an unknown microaggressor is a stranger in public (even though on some occasions an outsider microaggressor can commit a microaggression in a private space). An example of an outsider microassault in public includes a woman being groped on a crowded train; another example could be person being called racist names from a moving car. An example of an outsider microaggressor in a private space could be a student of color at a predominantly White institution receiving a note under her dorm room door that says racist, derogatory remarks.

Regardless of the type of microaggressor, microaggressions can be damaging. However, in the context of an academic environment, microaggressions committed by a person in power (such as a coach, mentor, instructor, or administrator) may prove damaging not only to a student’s emotional well-being, but also his or her academic career. While this study does not ask respondents to identify their relationship with the microaggressor, the
above classifications are ripe for the future investigation of microaggression theory.

2.4.3 Microaggressions: Types of Responses

The current microaggression theories do not provide a detailed model of how people can respond to microaggressions. I aim to advance this theory by articulating the two main responses to microaggressions (as supported by the research in this study): 1) non-confrontational and 2) confrontational.

In terms of non-confrontational responses, an individual can: ignore, excuse, endorse, internalize, become an inactive bystander, or become aware/empowered. Ignoring can include refusing to acknowledge the microaggressive behavior or intentionally disregarding the behavior. Excusing includes suggesting that it is not that serious. Endorsing the behavior involves defending the behavior. Internalizing can include blaming oneself for the microaggression, viewing oneself differently because of the microaggression, being hyper-aware and cautious in one's environment, or accepting the message of the microaggression. This can lead to internalized oppression and self-inferiority. Oppositely, one can become aware or empowered by the situation. They can see the microaggressor as weak and themselves as strong for being able to identify the microaggressor’s weaknesses and oppressive behaviors. Inactive bystanders
may be aware of microaggressions, but do not interrupt the behaviors as a result of a lack of skills or fear.

Confrontational responses include: being microaggressive or repairing the situation. Being microaggressive as a response to microaggressions can lead to short-term and long-term conflict. Being microaggressive as a response can create an explosion of conflict that can quickly expand beyond two individuals. It may spread to a group, and then add to a potentially already toxic social environment (college campus, workplace). Attempting to repair the situation can lead to positive outcomes, but it can also be risky. Interrupting microaggressive behavior puts the onus on the target to identify the behavior, have the skills to interrupt the behavior without escalating the situation, and then reconcile with the microaggressor. Interrupting the behavior can be challenging for even the most skillful social justice worker – but it is nonetheless important and necessary training that should be offered to students, faculty, and staff within the academy.

While this study does not ask respondents to identify how they respond to microaggressors or microaggressions, the above classifications can be investigated to advance microaggression theory. The above classification can also help administrators create interventions that can effectively address microaggressions within academic institutions.
2.5 The Intersection of Institutional and Social Hierarchies: Racism, Sexism and Microaggressions in Academia

It is important to illuminate the relationship between institutional and social hierarchies to fully understand how students experience microaggressions in school. I argue that microaggressions may have a stronger impact on students’ well-being and stress levels depending on the type of institution. For instance, students of color may experience a compounded effect of racist microaggressions at a predominantly White institution, while women may experience a compounded effect of sexist microaggressions at a school with a dominant sports and fraternity culture.

Institutional hierarchies leave all students in a vulnerable position; however, the difficulties associated with being a student are exacerbated for students who occupy a disadvantaged position within one or more of the social hierarchies’ structured around race or gender (Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2008). For instance, for a White man who is also a student, the disadvantages and pressures associated with being a student are temporary states that are confined to the institutional hierarchy of his school. However, a Black student’s disadvantage, pressure, and indignities extend past her status as a student; and also occur as a result of her race and gender status.
I take as a basic premise that there is a fundamental difference between the experiences of Black and White students and that the difference is caused by the fact that we live in a society organized by race. I also take the basic premise that there is a fundamental difference between the experiences of students who identify as women and students who identify as men and that the difference is caused by the fact that we live in a society organized by gender. This means that Black and White students, as well as women and men, experience schooling differently in the very same institutions. All students experience stressors and vulnerability, but that vulnerability is role specific for some, while for people of color and women it exists within a broader context of racial and gender inequities. In other words, students of color and students who are women experience racial and gender subjugation both on and off campus, in addition to experiencing the same demands that their White and male counterparts experience.

The pervasive racism that racial minorities experience constitutes the key distinction between the experiences of Black and White students, while women’s experiences with sexism constitute the main distinction between the experiences of students who are women and those who are men. Students of color may particularly experience institutional alienation, isolation, as well as overt and covert racism within predominantly White institutions, while students who
identify as women may experience sexism regardless of the institution type, but particularly in male dominated environments.

Institutional policy, specifically educational policy, can also create inequalities. House (1999) argues that beliefs about race are woven into all levels of American society. These beliefs include the notion that people of color are inferior to their White counterparts. House (1999) explains that these beliefs lead to education policies that treat minorities differently; and even though these policies create inequalities – they are often heralded as being fair and equal. He sums up his argument by noting that: “...American education as a whole functions as a racist system, whatever its virtues might be.” As for educational policy and sexism, even though institutional and educational policy related to sexism appears to be more advanced than policy on racism, it is possible that hegemonic beliefs regarding gender roles and victimization can not only influence educational policy but also how those policies are implemented.

The interaction of social and institutional hierarchies will be examined within the chapter on environmental context, where I test multiple jeopardy theory and where I compare student experiences at a PWI and a diverse institution.
2.5.1 *Racism in School*

Price et al. (2009) explains that, in terms of race relations, racial comfort or racial discomfort in higher education can either improve positive relations or impede them. According to Price (2009:4) “[i]f education is critical to a democracy and if racially diverse campus communities better prepare students for participation in a democratic society, higher education needs to evaluate its role in perpetuating race-related inequities”. Price et al. (2009) goes on to explain that racial discomfort, tension and invisibility have been a long-term problem on many college campuses. In their study, they reveal that White students were “not aware of their negative impact on social relations with Black students”, but Black students were very aware of the negative behaviors and dynamics that adversely affect their college experience (Price et al., 2009).

Price et al. (2009) specifically explains, that White students lacked awareness as a result of their White critical mass and White privilege, but Black students came to campus with a heightened sense of racial awareness because of “their individual and collective identity”. The students in the Price et al. (2009) study also had a heightened sense of racial awareness because they were very experienced in being in both multiracial environments and predominantly White environments.

The study also revealed that the there was a color-blind ideology on the
predominantly White campus that was mainly held by White students. Price et al. (2009) argues that this color-blind ideology held by the White majority was responsible for segregating White and Black students because the comfort found in White cliques bred White solidarity that effectively excluded, alienated, and marginalized Black students. The study also revealed that White students thought that Black student groups were offensive to the White student population and that such groups were unnecessary (Price et al., 2009). Price et al. (2009) also shows that White students on predominantly White campuses presented an interesting social paradox in which White students self-segregated, but were then offended when Black students created their own cultural groups on campus. Price et al. (2009) argues that “White students held Black students responsible for this perceived segregating act, tacitly shifting the problem away from White students and placing blame on Black students”. However, it is apparent that Black students isolated themselves in an effort to find comfort that could not otherwise be guaranteed within the majority White student population.

Wilson and Constantine (1999) argue that being a member of a numerical minority within an academic institution may lead to challenges such as racial discrimination, lack of academic support, and social isolation, which may in turn create many issues for students of color. For instance, minority group students
report more negative classroom experiences and interactions with professors and teachers than do majority group students (Allen and Niss 1990; Steele 1997). One study revealed that 50% of minority college students report having been the target of hate speech (Cowan and Hodge, 1996). Moreover, hearing or using an ethnic slur or ethnophaulism can activate stereotypical beliefs. It can also lead to discriminatory actions toward members of the targeted group, which can result in an oppressive learning environment.

Stereotype threat occurs when a member of a group is at risk of confirming a negative stereotype about one’s group (Steele and Aronson 1995). In their study, Steele and Aronson (1995) showed that Black college students performed more poorly on standardized tests than White students when their race was emphasized. Conversely, when race was not emphasized, Black students performed better and/or equally with White students. The results revealed that performance in academic contexts can be harmed by the awareness that one’s behavior might be viewed through the lens of racial stereotypes.

Ferguson (2000) highlights how Black male high school students are often the target of racial stereotyping and are consequently labeled as troublemakers and deviants more than other racial-ethnic groups of children. Williams (2002) reported that African American doctoral candidates who attended
predominantly White institutions had more negative perceptions of the campus social environment than their White counterparts.

Kozol (2005) also argues that racism and segregation still exists within the American school system, even after Brown v. Board of Education supposedly made segregation within the American school system illegal. Moreover, not only are students of color separate from White students, but their resources and quality of education is unequal (Kozol 2005; Tough 2008).

In a study of North American campuses, Perry (2010) found that racism was still a major issue on college campuses. Specific incidences of racism that students experienced included: verbal assault, property damage, being spat upon, having objects thrown and being pushed or shoved. Moreover, Perry (2010) found that such incidences of racism were not considered a major issue among dominant members of the college campus. Instead, the incidences were viewed as not being hurtful, and survivors were perceived as being oversensitive.

Lewis et al. (2004) examined the experiences of African American Ph.D. students at a predominantly White institution. They found that fewer African Americans received terminal degrees compared to White students, and many African Americans experienced feelings of isolation from other students on campus. Similarly, Ballard (2010) found that African American male Ph.D.
graduates experienced many instances of microaggression during their graduate careers at predominantly White institutions. Ballard (2010) goes on to explain that the impact from accumulated microaggressions can create and foster a marginalizing and ostracizing environment.

Holmes et al. (2000) also argued that, compared to students of other racial groups, African Americans at predominantly White institutions are doubly burdened. Holmes et al. argue that African American students have to 1) cope with the normal concerns of being first-year students (such as being away from home and familiar support systems for the first time, possibly sharing a room with a stranger, establishing new relationships, and academic pressures) and 2) “adjust in an intellectual and social community that is unprepared to accept their cultural differences”. Holmes et al. goes on to suggest that there is also a mounting body of evidence that suggests predominantly White institutions are negligent in providing campus communities that are “welcoming and conducive to the learning styles of culturally and ethnically diverse student groups”. The risks of not improving the campus climate for African American students at predominantly White institutions include higher attrition and lower degree completion, which reinforce existing economic and educational disparities.

Existing research confirms that: 1) approximately one in four minority students experience some form of bias motivated victimization during the school
year; 2) patterns of campus ethnoviolence are similar to those in the broader community, with 25 to 30 percent of minority students being victimized; 3) the bulk of incidents are comprised of some form of verbal harassment or intimidation; however, incidents varied and included serious physical assaults; 4) half of the minority student population identify as “co-victims” (individuals who are aware of other individuals who share their ethnic identity and who had been victimized; 5) White, male students accounted for the majority of identified perpetrators (the majority of the perpetrators were White, male fraternity members, but also included faculty as well as people without campus affiliations but who were connected to White supremacist or other extremist groups); and 6) college students are even less likely than the general population to report their victimization, largely due to the belief that campus authorities would not or could not do anything (Ehrlich 1998; Perry 2010:267).

Perpetuation theory aims to explain racial segregation, and has frequently been used to explain racial segregation that Black and Brown students experience on predominantly White campuses. Perpetuation theory argues that students who have more access to desegregated environments and schools earlier on in life will have more success in predominantly White environments and colleges in the future (Wells and Crain, 1994). Unfortunately, as pointed out in the Price et al. (2009) article, even though some students of color may want to befriend White
students, White students’ discomfort with interracial friendships or relationships may prevent that from happening.

In her work, Frank’s (2003) research shows that minority students who attend predominantly White universities experience many difficult challenges on campus because of racism. Frank (2003) suggests that faculty members should listen to the experiences and voices of minority students so that they can better serve this particular portion of the student population.

In their study, Ancis et al. (2000) found that African American students reported more racial-ethnic conflict on campus, pressure to conform to stereotypes, and unequal treatment by faculty, staff, and teaching assistants. White students’ responses reflected limited perceptions of racial-ethnic tensions and beliefs that the university climate respected diversity. McCabe (2009) also points out that Black male students were viewed as threatening on campus.

In their work, Greer and Chwalisz (2007) explain that African American students who attended a predominantly White school experience higher levels of minority status stressors compared to their counterparts at a historically black college and university. They explain that all students experience stress associated with scholastic responsibilities, but they point out that, in addition to common student stressors, African American students experience stress that is specifically related to their minority status as a result of racism and
discrimination on campus and throughout society. In this study, minority status represents a unique source of stress and an additional challenge to the well being, as well as the short term and long term success, of many African American students at predominantly White schools.

Aside from scholarly work, recent reports (provided through various news outlets) also highlight racism on college campuses. In 2012, minority students at the University of Texas were attacked with balloons full of bleach. Although the victims were concerned about the attacks and believed that they were racist attacks, several White students showed a lack of concern over the attacks, while police and campus investigators argued that the attacks were "subjective" (Edwards 2012). By labeling the attacks as subjective, they are giving the perpetrators the benefit of the doubt rather than, enforcing a zero tolerance policy against racist attacks. A zero tolerance policy is sorely needed. Giving the perpetrator the benefit of the doubt teaches future perpetrators that they can get away with assaults and microaggressive behavior. This has been seen in cases of sexual assault and rape where victims do not speak out because of fear of re-victimization. The same thing is now happening with race – perpetrators can hurt others and then their behavior can be downplayed or considered less serious than it really is. Polices need to be created and enforced so that there is no more room for subjectivity and victims and survivors can be empowered.
Furthermore, we must label covert and overt racism as unacceptable, to achieve true race and gender equity.

At The University of Iowa, there have been some recent instances of racist microaggressions that have also been highlighted in the news. One incident involved a controversial social media webpage where University of Iowa students perpetuated anti-Asian sentiments. The page primarily featured meme’s. In it’s simplest form, a meme is a photo with words imbedded into it. One particular meme was anti-Asian in nature, and it fueled an already present anti-Asian sentiment on campus by blaming Asian students for “setting curves” and for making it hard for White students to succeed academically. A news article highlights students misplaced priorities by pointing out that the website dedicated to the offensive memes was 60 times more popular among University of Iowa students than a page that aims to garner support for rape victims (Sullivan 2012). Although the initial Iowa meme’s page received negative attention and was taken down by the social media sites administrators, another similar page was soon constructed and continues to show very racist and sexist memes.

A quick search on the new UI memes page resulted in the discovery of several problematic memes. There were still a great deal of anti-Asian memes that focuses on Asian students setting curves, and there are also memes that
suggest that there are too many Asian students. Several memes promoted an anti-Black sentiment and perpetuated stereotypes that Black men are dangerous and violent; another poked fun at the residential segregation on campus, eluding to the fact that one dormitory is predominantly Black, and is not only situated away from other dorms on campus, but it is also situated away from the main campus. Another suggested that most Black students were at Iowa because of sports scholarships. Yet another meme suggested that Black instructors were not professional and were drug users.

A summary of the literature on racism on campus shows that racism on college campuses is a major social problem. As the Ehrlich (1998) and Perry (2010) research shows, the problem of racism on college campuses is probably more rampant than reported because of under-reporting out of fear or retaliation and revictimization. However, this literature fails to provide a clear and detailed link between specific forms of racist microaggressions (particularly covert forms), campus environment, student beliefs and mental health outcomes.

2.5.2 Sexism in School

Students who are women report more negative classroom experiences and interactions with professors and teachers than do male students (Allen and Niss 1990; Steele 1997). Lesko (2001) shows that male adolescents are given more privilege than women students and consequently have more power than women
students. Myers and Dugan (1996) found that gender-biased behavior remains an issue even within graduate programs – with students who are men being favored over students who are women.

Also as explained above, McCabe (2009) explains that Black women experienced a significant amount of microaggressions within the classroom setting, Latinas were viewed as sexually available and exotic, and, within male-dominated majors, White women experienced a substantial amount of microaggressions. Furthermore, aside from racism, Perry (2010) also shows that students experience a great deal of sexism on North American campuses. Specific incidences of sexism that students experienced included: verbal sexual assault, property damage, sexual assault, and physical threats or attacks. Moreover, Perry (2010) found that such incidences of sexism were not widely regarded as a major issue among dominant members of the college campus, instead the incidences were viewed as not being harmful and sexism survivors were also perceived as being oversensitive. Additionally, as addressed above, academic environments that have a dominant sports culture are more likely to have a campus climate that is hypermasculine, which may perpetuate sexist microaggressions (Miller 2008; Gage 2008; Murnen and Kohlman 2007).

Although women outnumbered men in college attendance (55 women enrolled in college for every 44 men), college age women continue to be at risk
for gender-based violence, including sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence (Fleck-Henderson 2012). Recent research shows that one in five women experience sexual assault in the college years. Violence against women on college campuses has received more attention in recent years because of high profile cases as well as the federal government’s pressing for colleges and universities to “review and revise policies and procedures addressing sexual misconduct, stalking and intimate partner violence” since these forms of gender-based violence would be considered gender discrimination under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Fleck-Henderson 2012).

Armstrong et al. (2006) explain that college women “are at greater risk for rape and other forms of sexual assault than women in the general population or in a comparable age group”. They go on to explain that between 50 and 75% of sexual assaults that occur on college campuses involve alcohol consumption on the part of the victim, the perpetrator or both parties (Armstrong et al. 2006). They surmise that the link between alcohol and sexual assault suggests that many sexual assaults on campuses can be deemed “party rapes”. Party rapes are a distinct form of rape that involves a perpetrator who targets women who are drinking alcohol or who are intoxicated.

The issue of sexism, in the form of sexual assault, has been highlighted as a major issue within colleges and universities for over 20 years. The issue gained
national attention after the death of Jeanne Clery who was sexually assaulted and murdered within her college dorm room by another student in 1986. The death of Jeanne Clery highlighted problems regarding violence against women on campuses as well as lax campus security issues. As a result the Clery Act was created and passed in 1990. Now schools that receive federal funding are required to submit reports about crimes committed on or near campus. This also prompted schools to create their own institutional policies, tasks forces, and procedures to combat sexism, gendered violence, and security issues on campus. Unfortunately, sexual assaults remain prevalent on college campuses (Armstrong et al. 2006).

At the University of Iowa, there have also been some recent high profile examples of sexist microaggressions that have been highlighted in the news. One recent case involved a university employee that was accused of sexually harassing students. The report explains that his behavior included: “overly friendly hugs, massages and other touching that colleagues and students said was unprofessional and made them feel uncomfortable” (Foley 2012). It was also disturbing that this individual was rehired by the school even though the employee behaved in similar unprofessional ways in past positions, leaving many critics of the incident upset that this employee was not fully vetted before being hired. There have been other high profile cases at this school and other
schools regarding sexist microaggressions or microassaults. This highlights the fact that sexism in the form of sexual assaults remains a major issue even though there are federal and institutional policies that are dedicated to promoting gender equity and safety from sexual assaults.

Also, as explained in the section above on racism in school, the UI meme’s page perpetuates stereotypes on many social groups. There are several meme’s that say derogatory things about women. One meme suggests that it is difficult to distinguish between prostitutes and women who attend social events on weekends, while another meme suggested that college-aged women were promiscuous.

A summary of the literature regarding sexism on campus shows that sexism on college campuses is also a major social problem (Armstrong et al. 2006) and is also probably more rampant than reported because of under-reporting out of fear or being stigmatized, retaliation or revictimization. The current body of literature regarding sexism on campus fails to acknowledge the role of sexist microaggressions. This body of literature also fails to provide a clear and detailed link between specific forms of sexist microaggressions (particularly covert forms), campus environment, student beliefs and mental health outcomes.
2.5.3 *Microaggressions in School*

In his research, Solorzano (2000) found that African American students with high levels of accomplishment experience microaggressions in the form of subtle and often hidden forms of inequality and discrimination. Mcabe’s (2009) research on racial and gender microaggressions revealed that on a predominantly White campus, Black men were seen as threatening, Black women experienced a significant amount of microaggressions within the classroom setting, and, within male-dominated majors, White women experienced a substantial amount of microaggressions.

Research has shown that overt and covert behaviors can lead to negative, hostile, and unwelcoming campus climates that can ultimately have a detrimental impact on the success and retention of students of color; while the term “chilly climate” describes a climate of hostility, outsidersness, and invisibility that many women experience at coeducational institutions (Vaccaro 2010).

This study will advance knowledge in this bourgeoning area of research. I will expand this line of inquiry by examining specific manifestations of microaggression across institutions and across race and gender groups. This research will also advance the research on both racist and sexist
microaggressions. It will also be useful in creating interventions, policies and procedures that protect students from microaggressions.

2.5.4 Microaggressions and Stress

Since the literature on microaggressions is still developing, few studies have explored the relationship between race-based microaggressions and stress or the relationship between gender-based microaggressions and stress. However, there is research on race-related stress and gender-related stress. Even though the following literature review does not employ microaggression theory or terminology, the research on race-related stress and gender-related stress is still useful in terms of understanding the relationship between microaggressions and stress.

Distress, the negative component of stress, is the result of negative emotions. Discriminatory treatment generates negative emotions, and negative emotions create distress. Stress theory suggests that there is a relationship between distress and outcomes related to mental and physical health (Lazarus and Folkman 1984; Lazarus 1999).

Research suggests that racism is a cause of chronic distress for racial minorities, and that racism-related stress can impact an individual’s well-being (Dion 2002; Harrell 2002). Frequent stressful, racist experiences can result in

Research also reveals that women experience more chronic distress and minor daily stress than men (Matud 2004). Consequently, women reported significantly higher levels of somatic symptoms and psychological distress (Matud 2004). This gender-related distress may be the result of sexism. In her study, Matud (2004) concluded that for women, life events and changes were perceived as more negative and less controllable than men. Matud (2004) argues that the negative emotions that women experience are possibly linked to sexism. She argues that the low social status assigned to women oftentimes resulted in power and control being given to men in a variety of social spaces and life events. Furthermore, this lack of power experienced by women was perceived as negative, which resulted in higher stress levels.

Based on the above literature, it is clear that there is a relationship between racism and distress, as well as sexism and distress. However, microaggression research does not clearly highlight this relationship. In this study, I will determine if individuals who report race-based and gender-based microaggressions will also report high levels of distress.
2.6 Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory and Feminist Theory

The study of racist and sexist microaggressions is multifaceted and complex. It involves simultaneously studying racism and sexism, as well as their multiple manifestations. To address both concepts comprehensively, I ground my work in theoretical concepts that explain both racism and sexism as individual entities, as well as intersecting concepts. This research is grounded in critical race theory, since it provides a relevant lens to explore racist microaggressions. I use feminist theory as a starting point to explore sexist microaggressions. To examine both concepts concurrently, I incorporate intersectionality, standpoint theory, positionality, double jeopardy, and multiple jeopardy. I also introduce Activation Theory, a concept that explains the relationship between race, gender, and microaggressions within institutions.

2.6.1 Critical Race Theory

Critical race theories take the basic propositions that race is a social construction that creates privilege for White people and disadvantage for people of color. Critical race theory (CRT) attempts to understand the oppressive aspects of society in order to generate societal and individual transformation (Ortiz et al. 2010). CRT can be specifically viewed as a theoretical framework that offers a multidimensional critique regarding the causes of racial oppression,
the effects of racial oppression as well as implications for transformational change (Ortiz et al. 2010). Critical race theory can also be applied to understand racial inequities within academic environments (Solórzano and Yosso 2002).

According to Hughes and Giles (2010) “critical race theory provides an unapologetically progressive scholarship and is used ‘to understand how a regime of White supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America’. They go on to explain that critical race theory not only helps us understand systemic racism, but it also suggests ways to achieve constructive social change (Hughes and Giles 2010). They also argue that the American academy fosters many norms and values that should be questioned under the lens of CRT – which makes the use of critical theory very useful in this line of research.

Hughes and Giles (2010) introduce the concept of CRiT walking, and define it as a response to hook’s call (1989;1994) that theory should be born out of personal experience, pain and struggle. At its core, CRiT walking involves “doing critical theory” and using social justice approaches to address structural and systemic racism throughout society and particularly within the academy. Hughes and Giles (2010) suggest that scholars and other actors within the academy should openly question the structural imbalances that are deeply embedded within the academy. One goal of CRiT walking is to push all
academic actors – students, instructors, and staff out of their comfort zones and to challenge the norms of “color-blind assumptions” or the “passive acceptance of blatant systemic racism” (Hughes and Giles 2010). The other main goal of CRiT walking is to increase awareness and critical thinking skills as it relates to social norms and covert oppression throughout academia. The third goal of CRiT walking is to promote critical consciousness and awareness (Hughes and Giles 2010).

Critical race theory specifically assumes that: 1) race is a social construction that exists to reinforce social inequality, and 2) race and race-based ideology permeates all aspects of social life (Ortiz et al. 2010; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw 1993). Given these assumptions, I use critical race theory to explain how subaltern race statuses result in African Americans and other people of color experiencing racist microaggressions in academic environments.

Aligning the assumptions of critical race theory to my research, I seek to unearth the entrenched patterns of racism that affect the lives of students of color and specifically African American students at predominantly White institutions. I will specifically incorporate critical race theory into my dissertation by using survey research to determine: 1) if students of color are more likely to report experiences of racist microaggressions than White students; and 2) if students at
a predominantly White institution are more likely to report experiences of racist microaggressions than students in a racially heterogeneous school. I will specifically use a microaggression scale that will gauge student’s experiences with: 1) racist microassaults (overt racism) and 2) racist microinsults and microinvalidations (covert racism).

2.6.2 Feminist Theory

Over time, feminist theory has evolved to become more complex, critical, inclusive, and avant-garde in its approach to explaining social stratification, by moving from a binary view of gender, to perspectives that include multiple dimensions such as race, ethnicity, and class that truly highlight the complexities of gender stratification and inequality within society.

In her analysis on feminist theory and sociology Chafetz (1997) explains that the main function of feminist theory is to problematize gender inequities. First and Second-wave feminist scholarship contributed to feminist theory by explicitly problematizing gender inequality (De Beauvoir 1945; Friedan 1963; and Firestone 1970). Third-wave feminist scholarship added race, class, and other social categories to the analyses. Third wave scholarship specifically highlighted: the importance of including race and class in feminist research (Lorde 1979; hooks 1981); it explored how categories of gender, race and class are connected and how they overlap (Davis 1983); it highlighted the standpoints of previously
silenced voices (Smith 1987; Collins 1990; Alcoff 1991); and it exposed how double and multiple jeopardy is manifested in the lives of individuals that are members of several subaltern social group categories (King 1988; Crenshaw 1991).

Second wave feminist theory assumes that: 1) gender is a social construction, and 2) women’s subaltern status results in social inequities. Given these assumptions, I use feminist theory to explain how subaltern gender statuses result in manifestations of sexist microaggressions in academic environments.

I will specifically incorporate feminist theory in my dissertation by using survey research to determine: 1) if students who are women are more likely to report having experienced sexist microaggressions than students who are men. I will specifically use a microaggression scale that will gauge student’s experiences with: 1) sexist microassaults (overt sexism), and 2) sexist microinsults and microinvalidations (covert sexism).

2.6.3 Intersectionality

Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) created the term ‘intersectionality’ to describe the violence that many women of color experience. Crenshaw (1991) argued that the violent experiences of women of color are frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism, creating oppression that is unique
and complex to this group. Furthermore, this perspective gives a voice to those who are oftentimes silenced because their position within the margins. As a doubly (and sometimes more than doubly) marginalized group, women of color, should have their experiences studied and their concerns voiced since they are usually the easiest to exclude or ignore within traditional dominant analyses.

The idea of explaining and eradicating gendered racism is at the heart of intersectionality theory – as well as related theories like positionality, double jeopardy and multiple jeopardy. As Crenshaw (1991) highlights, studying one form of oppression is limiting. Without accounting for multiple forms of privilege and oppression we can’t clearly decipher and understand the complex social inequalities throughout society and within academia.

The interlaced nature of gender and race can create privilege for an individual in one instance, and oppression in other instances. Therefore, it is essential to study where these social characteristics overlap to fully understand how subaltern group members experience multiple systems of oppression throughout society – and particularly within academia. We are both racialized and gendered individuals, therefore a study on racism and sexism requires the use of intersectionality theories – more than the theories that solely focus on one form of oppression.
Racial oppression has often been studied under the notion that other social categories have to be invisible so that race is visible; and gender oppression has often been studied in the same way (Mohanty 2004: 107). This was a common approach within the Civil Rights and Feminists Movements of the last century where feminist issues were neglected in the Civil Rights Movement and where racial issues were neglected in the first and second waves of feminism. However, Mohanty (2004) believes that this does not have to be the case. Mohanty argues that the “challenges posed by [B]lack and Third World feminists can point the way to…transformative feminist politics based on the specificity of our historical and cultural locations and our common contexts of struggle” (2004:107). She continues her argument by pointing out that the juncture of anti-racist and feminist studies is of great importance substantively as well as methodologically, because it allows us to incorporate many standpoints into feminist theory that traditional studies of gender fail to do.

2.6.4 Standpoint Theory

Standpoint theory was created in an attempt to explore the intersection of multiple social categories. Smith (1987) used standpoint theory to develop a “woman’s standpoint” where gender and class were her two main dimensions, while Collins (1990) used standpoint theory to study the intersection of race, gender, and class.
Standpoint theory allows us to understand the unique experiences and stigmas that women of color experience—and it allows us to visualize how their unique social position is related to their oppression, quality of life, and life outcomes. According to standpoint theory, individuals can simultaneously be oppressed and the oppressor, privileged and penalized (Collins 1990).

2.6.5 Double and Multiple Jeopardy

The forms of oppression that people experience as a result of their race, gender, and other subaltern social positions are not separate and additive but interactive and multiplicative in their effects (Collins 1990). King (1988) also attempted to explore the overlap of standpoints and the multiple dimensions of oppression in her work and explained that when an individual falls into several low social statuses or devalued groups (e.g. racial minority, women, poor) they may experience multiple jeopardy or compounded oppression (King 1988). In general, members of low social status groups who experience multiple jeopardy may suffer a decreased quality of life that includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, social discrimination, cultural denigration, as well as immeasurable burdens of prejudice and mistreatment (King 1988).

Additionally, it is important to note that the oppressive forces of racism and sexism intersect to create different experiences and life outcomes for subaltern group members. For instance, all African Americans experience
racism; however, racism is manifested differently depending on one’s gender. This means that oppression will be experienced differently for African American men compared to African American women. In terms of gender, all women experience sexism; however, sexism is manifested differently depending on one’s race, which means that oppression will be experienced differently for African American women compared to White women.

To grasp how individuals and groups experience systems of oppression, it is necessary to recognize the unique and multifaceted ways that different forms of oppression – such as covert and overt racism, sexism and microaggressions interact to shape students’ academic experiences and well-being (Bell et al. 2010). Double jeopardy occurs when a person experiences two forms of oppression concurrently. Similarly, multiple jeopardy occurs when a person experiences multiple forms of disadvantage and oppression on the individual, institutional, structural, cultural, and systemic level (King 1988). Furthermore, multiple jeopardy theory suggests that an individual who falls into several low status groups will suffer multiple inequalities. For instance, a student suffering multiple jeopardy would essentially receive a penalty (whether low grades, discrimination or maltreatment) for each low status (subordinate gender or racial) category that they fall into – and the effect will be multiplicative. For example, a Black woman would receive a penalty for being Black and for being a
woman (double jeopardy); this same women would also experience a multiplicative penalty or multiple jeopardy for other visible or invisible subaltern social categories that she was associated with (for instance: if she had a disability or was a sexual minority). Davis (1983) argues that the intersection of racism and sexism resulted in the systematic exclusion of Black women from higher education. While some Black women have been excluded from higher education, those who are pursuing post-secondary education most likely experience a concentrated minority status and isolation on their campuses.

Brave Heart et al. (2011) explain that discrimination has been linked to distress, poor general health, and anxiety. Also, Diaz and Ayala (2001) provide support for double and multiple jeopardy by showing that individuals who suffer multiple inequities also suffer compounded mental and physical health symptoms. In other words, compounded discrimination can lead to compounded adverse outcomes.

It is important to note that oppression can intersect with privilege to create unique life experiences; therefore, it is possible to be a member of a privileged group in one social location and a member of an oppressed group in another social location. For instance, a student who identifies as a White woman may receive race based privileges in her community; however, she may experience sexist microaggressions within her male-dominated classroom.
In this study, I test double jeopardy and multiple jeopardy theory to determine if women of color experience more microaggressions and stress than their counterparts. I will specifically use a microaggression inventory that will gauge student’s experiences with: 1) racist microassaults (overt racism), 2) sexist microassaults (overt sexism), 3) racist microinsults and microinvalidations (covert racism), and 4) sexist microinsults and microinvalidations (covert sexism).

2.6.6 Positionality

Positionality is a concept that is very similar to intersectionality and multiple jeopardy. Positionality suggests that identity is fluid, dynamic, and influenced by historical and social changes (Kezar, 2010). Furthermore, positionality theory suggests that an individual has “multiple overlapping identities”. Moreover, like standpoint theory, the positionality framework explains that since individuals have multiple positionalities it is possible that an individual can be privileged in some spaces, and oppressed in other spaces (Kezar, 2010). For instance, an African American women undergraduate may experience discrimination on campus; however, that same individual may have a lot of power, agency, and control as a head of her family or as a planner in her church.
In this study, double jeopardy theory will be tested to specifically examine the incidences of oppression that African American women experience while controlling for institution type; and multiple jeopardy theory will be tested to examine the incidences of oppression that African American women experience specifically within a predominantly White school that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture. I argue that their subaltern race and gender status is more visible while the number of potential perpetrators is numerically greater within a predominantly White institution with a dominant sports and fraternity culture.

2.6.7 Activation Theory

Activation theory builds off of concepts like intersectionality, positionality, and kyriarchy. Kyriarchy is defined as a social system that is rooted in oppression and domination (Bruns 2010). Much like positionality and intersectionality, it explains that one can be privileged in one space and oppressed in another space, or one can be both privilege and oppressed in the same social setting.

An important component of activation theory is the role of social statuses, social spaces and positionality. The concept of “activation” describes how specific minority statuses are more likely to be highlighted in certain instances. In terms of activation theory, I take the basic position that our social statuses become activated as a result of the social spaces that we occupy, and we will
experience either privilege or oppression depending on where our social statuses are activated. Activation theory aims to explore how subjugated group members live, learn, and work among dominant group members. This theory will help us understand the relationship between subaltern social statuses and social spaces.

For instance, if a woman of color enters a classroom full of male colleagues she will undoubtedly experience what I term the “activation of her gender” and “the activation of her race”. It will be hard for her and more importantly others to ignore the fact that she is the only woman in the room, and that her behavior may be scrutinized by the men in the room. Hopefully, all will be well if no inappropriate behavior occurs, but if one of her colleagues speaks to her and her alone in an abrasive manner, she may feel his behavior was directed towards her because of her subaltern gender position and her minority status. Moreover, if she reacts in any way other than the gender appropriate submissive way, or in a way that is comparable to any racial stereotype, she will undoubtedly be termed unprofessional and overly sensitive (as well as a host of other critical and abrasive terminologies). Furthermore, if this woman issues a complaint stating that she felt targeted because of her gender or race, she will most likely be re-victimized by untrained faculty or staff (Sapiro 2003). In other words, the activation of gender can result in short-term and long-term issues.
To review, intersectionality theories provide an appropriate context for this research on sexist and racist microaggressions within the academy. It allows us to see that experiences on campus are situated around one’s race and gender status. Viewing privilege and oppression through multiple dimensions allows us to understand the experiences of students. I will specifically use this perspective to examine women of color’s experience with microaggressions at a predominantly White institution and a diverse institution.

2.7 Summarizing the Literature and Weaknesses of Existing Studies

The above literature review reveals that: 1) racist and sexist microaggressions are rampant within society and academic institutions; 2) post-racist, racist, post-sexist and sexist beliefs are prevalent; 3) claims that society is post-racist and post-sexist are erroneous; 4) the academic institution interacts with a student’s social status to determine academic experience, well being, stress levels, opinion of campus climate and achievement; and 5) racism and sexism are uniquely experienced based on the intersection of an individual’s race and gender categories.

My dissertation is significant because it is among the first to document the existence of racist and sexist microaggressions in higher education. My research provides a better understanding of how microaggressions are manifested and
how they affect stress levels among college students. I also expand on microaggression theory by developing theory on: private and public microaggressions, aggressor and target relationships, and responses to microaggressions. Furthermore, this study tracks how microaggressions manifest differently depending on institution type. This study also shows that microaggressions are not simply individual acts of aggression or hostility but represent patterned manifestations of oppression throughout the academic system that must be exposed and addressed.

This dissertation is also among the first to study to determine the prevalence of post-racist and post-sexist beliefs. It reveals which students are more likely to hold post-racist and post-sexist beliefs, and whether these beliefs are held in conjunction with racist and sexist beliefs. It also shows how students of different races and genders have completely different academic experiences as a result of being in a dominant or subaltern group. The analysis also reveals how the intersection of race and gender, intersectionality, double jeopardy, and multiple jeopardy affects the lives of subaltern group members.
CHAPTER III

DATA

3.1 Hypotheses

This dissertation research will include four core analyses on the following topics: 1) covert and overt racist and sexist experiences among college students; 2) racist, sexist, post-racist, and post-sexist beliefs among college students, 3) environmental context on students’ experiences and beliefs by comparing college students at a predominantly White institution that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture, and students at a diverse institution that does not have a dominant sports and fraternity culture, and 4) a path analysis testing the causal relationships between demographic factors and environmental context, experiences and attitudes. Based upon a review of the literature, I test several interrelated hypotheses. My research questions and hypotheses will be grounded in critical race theory and feminist theory.

3.1.1 Analysis 1 Research Questions and Hypotheses

The purpose of analysis 1 is to examine the prevalence of covert and overt racist and sexist experiences among college students and to develop models of their occurrence by gender and race. The research questions and hypotheses for analysis 1 are as follows:
1. How prevalent are racist experiences among college students?

\(H_1\). People of color will report more racist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations than White students.

2. How prevalent are sexist experiences among college students?

\(H_2\). Women will report more sexist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations than men.

3. Will women of color experience double or multiple jeopardy as college students?

\(H_3\). People of color will report more racist and sexist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations if they are women.

4. Will students who report more incidences of racist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations report higher levels of stress?

\(H_4\). Students, irrespective of their race, who report more incidences of racist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations will also report higher levels of stress.

5. Will students who report more incidences of sexist microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations report higher levels of stress?

\(H_5\). Students, irrespective of their gender, who report more incidences of sexist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations will also report higher levels of stress.
6. Will students who report more incidences of racist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations report more negative perceptions of campus climate?

H6. Students, irrespective of their race, who report more incidences of racist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations will also report more negative perceptions of campus climate.

7. Will students who report more incidences of sexist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations report negative perceptions of campus climate?

H7. Students, irrespective of their gender, who report more incidences of sexist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations will also more report negative perceptions of campus climate.

8. Are women more likely to be victimized by individuals outside of their gender group?

H8. Women will be more likely to be victimized by men, especially on a campus that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture since such an environment may foster hypermasculinity and sexual misconduct.

9. Are students of color more likely to be victimized by individuals outside of their racial group?
H0. Students of color will be more likely to be victimized by dominant racial group members, especially on the predominantly White campus where they are outnumbered racially and oftentimes antagonized by the majority groups as well as other minority groups.

3.1.2 Analysis 2 Research Questions and Hypotheses

The purpose of analysis 2 is to examine the prevalence of racist, post-racist, sexist, and post-sexist beliefs among college students and develop models of their origins by race and gender. The research questions and hypotheses for analysis 2 is as follows:

1. Are dominant racial group members more likely to hold racist beliefs and believe in a post-racist society than subaltern racial group members?

   \( H_1 \). White students will hold more racist beliefs than non-White students.

2. Are men more likely to hold sexist beliefs and believe in a post-sexist society than subaltern gender group members?

   \( H_2 \). Men will hold more sexist beliefs than female students.

3. Are individuals with low levels of cultural competence more likely to believe in a post-racist society?

   \( H_3 \). Individuals with low levels of cultural competence are more likely to believe in a post-racist society than individuals with high levels of cultural competence.
4. Are post-racist beliefs more likely to be held by individuals who have not experienced high levels of racist aggression?

*H4*. Individuals with few or no experiences with racist aggression are more likely to believe in a post-racist society than individuals who have many experiences of racist aggression.

5. Are post-sexist beliefs more likely to be held by individuals who have not experienced high levels of sexist aggression?

*H5*. Individuals with few or no experiences with sexist aggression are more likely to believe in a post-sexist society than individuals who have many experiences of sexist aggression.

### 3.1.3 Analysis 3 Research Questions and Hypotheses

The purpose of analysis 3 is to focus on how an *environmental context* impacts student’s beliefs and experiences by comparing the prevalence of racist, sexist, post-racist, and post-sexist beliefs, cultural competence as well as overt and covert racist and sexist experiences among college students at a predominantly White institution that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture and students at a diverse institution that does not have a dominant sports and fraternity culture. The research questions and hypotheses for analysis 3 are as follows:
1. Are students who attend a diverse institution that does not have dominant sports and fraternity culture less likely to experience racist and sexist aggression than students at a racially homogenous institution that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture?

H1. A diverse institution that does not have a dominant sports and fraternity culture may be more inclusive and progressive than a racially homogenous institution that does have a dominant sports and fraternity culture. Consequently, the students at diverse institution will report fewer incidences of covert and overt racist aggression.

2. Are students who attend a diverse institution that does not have a dominant sports and fraternity culture less likely to hold racist and sexist beliefs than students at a racially homogenous school that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture?

H2. Students at a diverse institution will be less likely to hold racist and sexist beliefs.

3. Are students who attend a diverse institution that does not have a dominant sports and fraternity culture less likely to hold post-racist and post-sexist beliefs than students at a racially homogenous school that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture?
H₃. Students at a diverse institution will be less likely to hold post-racist and post-sexist beliefs.

4. Will mean cultural competency scores be higher at a diverse institution that does not have a dominant sports and fraternity culture?

H₄. Students at a diverse institution will have higher levels of cultural competency.

5. Will women of color experience multiple jeopardy within a racially homogenous institution that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture?

H₅. Women of color at a homogenous institution will experience more covert and overt sexism and racism than women of color at a diverse institution.

3.1.4 Analysis 4 Research Purpose

The purpose of analysis 4 is to create a path models in order to examine the relationships between demographic factors (race, gender, and institution type), experiences (racist and sexist victimization) and attitudes/outlook (racist, post-racist, sexist, post-sexist, campus climate, and stress).

1. The experiences of subaltern group members in relation to their perceptions of campus climate and stress.

H₁. I hypothesize that subaltern group members will experience more microaggressions: racial minorities will experience more racist microaggressions; women will experience more sexist microaggressions and
women of color will experience more racist and sexist microaggressions. These oppressive experiences will result in poor perceptions of campus climate and higher stress for these populations.

2. Institution type in relation to experiences and beliefs.

H2. I hypothesize that a predominantly White institution that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture will foster more microaggressions than a diverse, urban school. This experience will create more negative perceptions of campus climate and more stress for students.

3.2 Sample

The data for this study came from a sample of undergraduate students enrolled at two universities. The first school - The University of Iowa is located in a Midwestern predominantly White college town and has a dominant sports and fraternity culture. The second school – The University of Illinois at Chicago is located in a diverse large urban area and doesn't have a dominant sports and fraternity culture. The University of Iowa has over 30,000 enrolled students and University of Illinois at Chicago has over 27,000 enrolled students. I surveyed 1466 students at the University of Iowa and 995 students at the University of Illinois at Chicago. I sampled undergraduate students from diverse racial and gender backgrounds, as well as students from diverse majors and programs. My sampling plan involved listing all undergraduate programs within the university
and college. Courses in which the survey was administered were selected using random numbers. I secured course listings and schedules for the Spring 2012, Summer 2012, and Fall 2012 semesters, and requested permission from instructors to enter their classes on specified dates. After securing permission, I created a schedule of class times to collect data. To increase statistical power and to obtain enough African American students and students of color at The University of Iowa, I partnered with the Center for Diversity and Enrichment to administer surveys to students that they worked with (most of these students were from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups).

I accounted for internal validity by using reliable measures of my independent and dependent variables as well as a strong justification argument that causally linked my independent variables and my dependent variables. In terms of generalizability, I sampled students from a predominantly White institution and a diverse institution as well as undergraduates from diverse racial and gender groups. I pretested my instrument before distributing it. I collected feedback from undergraduate students at The University of Iowa and implemented useful feedback in the construction of my questionnaire. However, one shortcoming regarding this sampling plan is that I only gathered data from two universities.
The research was conducted in compliance with the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Iowa and the University of Illinois Chicago.

3.3 Data Collection

At the University of Iowa, I attended classes as well as events at the Center for Diversity and Enrichment to administer the survey. At the University of Illinois at Chicago, I only attended classes. Students were told that the purpose of the survey was to test campus climate. The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete and was collected as students completed the survey.

3.4 Measurement Details

The survey included: (1) a questionnaire that collected demographic information from the participants; (2) scales that measured racism, sexism, stress, and cultural competence (regarding race and gender); (3) questions regarding beliefs about post-racism and post-sexism; (4) an inventory to gauge individual experiences of racist and sexist microaggressions (overt and covert microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations); (5) questions the microaggressors who troubled them, (6) questions on personal sports involvement, (7) questions about
their schools sports culture, and (8) questions on campus climate. (See Appendix A.)

3.4.1 Demographic Information

The questionnaire collected demographic information including sex, gender, race, fraternity membership, sorority membership, financial aid receipt, and first generation college status. Sex and gender information was collected to primarily measure experiences with sexism. Race information was collected to primarily measure experiences with racism. Fraternity membership was collected to gauge levels of sexist and racist beliefs among this group. Sorority membership was used to gauge levels of experiences with sexism. Financial aid receipt and first generation college status was used to gauge students perception of campus climate.

3.4.2 Racist Beliefs

Racist beliefs were assessed using the eight item Symbolic Racism Scale (Henry & Sears, 2002). It asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following statements: 1) It’s really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as Whites; 2) Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same; 3) Some say that black leaders have been
trying to push too fast. Others feel that they haven’t pushed fast enough. What do you think? 4) How much of the racial tension that exists in the United States today do you think blacks are responsible for creating? 5) How much discrimination against blacks do you feel there is in the United States today, limiting their chances to get ahead? 6) Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class; 7) Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve; and 8) Over the past few years, blacks have gotten more economically than they deserve. Responses can range across four values from 1 (strongly agree/a lot/all of it) to 4 (strongly disagree/not at all/not much at all). Although the reliability of the scale is slightly low in this sample (α=.68), other studies have validated the reliability of the items (Henry and Sears 2002).

3.4.3 Sexist Beliefs

Sexist beliefs were assessed using the eight item Modern Sexism scale (Swim et al. 2001). It asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following statements: 1) Women often miss out on good jobs due to sexual discrimination; 2) It is rare to see women treated in a sexist manner on television; 3) Society has reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement; 4) It is easy to understand the anger of women’s groups in America; 5) Over the past few years, the government and news media have been showing
more concern about the treatment of women than is warranted by women’s actual experiences; 6) Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the United States; 7) On average, people in our society treat husbands and wives equally; and 8) It is easy to understand why women’s groups are still concerned about societal limitations of women’s opportunities. Responses can range across four values from 1 (strongly agree/a lot/all of it) to 4 (strongly disagree/not at all/not much at all). Scale items reliably measure the concept of sexist beliefs (α=.79).

3.4.4 Post-Racism and Post-Sexism

I measured post-racist and post-sexist beliefs by asking four questions that I created based on relevant literature. It asked respondents to agree with the following statements: 1) The election of President Obama is proof that racism isn’t a major social issue anymore. 2) The advancement of women is proof that sexism isn’t a major social issue anymore. 3) Sexism is not as bad as it was in the past. 4) Racism is not as bad as it was in the past. The first two questions are dichotomous and the last two include responses that range across four values from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Questions asking about post-sexist and post-racist beliefs were not combined into scales because the reliability of the measures was low and because only two questions were asked for each construct (α=.25 for post-sexist; α=.15 for post-racist). No other studies, however, have attempted to measure post-sexist or post-racist beliefs. While these items cannot be used to
construct a scale, it is important to analyze respondent’s agreement with these statements so that individual’s awareness of racism and sexism as continuing social issues can be addressed.

3.4.5 Personal Sports Involvement

I measured personal sports involvement and one’s perception of their schools sports culture. The intent of the personal sports involvement questions was to gauge participant’s level of interest and involvement in sports. For men, this variable serves as a proxy for hypermasculinity since participation or membership in all male groups like sports teams are associated with attitudes related to sexual aggression and sexually aggressive behavior. The following items were used to measure the concept of personal sports involvement: 1) Are attending games important to you?; 2) Are watching games important to you?; 3) Are sports important to you?; 4) How often do you watch sports?; and 5) How often do you participate in sports.

3.4.6 Perception of School Sports Culture

I measured respondent’s perception of the sports culture at their school. Research has shown that academic environments that have a dominant sports culture are more likely to have a campus climate that is hypermasculine as well as more incidents of sexual aggression and sexual assault compared to other
schools (Miller 2008; Gage 2008; Murnen and Kohlman 2007). The following items were used to measure the concept of school sports culture: 1) Is your school a sports-centered school?; 2) Are sports important to most people at your school? 3) How important is the role of sports within your school environment? 4) How many sports related activities go on at your school?

3.4.7 Cultural Competence

I measured cultural competence by using the 6-item Respect for Cultural Differences subscale from the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale. Cultural competency will serve as an outcome variable. This scale is useful in terms of gauging students' cultural awareness and sensitivity about a variety of cultures. It also captures the essence of cultural competency, which encourages individuals to be respectful and aware of all cultures, not just the Black and White binary that is traditionally used in studies of race and culture. It asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following statements: 1) I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded; 2) I don’t like to be with people from different cultures; 3) I respect the values of people from different cultures; 4) I respect the ways people from different cultures behave; 5) I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures; and 6) I think my culture is better than other cultures. Responses can range across four values from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). The Respect for Cultural Differences subscale reliably measures cultural competency (α=.73).
3.4.8 Microaggression Scale

Microaggression theory outlines three different types of microaggressions: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. The microaggression scale consists of 20 items that include microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. Microassaults are usually overt in nature, while microinsults and microinvalidations are usually covert.

I used a modified version of a 19-item survey instrument used in Perry’s (2010) campus climate study, in order to gauge incidences of overt racism and sexism. These questions allowed me to identify incidences of hate crimes on a Predominantly White Institution and on a racially heterogeneous campus. The questions are linked to dichotomous responses (1 yes; 2 no).

I used a modified version of the 14 item survey instrument used in the Torres et al. (2010) study on microaggressions in order to gauge incidences of covert racism and sexism. These questions allowed me to identify incidences of covert hate crimes on a Predominantly White Institution and on a racially heterogeneous campus. The questions are linked to dichotomous responses (1 yes; 2 no).

3.4.9 Microaggression Scale: Microassault Subscale

Microassaults are typically overt acts. The microassault scale items are all overt and include the following items: You have heard an offensive joke or
comment about your group (based on your race or gender); You have heard stereotypes about your group (based on your race or gender); You have been called a name or verbally harassed (based on your race or gender); You received offensive phone calls, letters or email; You had personal property damaged (e.g. laptop, car) (based on your race or gender); You have been threatened with physical assault (based on your race or gender); and You have been physically assaulted or harmed (based on your race or gender).

3.4.10 Microaggression Scale: Microinsult Subscale

The microinsult scale items are all covert and include the following items:
You were treated rudely or disrespectfully (based on your race or gender); You have been treated as if you were “stupid” (based on your race or gender); Others have avoided being around you (based on your race or gender); Others have acted as if they were afraid of you or intimidated by you (based on your race or gender); You have been stared at as if you were abnormal or “didn’t belong” (based on your race or gender); and You have been watched or followed in public places as if you were a threat or dangerous (based on your race or gender).

3.4.11 Microaggression Scale: Microinvalidation Subscale

The microinvalidation items are all covert and include the following items:
Your ideas, beliefs or opinions were ignored or devalued (based on your race or
gender); You have been left out of conversations or activities (based on your race or gender); Others have expected your work to be inferior (based on your race or gender); You have been mistaken for someone else because you are a member of the same race or gender group (based on your race or gender); You have been mistaken for someone who serves others (i.e., janitor, or maid) (based on your race or gender); Have been told that you were “too sensitive” about race or gender (based on your race or gender); and Someone has told you that they “don’t see race” or “don’t see gender (based on your race or gender).

3.4.12 Microaggressor Inventory

I then ask respondent’s questions about the microaggressors who troubled them. Using microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations as guides, I ask students if they have been physically assaulted, verbally assaulted, disrespected, or had their feelings or concerns ignored by microaggressors on campus. I specifically ask if their microaggressor was a woman, a man, someone of the same race, or someone of a different race. I also ask how many times those microaggressors have hurt them.

3.4.13 Stress

I measured stress among students by using the four item Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, 1983). Stress will serve as an outcome variable. It asked respondents
to answer the following questions: 1) In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?; 2) In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?; 3) In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?; and 4) In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them? Responses can range from 1 (never) to 4 (very often). The items work reasonably well as indicators of stress ($\alpha=0.69$).

3.4.14 Campus Climate

I measured campus climate by asking seven questions that I created based on relevant literature. Campus climate will serve as an outcome variable. It asked respondents to answer the following questions: 1) Based on your race do you feel that you are treated well at your school?; 2) Based on your gender do you feel that you are treated well at your school?; 3) Do you believe that racism on campus is a major problem?; 4) Do you believe that sexism on campus is a major problem?; 5) Have you ever considered dropping out of school because of racist experiences?; 6) Have you ever considered dropping out of school because of sexist experiences? The above questions are linked to dichotomous responses (1 yes; 2 no). 7) Do you feel safe on your campus? Responses for this question range from 1 (never) to 4 (always). The reliability of the scale is acceptable ($\alpha=0.64$).
The main independent variables of interest for chapter 1 include: the participant’s race and gender. Three race variables are included in the analyses; Black, Asian, and Latino. White is excluded as the reference category. Dummy variable for woman and enrollment at a predominantly White institution are also included.

The main dependent variables of interest include the following experiential outcomes among students: 1) experiences with racist microassaults (overt racism), 2) experiences with sexist microassaults (overt sexism), 3) experiences with racist microinsults and microinvalidations (covert racism), 4) experiences with sexist microinsults and microinvalidations (covert sexism), 5) the prevalence of stress among students, and 6) perceptions of campus climate.

3.4.15 Open-ended Questions

I also included a set of open-ended questions within the survey. Open-ended questions can yield fruitful qualitative data. The intent of these questions was to generate in-depth responses about participant’s experiences with racism and sexism on campus as well as their opinion of their campuses racial and gender climate. Respondents were asked: 1) Please describe your experiences with racism on your campus; 2) Please describe your experiences with sexism on your campus; and 3) Do you think that your school provides a comfortable environment for culturally diverse groups and women? These questions were
crafted with the anticipation that responses would fall into three major themes: student’s experiences with microaggressions; their beliefs related to racism and sexism; and their impressions of campus climate. The same three open-ended questions were asked to all study participants. Standardized questions were used in order to provide all respondents with the same stimulus. The data consists of verbatim quotations that the respondents wrote. Using inductive analysis and on screen coding I documented the common patterns found in the data. I present the data based on common patterns related to experiences with microaggressions; beliefs related to racism and sexism; and impressions of campus climate that emerged.

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.
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Modern racism scale

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CHAPTER IV

RESULTS – EXPERIENCES WITH MICROAGGRESSIONS

The purpose of chapter four is to examine the prevalence of covert and overt racist and sexist experiences among college students, and to develop models of their occurrence by gender and race. The research questions and hypotheses for chapter four examine:

1. How prevalent are racist experiences among college students?
   
   \( H_1 \). Students will experience racist microaggressions because the United States is not a post-racist society. Moreover, following the literature on microaggressions, I test the hypothesis that people of color are more likely to report racist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations than White students.

2. How prevalent are sexist experiences among college students?
   
   \( H_2 \). Students will experience sexist microaggressions because the United States is not a post-sexist society. Moreover, following the literature on microaggressions, I hypothesize that women are more likely to report sexist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations than male students.

3. Will women of color experience double or multiple jeopardy as college students?
$H_3$. Based on the literature on intersectionality and double jeopardy, women of color will experience double jeopardy or a multiplicative effect of both racist and sexist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations because of their subjugated race and gender status.

4. Will students who report more incidences of racist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations report higher levels of stress? 

$H_4$. Students, irrespective of their race, who report more incidences of racist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations, will also report higher levels of stress.

5. Will students who report more incidences of sexist microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations report higher levels of stress? 

$H_5$. Students, irrespective of their gender, who report more incidences of sexist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations, will also report higher levels of stress.

6. Will students who report more incidences of racist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations report negative perceptions of campus climate? 

$H_6$. Students, irrespective of their race, who report more incidences of racist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations, will also report negative perceptions of campus climate.
7. Will students who report more incidences of sexist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations report negative perceptions of campus climate?

H7. Students, irrespective of their gender, who report more incidences of sexist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations, will also report negative perceptions of campus climate.

8. Are women more likely to be victimized by individuals outside of their gender group?

H8. Women will be more likely to be victimized by men, especially on a campus that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture since such an environment may foster hypermasculinity and sexual misconduct.

9. Are students of color more likely to be victimized by individuals outside of their racial group?

H9. Students of color will be more likely to be victimized by dominant racial group members, especially on the predominantly White campus, where they are outnumbered racially and oftentimes antagonized by the majority groups as well as other minority groups.

4.1 Quantitative Results

In this section, I present results on the prevalence of microassaults. Microassaults are overt acts. I will specifically present findings on: 1) racist
microassaults (overt racism), and 2) sexist microassaults (overt sexism). Table 2 (see below) displays the results of t-tests examining the differences in the prevalence of racist and sexist microassaults. Table 2 (as well as Tables 3 and c) can be read by looking at the group mean and the superscript that follows. For example, White women experience an average of 1.71 gender-based microassaults. The superscripts, BW, AW, HW, and WM, indicate that White women experience significantly more gender-based assaults than Black women, Asian women, Latina women, and White men. Each mean value in the table can be read in a similar manner.

4.1.1 Racist Microassaults and Double Jeopardy

Compared to White students, Black, Asian, and Latino(a) students all experienced a significantly higher amount of race-based microassaults. Black students experienced more race-based microassaults than Latino students. Asian students also experienced significantly more race-based microassaults than Latino students. Black men, Asian men, and Latino men experienced more race-based microassaults than White males. Asian and Latino men experienced a similar number of race-based microassaults. However, men reported more race-based microassaults than women (men: 1.30; women: 1.19).

In this section, I examine the experiences of race-based microassaults that women of color experience. Black women, Asian women, and Latino women
experienced more instances of race-based microassaults than White women. Black women experienced more race-based microassaults than Latinas. No differences existed between Black women and Black men, Asian women and Asian men, or Latinas and Latino men.

4.1.2 Sexist Microassaults and Double Jeopardy

Compared to men, women experienced more gender-based microassaults. Asian students and Latino students experienced fewer gender-based microassaults than White students.

In this section, I examine the experiences of gender-based microassaults among women of color. The interaction of race with gender produced unusual results, with White women reporting the largest number of gender-based microassaults. Black, Asian, and Latina women experienced fewer microassaults than White women. Latina, Black and Asian women experienced a similar number of gender-based microassaults. Men of all races experienced a similar number of gender-based microassaults – none of the comparisons were statistically significant. Interestingly, no significant differences were found between Black women and Black men, Asian women and Asian men, and Latina women and Latino men. White women, however, experienced significantly more gender-based microassaults than White men.
4.1.3 Racist and Sexist Microinsults, Microinvalidations

and Double Jeopardy

In this section, I present results on the prevalence of microinsults and microinvalidations. Microinsults and microinvalidations are covert acts. I will specifically present findings on: 1) racist microinsults and microinvalidations (covert racism) and 2) sexist microinsults and microinvalidations (covert sexism). Table 3 (see below) displays the results of t-tests examining the differences in the prevalence of racist and sexist micro-insults and microinvalidations.

Compared to White students, Black, Asian, and Latino(a) students all experienced a significantly higher amount of race-based microinsults and microinvalidations. Furthermore, Black students experienced more race-based microinsults and invalidations than Asian and Latino/a students. While Asian students experienced a comparable number of race-based microinsults to Latino students, they experienced significantly more race-based microinvalidations. Within gender comparisons show that Black men, Asian men, and Latino men experienced more race-based microinsults and microinvalidations than White men. Black men experienced more race-based microinsults and microinvalidations than Asian men and Hispanic men. Asian and Latino men experienced a similar number of race-based microinsults and microinvalidations.

In this section, I examine the experiences of race-based microinsults and
Table 2. T-Tests of Race and Gender Microassaults across Groups

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<th>Race Assaults</th>
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<td>1.29</td>
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<td>1.19</td>
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Note: Means presented; Superscripts indicate which group means are higher than
W=women; M=men
W=White; A=Asian; L=Latino
WW=White women; AW=Asian women; LW=Latina women; BW=Black women
microinvalidations among women of color. Black women, Asian women, and Latinas experienced more race-based microinsults and microinvalidations than White women. Black women experienced more race-based microinsults and invalidations than Asian women and Latinas. Asian women experienced significantly more race-based microinvalidations than Latinas.

Black students experienced more gender-based microinvalidations than White students. Asian students and Latino students experienced fewer gender-based microinsults than White students. Black students experienced more gender-based microinsults than Asian students and more gender-based microinsults and microinvalidations than Latino students.

In this section, I examine the experiences of gender-based microinsults and microinvalidations among women of color. Asian women and Latina women experienced fewer gender-based microinsults than White women. Black women experienced more gender-based microinsults than Asian students. Compared to Latina women, Black and Asian women experienced a similar number of gender-based microinsults and invalidations.

Black men experienced more gender-based microinsults and invalidations than White men, while Asian men experienced more gender-based microinvalidations than White students. Latino and White men experienced a
### Table 3. T-Tests of Race and Gender Microinsults and Microinvalidations across Groups

<table>
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<td>.93&lt;sup&gt;A, L&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.65</td>
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| Women            | .76           | .98<sup>M</sup> | 1.15               | 1.55<sup>M</sup>     |
| Men              | .78           | .65            | 1.10               | .80                  |

| Black women      | 2.56<sup>WW, AW, LW</sup> | .92<sup>AW</sup> | 2.61<sup>WW, AW, LW</sup> | 1.60 |
| Asian women      | 1.29<sup>WW</sup> | .62            | 1.94<sup>WW, LW</sup> | 1.42<sup>AM</sup>     |
| Latina women     | 1.15<sup>WW</sup> | .77            | 1.50<sup>WW</sup> | 1.38<sup>LM</sup>     |
| White women      | .30           | 1.09<sup>AW, LW, WM</sup> | .65                | 1.57<sup>WM</sup>     |

| Black men        | 2.37<sup>WM, AM, LM</sup> | .98<sup>WM, AM, LM</sup> | 2.54<sup>WM, AM, LM</sup> | 1.42<sup>WM, AM, LM</sup> |
| Asian men        | 1.46<sup>WM</sup> | .57            | 1.94<sup>WM, LM</sup> | 1.04<sup>WM, LM</sup> |
| Latino men       | 1.21<sup>WM</sup> | .61            | 1.51<sup>WM</sup> | .74                  |
| White men        | .35           | .63            | .64                | .71                  |

Note: Means presented; Superscripts indicate which group means are higher than
W=women; M=men
W=White; A=Asian; L=Latino
WW=White women; AW=Asian women; LW=Latina women; BW=Black women
WM=White men; AM=Asian men; LM=Latino men; BM=Black men
similar number of gender-based microinsults and microinvalidations. Compared to Latino men, Black men experienced more gender-based microinvalidations.

Within race, few differences exist by gender. Black, Asian, and Latina women experience a similar amount of gender-based insults and invalidations compared to men. Compared to White men, however, White women experience significantly more gender-based insults and invalidations.

4.1.4  Experiences with Microaggressions: Microaggressors

Survey respondents were asked about the race and gender of their microaggressors. Using microaggression theory, four overarching microaggression themes were created from the results. Two microassault themes: physical assault and verbal assault; and two microinsult and microinvalidation themes: being disrespected and having your concerns ignored.

Theory suggests that non-White students will be more likely to experience victimization by members of another race than White students. This is true in some cases but not others. Asian and Latino students are more likely to be physically assaulted by someone of a different race than White students. Black and White students are equally likely to be physically assaulted by someone of a different race. (See Table 4).
Table 4. Percent of Group Experiencing Microaggressions by Members of a Different Race/Gender

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Note: Superscripts indicate which group means are higher than
W=women; M=men
B=Black; A=Asian; L=Latino; W=White
Women are more likely than men to be physically assaulted by someone of the opposite gender. Microaggression theory also posits that women will be more likely to experience victimization by men, while men are relatively unlikely to experience victimization by women. Not surprisingly, the results from Table 4 show that women are more likely to be physically assaulted by someone of a different gender than are men.

The results are similar when examining respondents’ experiences with verbal assaults. Black and Asian students are more likely to be verbally assaulted by someone of a different race than are White students (See Table 4). Women are more likely than men to be verbally assaulted by someone of the opposite gender (See Table 4).

Table 4 also examine the percentage of respondents, by race, that have experienced disrespect. Not surprisingly, Black students represent the largest percent – with 55% experiencing disrespect by members of another race. This is significantly higher than the percent of Latino, Asian, and White students experiencing disrespect. White students were the least likely to be disrespected by someone of another race (31%). Similar to physical and verbal assaults, women were more likely to be disrespected by a member of the other gender than were men (See Table 4).
Table 4 also examine the percentage of respondents, by race, that have had their concerns ignored by a member of a different race. Not surprisingly, Black students represent the largest percent – with 37% having their concerns ignored. This is significantly higher than the percent of Latino, Asian, and White students who had their concerns ignored. White students were the least likely to have their concerns ignored by members of another race (21%). Similar to physical and verbal assaults, women were more likely to have their concerns ignored by a member of the other gender than were men (See Table 4).

4.1.5 *Regression Results*

Although the results of the t-tests show that some groups experience more microaggressions than others (e.g. Black women experience more race-based assaults than White and Latina women), it is important to examine whether race and gender are associated with microaggressions after controlling for other variables that may also influence one’s experiences with microassaults, insults, and invalidations. Even after controlling for age, financial aid receipt, enrollment as a first generation student, fraternity and sorority membership, the importance of sports to the respondent, and the perceived importance of sports to the school by the respondent, Black, Asian, and Latino students experienced more race based microassaults than White students. Women students experienced fewer than men. Students at the predominantly White institution
experience fewer microassaults overall. Being in a fraternity is associated with
to more race-based assaults. Also, students who responded that their school was
sports-based reported more race-based microassaults.

The effect of being a Black, Asian, or Latina woman is stronger at the PWI
than at the diverse institution – in other words, Black, Asian, and Latina women
experience more race-based microassaults at a PWI – which supports multiple
jeopardy theory (See Table 5). Most importantly, the interaction effects of Black
by women, Asian by women, and Latina by women are not significant on their
own. However, when multiplying these two-way interactions by institution
type, a positive effect emerges. Black women, Asian women, and Latina women
only experience a greater number of race-based microassaults when they attend a
predominantly-White institution. This suggests that respondents with two
disadvantaged statuses, non-White and women, only experience greater
victimization when in a largely White environment. Within a diverse
environment, possessing two disadvantaged statuses poses no risk for additional
victimization – likely because being a woman and non-White is viewed as less of
a disadvantage in a diverse environment.

The results show a similar pattern for race-based microinsults and
microinvalidations. Black, Asian, and Latina women experience no increase in
microinsults based on their status. However, when Black, Asian, and Latina
Table 5. OLS Regressions of Race-Based Microassaults, Microinsults, and Microinvalidations

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†<.10; * p<.05; * p<.01; *** p<.001
women attend a PWI, the number of microinsults they experience increases substantially. Black and Asian women experience an increase in microinvalidations as well. Interestingly, Latinas did not experience an increased number of microinvalidations when attending a PWI.

Not surprisingly, compared to males, women experienced more gender-based microaggressions of all types. Microaggression theory suggests that, as members of a disadvantaged group, women will be likely to experience more microaggression based on their gender than will men. While Black, Asian, and Latina women experienced a greater number of race-based microaggressions when they attended a PWI, the same is not true for gender-based microaggressions. While there is a main effect for race – Black – on gender-based insults and invalidations, the interaction of Black and women in each equation is negative. This suggests that Black men experience a greater number of gender-based insults and invalidations than Black women.

Table 7 displays the effects of microaggression experiences, race, and gender on perceptions of campus climate. The main effects model indicates that individuals who experience a greater number of race-based insults, gender-based insults, gender-based invalidations, and gender-based assaults have more negative perceptions of campus climate. Asian students, women, and students attending a PWI also have more negative perceptions. It is unsurprising that
Table 7. OLS Regressions of Campus Climate

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Note: coefficients for control variables (age, financial aid, first generation, fraternity, sorority, personal sport, and school sport) are not presented
†<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001
students who experience microaggressions have more negative perceptions. Nor is it surprising that women, as a disadvantaged group subject to multiple microaggressions, have more negative perceptions than males. However, only Asian students had more negative perceptions than White students. No effect was present for Black and Latino students. In addition to the main effects of gender assaults and women, there is an additional effect for the interaction of the two – women who experience gender assaults have even more negative perceptions of campus climate. The final column of Table 7 displays coefficients for interactions between race and race-based microaggressions. Few interactions are significant. While the interaction between Asian and race-based insults is significant, it is negative. This suggests that the effect of experiencing race-based insults is less for Asian students.

Tables 8 and 9 display the coefficients for three way interactions of Black women, Asian women, and Latina women with race and gender based microaggressions. Table 8 shows that there are no significant interactions between Asian and Latina women and race-based microaggressions. However, the interactions of microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations with Black women are significant. While individuals who experience race-based insults have more negative perceptions of campus climate, this effect is greater for Black
Table 8. Campus Climate – Race-Based Microaggressions

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Note: coefficients for control variables (age, financial aid, first generation, fraternity, sorority, personal sport, and school sport) are not presented
†<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001
Table 9. Campus Climate – Gender-Based Microaggressions

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Note: coefficients for control variables (age, financial aid, first generation, fraternity, sorority, personal sport, and school sport) are not presented
†<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001
women. Table 9 shows that there is no significant interaction of gender-based microaggressions with the three race/gender combinations.

Table 10 displays the results of the microaggressions and relevant demographic variables on stress. The column of main effects shows that Asian students and students who experience gender-based insults have higher levels of stress. While theory suggests that students who possess a disadvantaged status (race or gender) may have higher levels of stress when they experience race or gender-based microaggressions, all of the interactions are non-significant.

4.1.6 Summary of Quantitative Results

Hypothesis 1 asks: “How prevalent are racist experiences among college students?” I argued that students do experience racist microaggressions, and more specifically students of color are more likely to report racist microaggressions than White students. This hypothesis was supported by the data. This finding is also consistent with another recent study that indicated that both Black and Asian participants reported more discrimination compared to other racial/ethnic groups (Gomez et al., 2011).

Hypothesis 2 asks: “How prevalent are sexist experiences among college students?” I argue that students do experience sexist microaggressions, and more specifically women are more likely to experience sexist microaggressions than men. Unsurprisingly, women experienced more sexist microassaults than
Table 10. OLS Regressions of Stress

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Note: coefficients for control variables (age, financial aid, first generation, fraternity, sorority, personal sport, and school sport) are not presented

†<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001
men. White women reported the largest number of gender-based microassaults. Compared to White males, White women experience significantly more gender-based microinsults and microinvalidations. Black students experienced more gender-based microinvalidations than White students. Black students experienced more gender-based microinsults than Asian students and Latino students. Black, Asian, and Latina women experience a similar amount of gender-based insults and invalidations compared to men. These findings are consistent with previous studies that explain that women and women of color experience more sexism than their male counterparts (Perry, 2010; McCabe, 2009).

Hypothesis 3 asks: “Will women of color experience double or multiple jeopardy as college students?”, and I argued that double or multiple jeopardy occurs on college campuses. The data supported this hypothesis – and multiple jeopardy was prevalent at the PWI. The effect of being a Black, Asian or Latino woman is stronger at the PWI than at the diverse institution – in other words, Black, Asian and Latino women experience more race-based microassaults at a PWI – which supports multiple jeopardy theory. This suggests that respondents with two disadvantaged statuses, non-White and women, only experience greater victimization when in a largely White environment. When Black, Asian, and Latina women attend a PWI, the number of microinsults they experience
Increases substantially. Black and Asian women experience an increase in microinvalidations as well at a PWI. These results support multiple jeopardy theory since these student’s who fall into a subjugated racial group, gender group, and who attend a male centered PWI experience high levels of microaggressions. The presence of double and multiple jeopardy has also been noted in previous studies (McCabe 2009).

Hypotheses 4 and 5 ask: “Will students who report more incidences of racist or sexist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations report higher levels of stress?” I argued that microaggressions would increase stress. However, the hypothesis was only partially supported. Asian students and students who experience gender-based insults were the only students who have higher levels of stress. While theory suggests that students who possess a disadvantaged status (race or gender) may have higher levels of stress when they experience race or gender-based microaggressions, all of the interactions are non-significant.

Hypotheses 6 and 7 asks: “Will students who report more incidences of racist or sexist microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations report negative perceptions of campus climate?” I argued that microaggressions would lead to negative perceptions of campus climate. This hypothesis was also supported. While individuals who experience race-based insults have more negative perceptions of campus climate, this effect is greater for Black women.
Hypotheses 8 and 9 ask: “Are women more likely to be victimized by individuals outside of their gender group?”; and “Are students of color more likely to be victimized by individuals outside of their racial group?” The data supports these hypotheses. Women were more likely than men to be physically assaulted, verbally assaulted, disrespected and have their concerns ignored by someone of a different gender. Students of color experience victimization by members outside of their racial group at higher rates than White students. As previous literature explains, victimization of students of color is unsurprising at predominantly White institutions where diverse groups are oftentimes antagonized by the larger White majority; and amongst diverse groups where there might be little solidarity (McCabe 2009; Perry 2010).

4.2 Qualitative Results

The open-ended questions allowed me to gauge student’s experiences with racism and sexism on campus. Respondents were asked: 1) Please describe your experiences with racism on your campus; 2) Please describe your experiences with sexism on your campus; and 3) Do you think that your school provides a comfortable environment for culturally diverse groups and women? In this section, I will specifically present major themes that are related to students’ experiences with microaggressions and their beliefs related to racism and sexism.
The following themes arose that were related to students’ experiences: 1) anti-Asian and anti-International Student Microaggressions, 2) anti-Black microaggressions, and 3) jokes. Additionally, I will support my addition to microaggression theory by presenting data that: 4) differentiates between microaggressions that took place in public versus private spaces; 5) addresses the relationship between microaggressor and target; and 6) outlines the various responses to microaggressions.

4.2.1 Anti-Asian Sentiment and Anti-International Sentiment

Anti-Asian sentiments and racist microaggressions were major themes that arose in the open-ended questions. Racism towards Asians was the most common form of racist microaggressions that arose in the open-ended questions. Since many Asian students who were targeted were international students, it is appropriate to also acknowledge an anti-International sentiment. Non-Asian students reflected a perpetual foreigner sentiment about most Asian students, in which they assumed that the majority of Asian students were international students. Many non-Asian students also believed that Asian international students shouldn’t attend school in the United States because they take admission spots that belong to American born students.

The comments below reflect the Asian respondents’ feelings about the anti-Asian and anti-International microaggressions:
A week does not go by where I don’t hear something negative about my race. There are comments made everyday almost about the international kids. The way they eat, talk, smell, stick together, and other cliché generalizations of Asians. I’ve heard many comments about blacks too from mostly Whites. Rarely so I ever hear negative comments about Whites. When I do, it’s about blondes. (Asian, woman, 21)

No I am born and raised in Asian. They are too ignorant and even grouped me with Chinese even though I don’t speak or look like one. Americans need to be educated more ABOUT THE WORLD! (Asian Woman, 21)

I notice a ton of racism towards Asians. Jokes which people know they will not respond to; stereotypes; rude comments; all around I feel that Asians are most targeted and that is not because I have Asian background many people do not even know I am. (Asian, man, 18)

I’ve received racial slurs by White people before with no reasoning. People tend to make many Asian jokes but always claim, I’m not Asian because I’m Filipino. (Asian, woman, 20)

Most people are bad to the international students. (Asian woman, 19)

Some students in my class don’t want to discuss with me, I felt (Because I’m Asian) (South Korean International Student, woman, 21)

Made up words meant to be an “Asian” language. Negative stereotypes perpetuated about racial minority groups. Racial slurs. (Asian, woman, 22)

I’ve heard people make comments about other races and my friends are somewhat racists. I’ve had experiences where Asians were made fun of in front of me (they didn’t know I was Asian) (Asian woman, 18)
University of Illinois at Chicago

ID33: Asked if I could speak English, which I can because I was born here. (Asian, woman, 20)

ID220: People made fun of me because I am an Asian American. (Asian, man, 20)

ID873: I get called bad names and it hurts my feelings. (Asian, man, 18)

ID908: Just stereotypes: “Asian Invasion” - called typical etc (Asian, woman, 22)

ID957: People usually call black people the N word and Asian people as chinks. (Asian, m, 20)

The comments below reflect the respondents’ and some portions of the student body’s anger towards Asian students. Reasons for anger included language barriers, as well as some students’ jealousy over Asian students academic performance. In terms of school performance, majority students might be reacting to stereotype threat (where Asian students are expected to be better students than students of other racial groups) as well as a threat to their majority privilege of gaining unearned advantages (such as possibly getting higher grades and better treatment at school as a result of their majority racial status):

University of Iowa

ID447: Yeah, since Asians are taking over this fucking school and can’t even speak English. (White, male 21)

ID110: “A lot against Asian students because they make up a good majority of the university and set curves”. (White, woman, 18)
ID140: Asians are categorized as smart and throwing off our grade curves. (White, woman, 20)

*University of Illinois at Chicago*

ID326: Chinese and Koreans come and don’t speak a word of English. They do not learn the language or customs because they make little or no effort to interact with Americans (ALL CAPS). (White, 22, Male)

The following quotes describe Anti-Asian sentiments that the respondents witnessed. The most common microaggressions tended to be verbal microaggressions, although some were behavioral:

*University of Iowa*

ID785: The only racism I have encountered was what I have seen others do and say to the foreign students usually from China. (White, woman, 18)

ID136: I observe a lot of racism aimed at Asian international students on campus. (White, male, 20)

ID209: I see a lot of racism against Asians and black people. (White, woman, 19).

ID211: This might be mixed with other factors other than race, but international students, because they may speak another language or dress differently are not blatantly disrespected, but conveniently ignored. (White, man, 20)

ID332: More so than any other race – I see the most discrimination against Asians. (White, woman, 19)

ID345: Derogatory slurs about Asian exchange students. (White, woman, 20)

ID468: One instance where a White group told an Asian biker to go back to Asia because he got in the way of traffic by accident. (Latino, man, 18)
ID497: People hate Asians. (White, woman, 18)
ID543: People dislike Asians the most out of every race. People telling Asians to go home/making fun of their customs and speech. (White, man, 19)
ID558: I hear friends and people on the street downtown making racial jokes towards blacks and Asians ALL the time. (White woman, 19)
ID622: People are most racist to Asians. (White, woman, 19)
ID623: My friend who was Asian was told “Welcome to America” by several White students on the bus. (White, woman, 19)

*University of Illinois at Chicago*

ID431: The Asians get treated differently because there are so many. (White, man, 19)
ID533: Some people on campus discriminate Asians. Like in the cafeteria or in some college offices (Asian, man, 19)
599: Not bad, University of Indian and Chinese. (White, woman, 19)

4.2.2 *Anti-Black Sentiment and Microaggressions*

Anti-Black sentiment and microaggressions were also a major theme that arose in the open-ended questions. Similarly to anti-Asian microaggressions, anti-Black microaggressions were common in both schools. Students of color shared experiences of being racially profiled, experiencing overt and covert racism, and feeling isolated:

*University of Iowa*

The following statements represent the anti-Black sentiments or microaggressions highlighted by students of color:
ID305: A lot of Whites tend not to socialize with Blacks. (Black, woman, 18)

ID3: “Both overt and more “undercover”. From profiling, discrimination, and name calling to other students having lower expectations”. (Black, woman, 20)

ID9: “The people here have a certain vibe, where they have to accept your presence, but they don’t like you at the same time. Ex. On the Cambus – there will be an open seat next to me and people (White) will look at the seat and rather stand up and and try to balance themselves, than sit next to me.” (Black, woman, 20)

ID8: “I have been called [the] ‘N word’ on campus. People won’t sit by me on the bus. I hear comments in situation[s] that was racist. Asked how I got here. And whether or not I comb my hair”. (Black, woman, 19)

ID17: “People are often surprised by my accomplishments and/or who I am where I come from. I am not looked at equally as my peers are.” (Black, woman, 21)

ID320: My friends were called the “N” word last year outside their residence hall. (Black, woman, 19)

University of Illinois at Chicago

ID523: I get followed by cops all the time and get stopped. I was once pulled over while walking out of the library and a group of police get out of the car and asked me a bunch of questions saying I fit the profile (Black, man, 21)

ID930: Not many people here on campus project racism towards me, but in some classes many other races are naïve or don’t are about the struggles that blacks go through almost on a regular basis. They seem to only care about their culture and people can care less about others ESPECIALLY BLACKS. (Black, woman, 24)

ID172: People avoiding eye contact and physical contact due to the fact they think a crime will occur. (Black, man, 18)
ID349: I always get the feeling from UIC students that black men are seen as inferior. I’ve had students avoid me simply because I was casually approaching them. (Black, man, 30)

ID425: People definitely judge me b/c of my color. They make rude comments and it hurts my feelings (Black, woman, 21).

452: Depending on how wealthy the suburb is that they came from people are generally intimidated. Or generally befriend me quickly if they don’t judge my appearance; people also act surprised when I tell them may major – electrical engineering. (Black, man, 20)

882: I’m black; people always see me as inferior, (Black, woman, 19)
883: People bad mouthing Blacks. Using the n-word. Derogatory remarks to minorities. (Black, woman, 18)

ID941: I was employed at the UIC medical bookstore and worked through the summer when the semester started my manager told me she didn’t have enough hours to schedule me so she made me believe it was best to quit and get another job. A couple weeks later, I found out she hired someone else, I was the only Black woman working in the bookstore . (Black, woman, 21)

Even though ID270 and ID274 don’t identify as Black, they are co-victims of anti-Black microaggressions since their significant others are African American:

University of Iowa

ID270: faced some since my girlfriend is Black. (White, man, 18)

ID274: Going to the bars I had noticed racism, like trying to get in with my boyfriend who is African American. The security guy wouldn’t even take our ID’s and just stared at us, then said my boyfriend’s jeans weren’t allowed and they were Ed Hardy. (Multiracial, woman, 19)
The following statements represent the Anti-Black Sentiment of microaggressions as highlighted by non-Black respondents:

*University of Iowa*

ID111: I feel there is a lack of Black students here. Also a lot of stereotypes are spoken about Black people. (White, woman, 20)

ID307: I hear stereotypes about Blacks all the time. (White, woman, 19)

ID279: Most racism involves African Americans. (Latino, man, 20)

ID382: People tell me they don’t ride the bus at certain times of day because of Black people. (Male, N/A, 20)

ID559: I find that many people say harmful things about African Americans even though they claim not to be racist. (White, woman, 19)

ID586: A lot of stereotypes facing African Americans. (White, woman, 22)

ID795: Other White using the “N” word. (White male, 19)

*University of Illinois at Chicago*

ID4: UIC is very accepting of all races on campus, but I know certain students who become afraid when someone Black passes by at night. (White, woman, 20)

ID78: There are a lot of Black people. A lot of people wonder how some got in because they’re “ghetto”. (White woman, 18)

ID892: Sometimes latinos and blacks get looked at the wrong way. Also, I noticed lots of African Americans working at the cafeteria. (Multiracial, man, 18)
4.2.3 Racist and Sexist Jokes

Cundall (2012) argues that jokes do not cause harm, however, in this analysis, students who experienced the most microaggressions also had higher levels of stress. He also downplays teasing, and it’s consequences. Cundall (2012) seemingly ignores the stressors, pain, and suicides that result from excessive teasing and bullying. As explained earlier when discussing the different forms of racism, liquid racism is powerful because it provides the aggressor or antagonist a way to hide their racist behavior by labeling their comment a “joke”. In other words, with this form of racism, aggressors jokes are similar to a Trojan horse because the jokes initially appear harmless even though the jokes can cause a great deal or embarrassment and pain.

University of Iowa

ID11: “My roommates often make racist jokes, they are both from rural Illinois, which is most likely the source of their discrimination. It pains me and I have asked them to stop numerous times”. (White, man, 20)

ID69: “I’ve heard only a few racist comments, some of them being jokes and only one or two meant to be hurtful.” (White, woman, 21)
ID359: There is definitely discrimination, jokes about how ¾ black students are usually athletes, Chinese are taking over the campus. (White, man, 19)

ID83: “Racist jokes/comments, never anything past that, all though I don’t condone it.” (White, man, 20)

ID103: “In my opinion, racism is more of a verbal problem rather than a physical one (i.e. jokes, comments are most prevalent.) (White, man, 19)
ID162: Have heard people make jokes about other races. (White, man, 21)

ID167: Black/racist jokes. (White, man, 20)

ID197: I do not see very much racism on campus, however, if I do it is usually towards international students being the center of racist jokes. (White, man, 20)

ID254: Many racist jokes. (White, woman, 20)

ID256: Minimal, just the occasional joke (mainly about Asians). (White, woman, 19)

ID265: I’ve heard racist jokes, and some students w/ racist feelings. I’ve even heard of a teacher who might be a bit racist. Overall, it isn’t a huge issue, but it’s around. (White, man, 23)

University of Illinois at Chicago

ID3: I have not seen too many or really any cases of racism at UIC. UIC is a very diverse campus as well as in the heart of a major city, so I believe for the most part people are very accepting of others. I have one friend who makes racist comments but plays them off as jokes, which deeply upsets and confuses me as many of my/our friends [are] of different races. (White, woman, 21)

ID41: Still hear jokes about different races and those that the joke is aimed at are supposed to laugh. Slurs still used. (White, woman, 19)

ID872: You don’t see it much but people make racial jokes. (Asian, man, 18)
ID225: Dumb blonde jokes. Women being intellectually inferior. (White, woman, 21)

ID41: Jokes about women being inferior are still prevalent; words like “bitch”, “slut” etc. (White, woman, 19)

ID80: No experiences – guys just make jokes how women should be cooking/cleaning all the time. (White Woman, 20)
ID83: At parties or events, women are often degraded in jokes or comments, as if they are sexual objects and not humans. (White, woman, 20)

ID330: Jokes made about women to stay in the kitchen (Asian, women, 20)

ID584: The one thing I can remember is a guy in one of my classes making a “sandwich/ women belong in the kitchen” joke. But nothing really major. (Black, woman, 22)

4.2.4 Private and Public Microaggressions

In the above theory section, I theorized about the possible ways that microaggressions are manifested. I distinguished between microaggressions that occur in public spaces (social space available to all people) or private space (a space with limited access to the public, but is available to certain groups or individuals).

Respondents listed public microaggressions that took place on public buses, campus buses, the mall, the street, or bars. The most common private microaggressions in the study took place in door rooms or residence halls:

Public Microaggressions

ID623: My friend who was Asian was told “Welcome to America” by several White students on the bus. (White, woman, 19)

ID533: Some people on campus discriminate [against] Asians. Like in the cafeteria or in some college offices (Asian, man, 19)

ID9: “The people here have a certain vibe, where they have to accept your presence, but they don’t like you at the same time. Ex. On the Cambus – there will be an open sit next to me and people (White) will look at the
seat and rather stand up and and try to balance themselves, than sit next to me.” (Black, woman, 20)

ID523: I get followed by cops all the time and get stopped. I was once pulled over while walking out of the library and a group of police get out of the car and asked me a bunch of questions saying I fit the profile (Black, man, 21)

Private Microaggressions

ID690: My second week at UIC during my freshman year, someone spray painted a swastika on my dorm room door. I didn’t socialize with my floor so I was stunned that someone knew I was Jewish first of all. When I spoke to campus police all I got was a police report and nothing else. UIC prides itself on “acceptance” and “Diversity” when the truth is, if I was a member of a dominant minority group on campus (Hispanic, African American), the university and campus police would have done more! (Multiracial, Jewish, women, 21)

ID320: My friends were called the “N” word last year outside their residence hall. (Black, woman, 19)

ID1036: Like the microaggressions related to race they’re often humor related (or the person defends themselves with “it was a joke, relax” even if it wasn’t) and I’m supposed to hang out there and accept it. Sexist offenses can be more violent too, though. I was assaulted on a street during the day and fought off an attempted rape in a friend’s dorm room. I don’t think that should be normal. (White, woman, 20)

4.2.5 Relationship between Aggressor and Target

In the theory section, I theorized about the relationship between the microaggressor and the target. I distinguished between microaggressors that were intimate, an acquaintance, or an unknown/stranger. Intimate aggressors can be friends or significant others; acquaintance aggressors can be instructors or
classmates; and unknown aggressors include strangers or individuals with no
prior relationship to the target:

**Intimate**

ID492: I’ve been talked down to by a lot of guys, been verbally
abused…called names, mainly by ex boyfriend ie. Cunt, slut, bitch etc.
(White, woman, 21)

ID558: I hear friends and people on the street downtown making racial
jokes towards blacks and Asians **ALL** the time. (White woman, 19)

**Acquaintance**

ID941: I was employed at the UIC medical bookstore and worked through
the summer when the semester started my manager told me she didn’t
have enough hours to schedule me so she made me believe it was best to
quit and get another job. A couple weeks later, I found out she hired
someone else, I was the only Black woman working in the bookstore.
(Black, woman, 21)

ID11: “My roommates often make racist jokes, they are both from rural
Illinois, which is most likely the source of their discrimination. It pains
me and I have asked them to stop numerous times”. (White, man, 20)

**Unknown**

ID8: “ I have been called [the] ‘N word’ on campus. People won’t sit by me
on the bus. I hear comments in situation[s] that was racist. Asked how I got
here. And whether or not I comb my hair”. (Black, woman, 19)

ID762: It is obvious to me that campus police and the security guards at
the Old Capitol Mall near International Programs racially and
economically and attempt to intimidate non-White, non-Upper middle
Class mall patrons. I hate it and do not know how to address the issue. I
look very working class and am harassed by the guards too. (White,
Transgendered, 35)
4.2.6 Responses to Microaggressions

In the above theory section, I theorized about the possible responses to microaggressions. I outlined non-confrontational responses an individual can use such as: ignoring, endorsing, becoming aware/empowered, internalizing, excusing, or being an inactive bystander. Confrontational responses include being microaggressive or repairing the situation.

Oftentimes, students ignored microaggressions that they saw or heard on campus. It is possible that the act of ignoring microaggressions can be interpreted as a coping mechanism. It is also possible that ignoring microaggressions can be the consequence of being apathetic or desensitized to other people’s issues.

Microaggression Response: Ignoring

*University of Iowa*

ID384, ignores the microaggressions that are aimed at others and admits that she is not bothered by such behaviors. Her apathy might stem from the fact that she says that she has never personally experienced racism:

ID384: I have not personally felt any racism towards myself. I have heard people make racist jokes about several races often, but it does not bother me. (Latina, 20)
Even though, ID856 acknowledges specific instances of racial microaggressions, she doesn’t believe that racism is a major issue on campus.

This is most likely the result of her dominant group status:

ID856: Racism I have noticed is verbal remarks about Blacks from friends and social observations… Black people hang out with Black people, Asians hang out with Asians etc. I have heard people make degrading remarks about the people that hang out in front of the Old Capitol Mall. I feel that racism isn’t that big of an issue at Iowa. (White, woman, 20)

University of Illinois at Chicago

For ID198 this response may be the result of a coping method. She acknowledges not listening to the comments and tuning them out.

ID198: People just throw jokes here and there. But I never really listen to them. They are ignored by me. (Multiracial, woman, 20)

ID565 is also apathetic and argues that although social justice is a good idea, it is unlikely. Therefore, people need to get over injustices and not be offended by them. His argument appears to be rooted in rugged individualism, instead of people working towards social justice and taking social responsibility:

ID565: People need to learn to let that which does not matter truly slide. The world will never be fair. Expect nothing from anyone except yourself. Social justice is a great goal but don’t count on it. People should only count on themselves. (White, man, 26)

Microaggression Response: Endorsing

Endorsing microaggressions involves defending the behavior. Endorsing microaggressions can be the result of internalized domination, where members
of a dominant group develop attitudes of superiority, entitlement, and privilege about themselves, while holding beliefs of inferiority about subjugated groups (Hardiman and Jackson, 2007).

*University of Iowa*

ID260, justifies her racist comments about Asian students. Her comments reflect an attitude of internalized domination where she reflects an attitude of racial entitlement and deservedness for being born here while she argues that it’s a “shame” that Asian students attend the University of Iowa when they have “their own” schools:

ID260: There is racism on our campus towards the mass amounts of Asian students on our campus. I don’t think they try to get to know our culture but that doesn’t mean we should be as harsh to them I guess. It’s just a shame we have so many Asians going to school here setting our curves when they have perfectly good schools in Asia and there are American students that don’t get to have a college education because they are taking their spots because they can afford it. I know that statement sounds racist but it’s just unfair. (White, woman, 20)

ID447, acknowledges that women are verbally assaulted and harassed but blames them for dressing in ways that he thinks attract such behavior. Instead of putting the onus on assaulters and aggressors for their behavior, he blames the victim:

ID447: What do girls expect when they go out wearing literally nothing. They are going to be called sluts but I’m not complaining because they look sexy as fuck. (White, man, 21)
ID431, downplays the racist behavior that he has witnessed on campus and then proceeds to blame students of color for not “grasping” dominant White culture and for irritating White people. His comment not only reflects a defense of racist behavior, but he also situates White students as superior and students of color as inferior and irritating because they do not easily blend into the majority group:

ID431: There are very few racist acts I see ever on campus other than people saying stupid things at parties. All black, Latino, Asian students have a hard time grasping our culture and rub us the wrong way... otherwise the diversity exceeds any negative attitudes toward race. (White, man, 18)

*University of Illinois at Chicago*

ID273 endorses sexist behavior by saying that sexist verbal microaggressions are funny. He then puts the responsibility of managing the microaggression on people who are offended by such behaviors instead of putting the onus on the individuals who are committing the microaggressions:

ID273: Women jokes are kinda funny…. Sexism exists, and when it’s the cause of discrimination its wrong. Otherwise people need to be more lighthearted (White, male, 20)

*Microaggressions Response: Becoming Aware or Empowered*

One can become aware of social inequalities as a result of microaggressions. This awareness does not necessarily lead to bad feelings such as discouragement or depression. Instead, an individual can be empowered by the microaggressive
experience. They can see the microaggressor as weak and themselves as strong for being able to identify the microaggressors’ weaknesses and oppressive behaviors. They can also be empowered to work towards social justice.

*University of Iowa*

ID313 is aware of the inequalities experienced throughout society and within institutions (such as academic institutions). He is also aware that solutions to this systemic problem need to be comprehensive and systemic:

ID313: Racism, a system of advantage based on race, is alive and well in America. It is much bigger than any student or campus. Even if we delude ourselves by pointing to civil rights legislation or the President, racism can be seen everywhere; in the media, in our culture, in our institutions. (White, man, 19).

ID557 shares her experience with racist microaggressions by explaining that classmates called her derogatory names. She also highlights the microaggressors’ weaknesses by explaining that even though they treated her as an unintelligent foreigner, she achieved a higher grade than her classmates:

ID557: People look down on me because English isn’t my first language. They call me a “FOB” (fresh off the boat). I scored better in my rhetoric class compared to them. (Asian, woman, 21)

ID1036 is not only aware of microaggressions, but she is aware that people regularly try to excuse or downplay their harmful behavior. She discloses that she was assaulted twice and acknowledges that such occurrences aren’t acceptable:
ID1036: Like the microaggressions related to race they’re often humor related (or the person defends themselves with “it was a joke, relax” even if it wasn’t) and I’m supposed to hang out there and accept it. Sexist offenses can be more violent too, though. I was assaulted on a street during the day and fought off an attempted rape in a friend’s dorm room. I don’t think that should be normal. (White, woman, 20)

*Microaggressions Response: Internalization*

Internalizing can include blaming oneself for the microaggression, viewing oneself differently because of the microaggression, being hyper-aware and cautious in one’s environment, or accepting the message of the microaggression. This can potentially lead to internalized oppression and self-inferiority.

*University of Iowa*

ID138, shares her disdain for hearing and witnessing microaggressions. She explains that she was exposed to more racism on campus than ever before in her life. She internalized the experiences and now blames herself and views herself differently for being a witness to frequent microaggressions on campus:

ID138: I’ve been more exposed to racism and racist stereotypes than ever since being at college. I don’t like the fact that I know all those stereotypes. I feel like a bad person.

ID852, is an example of internalizing that leads to being cautious in one’s environment as a result of microaggressions. After a highly publicized shooting that involved an Asian, as an Asian, he was not only targeted (overt microaggressions) but also believed that others viewed him as a potential threat (covert).
ID852: After the Virginia Tech incident (school shooting) - the culprit being Asian, I felt I was viewed differently by the community. I was even verbally mistreated by many Caucasian students. (Asian, male, 23)

ID916, is another example of being cautious in one’s environment. Being a minority student at a predominantly White institution has caused her to feel as an outsider and constantly the subject of the majority students’ gaze. In order to reduce feeling this way, she avoids speaking in class:

ID916: I am usually the only African-American women within my classes. I try to not participate in class to draw less attention even though I still feel like “all eyes are on me”. (Black, woman, 19)

ID935 is yet another example of being cautious and hyperaware in one’s environment. Even though she is a majority group member, she is a co-victim as a result of her boyfriend being verbally assaulted as a result of their interracial relationship:

935: Occasionally someone will holler at me and my boyfriend. I’m always cautious of it, because he’s black. (White, woman, 20)

ID526 is an example of accepting the message of the microaggression as well as a sense of self-inferiority or internalized oppression.

ID526: Since I am a woman and a writer I feel intimidated being in a class full of male writers. (White, woman, 19)

Microaggressions Response: Excusing

Excusing involves suggesting that microaggressions are not serious. It’s not the same as endorsing it or approving of the behavior, and it’s also not the same as
ignoring microaggressive behavior since the respondent acknowledges the occurrence of microaggressions. Instead, excusing is most similar to the color-blind, post-racist, and post-sexist beliefs because people who excuse the behavior don’t believe that racism and sexism are major social issues, and people who suggest that these forms of oppression are still important are wrong for doing so.

*University of Iowa*

ID226 is a classic example of excusing microaggressive behaviors. He is aware that racist microaggressions do exist. However, he seemingly doesn’t care about the causes and effects of racist microaggressions.

ID226: I don’t think it’s a problem. Minorities make it a bigger deal than it is. It’s B/S. (White, man, N/A)

Similarly, ID984 argues that people who are offended by microaggressions are “too sensitive”. He makes a contradictory point by saying that there isn’t any racism on campus – but then suggests that people are too sensitive. His behavior is not only a good example of excusing microaggressions, but it is also a good example of a microinvalidation since he is nullifying the experience of students of color:

ID984: There isn’t any. People are way to sensitive. (White, man, 21)

ID756 not only excuses microaggressions, but suggests that women who believe that they experience microaggressions are actually fabricating the issue.
This is also an example of a sexist microinvalidation because it nullifies the experiences of women:

ID756: Girls get objectified on night outs every so often but in terms of academic I have not seen anything. My classes are mostly women, I think that people who are claiming there is a lot of sexism are trying to make up an issue. (White, man, 23)

ID823 excuses microaggressions by suggesting that segregation is natural. Her response is also reflective of the Price et al. (2009) article in which White students self-segregated but were then offended when Black students created their own cultural group on campus. This occurred even though Black students isolated themselves in an effort to find comfort that could not otherwise be guaranteed within the majority White student population. Unfortunately, as pointed out in the Price et al. (2009) article, though some students of color may want to befriend White students, White students discomfort with interracial friendships or relationships may prevent that from happening. ID823’s comment about segregation being natural excuses segregation at the PWI, ignores the fact that such behaviors are discriminatory towards students of color, and downplays the serious implications of such social patterns:

ID823: Natural segregation between students maybe, but nothing discriminating. (White, woman, 19)

ID561, excuses racist microaggressions by saying that most microaggressions are jokes. He also believes that deep hatred and racism doesn’t
exist, which is also reflective of a post-racist belief system. His statement also
downplays how offensive such jokes can be to students of color as well as the
adverse consequences such as stress and even lower academic performance as a
result of stereotype threat:

ID561: People aren’t actually racist, but say racist jokes sometimes to
make fun of people who really think that way. Deep hatred and racism
doesn’t exist. People don’t actually mean it and if confronted they’d say
the same thing. (White, man, 18)

ID1019 and ID48 acknowledge the mistreatment and negative attitudes
about women, but they excuse the behavior by either blaming the victim or
downplaying those behaviors since women are a numerical majority:

1019: Sorority girls easy, not necessarily true but when you put yourself
out there like that… (White, man 19)

ID48: “The frats are pretty sexist and misogynistic, but women seem to be
doing pretty well (they outnumber men at least).”(White, man, 23)

ID100 uses the classic human capital argument that suggests that women
lack the skills needed to compete with men in the workforce or in some cases
academia. ID100 not only excuses his own microaggressive behavior but also
greater social patterns of gender discrimination based on this outdated human
capital argument:

ID100: “I believe some people overreact and think their being
discriminated against due to gender when its really due to lack of skills.”
(White, man, 19)
ID238 not only excuses sexist microaggressions but also downplays violence against women. The statement also highlights the fact that violence against women is common, particularly when alcohol is involved in social settings. Since ID238 identifies as a woman, this statement also reflects internalized oppression, since she believes that violence against women is “not a huge problem”:

ID238: Not a huge problem, just the average violence against women in social situations involving alcohol. (White, woman, 20)

*Microaggressions Response: Being an Inactive Bystander*

Inactive bystanders may be aware of microaggressions but do not interrupt the behaviors as a result of a lack of skills or because they choose not to. Being an inactive bystander who lacks skills, but wants to help reduce microaggressions can be directly addressed through bystander intervention training. Bystander intervention training has been gaining popularity and has received great reviews and outcomes (Banyard et. al, 2010; Potter, 2009):

ID762, ID853, ID985 and ID954 point out microaggressions that are more macro-oriented in nature. The below comments reflect on University policy or practices as well as community level issues and police relations where they feel unable or powerless in generating positive change to combat microaggressive forces:
ID853: There are hardly any Black students in my department and no Black professors at all. Asian students and other students seem to live separate lives (White, woman, 25)

ID762: It is obvious to me that campus police and the security guards at the Old Capitol Mall near International Programs racially and economically and attempt to intimidate non-White, non-Upper middle Class mall patrons. I hate it and do not know how to address the issue. I look very working class and am harassed by the guards too. (White, Transgendered, 35)

ID985: Police watching Black people at the mall “If they’re wearing hoodies and talk like criminals, they might be criminals” (White, woman, 20)

ID954: I am a witness to frequent racism, at the bus stop at the mall, in local stores, COPS! (White, woman, N/A)

971: I have seen friends who are black be singled out by police for nothing other than their race (White, man, 19)

The below statements highlight encounters with microaggressions that were more micro-oriented in nature. Bystander intervention training may be more relevant for individual level encounters since institutional, structural, and systemic forces of oppression may take more complex interventions. Additionally, when alcohol is involved, it is necessary for bystander intervention training to stress the importance of safety and interrupting microaggressive behaviors as a group:

974: A drunk White male yelled racial slurs at a group of black men causing a physical fight (White, woman, N/A)

883: Many people use the N-word, there is an extreme lack of diversity on campus, people talk about “Asians” in a negative way (nerdy, can’t
understand), many people have a lack of experience with people from different ethnic groups. (White, woman, 21)

979: I have seen people of different races discriminated against in class discussion by being asked to speak on behalf of their entire race. (White, woman, 19)

1021: I know what I go through is nothing compared to what African American, Hispanic American or Asian Americans must go through every day. I know specifically here on campus I have seen a lot of racism against the Asian students who are here as well as the Hispanic and Black students. (White, Male, 20)

1036: The campus is quite a lot Whiter than my home state and so I think most racism I’ve seen is rooted in awkward exchanges. Not just black v. White issues, but international student/multiracial and ethnic issues come up a lot. People don’t really talk about either in public but there are coded/subtle exchanges. Like White people tell my friends who are international that their English is surprisingly good. Or they ask my friends who are black “Where are you from?” like they couldn’t have grown up in Iowa. I think its called microaggressions. (White, woman, 21)

ID690: It’s not uncommon to hear racist remarks – although its uncommon to hear people stand up and say something back when these jokes are made. (White, woman, 20)

**Microaggressive Response: Being Microaggressive**

Confrontational responses include being microaggressive. Being microaggressive as a response to microaggressions can lead to short term and long term conflict. Being microaggressive as a response can create an explosion of conflict that can quickly expand beyond to individuals, spread to a group and then it can add to an already toxic social environment. Fortunately, very few students chose to be microaggressive in response to microaggressions.
University of Iowa

The following comment describes a situation where the respondent needed to stand his ground and defend himself from inebriated bar patrons:

ID819: It happens mostly with drunk males at the bars. They think it’s funny to crack jokes about being Mexican so I stand my ground. (Latino, man, 21)

University of Illinois at Chicago

ID592 and ID900 explain instances where they responded to sexist microaggressions in aggressive ways:

ID592: Being a small White girl, I sometimes do feel like I need to take extra precautions to protect myself – that some may think I am weak or forgiving – but in reality I’m ready to swing a punch if need be. It’s difficult to remove myself from that stereotype. (White, woman, 20)

ID900: At my orientation in the sexual violence seminar, the idiot behind me made a rape joke (“surprise sex”). I turned around and scared the shit out of him and publically embarrassed him. (White, woman, 21)

Microaggression Response: Repairing the Situation

Attempting to repair the situation can lead to positive outcomes, but it can also be risky. Interrupting microaggressive behavior puts the onus on the victim to identify the behavior, have the skills to interrupt the behavior without escalating the situation, and then reconcile with the microaggressor.

Interrupting the behavior can be challenging for even the most skillful social justice worker – but it is nonetheless important and necessary training that should be offered to students, faculty, and staff within the academy.
The following responses provide examples of interrupting microaggressions with the goal of increasing awareness of the problematic behavior or with the goal of repairing the situation. Not many student comments were related to interrupting or repairing microaggressive behaviors. This may be due to a lack of training, such as bystander intervention or cultural competence training:

**University of Iowa**

ID11: “My roommates often make racist jokes, they are both from rural Illinois, which is most likely the source of their discrimination. It pains me and I have asked them to stop numerous times”. (White, male, 20)

ID661: A lot of my close friends are unintentionally racist: They don’t mean to be, but I find myself constantly having to point it out to them. This happens consistently when talking about Mexicans, Blacks or Asians. (White, women, 19)

ID745: Most of the racism grows out of the fact that White students are a HUGE majority on this campus. We must all be more wary of the way we speak about International Students (White, women, 21)

**University of Illinois at Chicago**

ID342: I’m a pretty strong woman. I like to hold my own. Yet that doesn’t mean that sexism still doesn’t exist. I just haven’t experienced it too much. And if it does happen I will point it out especially if its someone I know. (Asian, woman, 22)
4.2.7  Summary of Qualitative Results: Experiences with Microaggressions

The student responses to the open-ended questions provided valuable information on students’ experiences. There were four main themes that were uncovered as it related to students experiences: 1) anti-Asian and anti-International Student Microaggressions, 2) anti-Black Microaggressions, 3) racist and sexist jokes and 4) students responses to microaggressions.

Both schools displayed an anti-Asian Sentiment and anti-Asian microaggressions, although this sentiment was more intense at the University of Iowa. For The University of Iowa, this sentiment, and subsequent microaggressions may be the result of a critical mass of Asian students – where Asian students are the largest minority group at the school. Approximately 3000, or 10%, of University of Iowa students identify as Asian International Students (the most common countries of origin include China, South Korea, and Taiwan). While approximately 1,020 or 3.4% of students identify as Asian American. In total, Asian students represent 13% of the student body; the largest minority group and the most visible minority group – which makes it easier for them to be racially profiled and targeted.

Approximately 3,000, or 9%, are of other minority groups (African American 2.7%; Latina(o) 4.8%; Native American 0.3%, Native Hawaiian 0.1%,
Multiracial 1.3%). Even though 23,000 or 77% of the student body are White (University of Iowa Admissions Website, 2013; University Communication and Marketing Website, 2013), as shown in the responses, many White students were upset that there were “too many” Asians. There are over 6 times more White students at the University of Iowa; however, some White students still yearn for more Whiteness. This desire may also be linked to stereotype threat or White students’ jealousy and beliefs of self-inferiority when it comes to the academic performance (either real, perceived, or stereotypical) of Asian students (Steel and Aronson, 1995; Steele, 1997). In response to feeling as though their privilege and dominance is being jeopardized, White students then respond in racist, microaggressive ways.

There was also an Anti-Black sentiment which largely consisted of covert microaggressions, such as racial profiling, White students not interacting with Black students, a lack of support from mentors, and others having lower expectations of Black students’ work. In terms of overt microaggressions, verbal harassment, such as name calling and verbally inciting acts of aggression were some of the most commonly reported forms of microaggressions. Again, it may be difficult to report many covert forms of microaggressions, since policies and procedures do not account for these forms of racism.
Due to White privilege, White aggressors or microaggressors may be given the benefit of the doubt and not punished because of their behavior. Consequently, students of color may be targeted and revictimized by racist students, faculty, and staff. Without the necessary assistance or allies, it may be difficult for students of color to remain in such toxic environments – which may also explain why many predominantly White institutions have difficulties retaining Black students and other students of color (Love 2008).

The University of Iowa has a goal of creating a critical mass of minority students (University of Iowa 2005). To achieve this goal, there has been an influx of minority and international students at The University of Iowa in recent years (Pradarelli 2011). However, it is possible that the increase of international students and students of color is creating a White backlash in the form of Anti-Asian, Anti-Black, and Anti-International sentiments, as well as racist microaggressions.

White backlash as the result of desegregation and increased diversity is not an uncommon occurrence. Throughout the history of this country, we have seen a backlash when predominantly White schools or neighborhoods have been integrated (e.g. The Little Rock Nine being escorted by armed guards to protect them from volatile people that were against desegregation) (Chadwick 2007). Similarly, when there is a critical mass or large group of minority students that
attend a predominantly White school, it is possible that members of the White majority will feel uncomfortable on some level. This discomfort is also seen in examples of residential segregation when the tipping point happens or when White people will move out of a neighborhood because they believe that too many Black people have moved into a neighborhood (Seitles 1996).

However, unlike the tipping point in residential segregation – White students typically will not leave their schools when there is a critical mass of students of color, instead, as seen in this study, they may push back through racist microaggressions. These microaggressors might even behave in antagonistic or microaggressive ways with the hopes that targeted group members will feel uncomfortable enough to leave the school. Also, some microaggressors may intentionally avoid committing overt microaggressions to avoid being labeled as racist (which explains the increase of covert forms of racism in recent years). Instead racist microaggressors might opt to commit covert forms of racism where it is difficult to label their behavior as problematic or as a hate crime; by doing this, the microaggressor avoids the penalty of social scrutiny. All the while, they are still able to damage targeted group members. As explained in this section, and as shown in this study, contemporary forms of racism are more covert; therefore, our policies, procedures, and practices must
account for these new covert forms of racism if we truly desire to make our campuses safe, inclusive, anti-racism environments.

Racist and sexist jokes were also common at both schools. Our institutional policy must be written to include a zero tolerance policy as it relates to sexist and racist jokes or comments. Labeling racist and sexist comments as “playful” or “not serious” provides the aggressor with a way to hide their racist behavior by labeling it as a “joke”. Stereotypical comments are also related to stereotype threat because such “jokes” often transmit a message of inferiority to targeted groups. If a woman constantly hears “jokes” that she is bad at math because she is a woman, then, according to stereotype threat, these comments may affect her performance (Steele and Aronson, 1995; Steele, 1997). This, in turn, can affect her academic achievement and life outcomes. In other words, something that seems playful can have long-lasting negative effects. Jokes can also contribute to a chilly campus climate, which can also affect retention rates for women and students of color.

In this dissertation I added to microaggression theory by: 1) differentiating between microaggressions that took place in public versus private spaces; 2) considering the relationship between microaggressor and target; and 3) outlining the various responses to microaggressions.

As highlighted in the responses, students did experience microaggressions both in public spaces (such as bars, the mall or street) and private spaces (such as
a dorm room). To this end, literature on microaggressions has failed to address the relationship between private spaces, public spaces, and microaggressions. This is an important distinction since oppression and privilege are manifested differently depending on the social context and space. Therefore, microaggressions that happen in a safe space may have different implications than microaggressions that occur in a public space. Microaggressions can cause stress regardless of where they occur. However, microaggressions that occur in safe spaces may lead to a reduced sense of security, which subsequently results in more stress. For instance, a microaggression experienced within a dormitory (safe space) may be more damaging or stressful than a microaggression that occurs in a mall (public space). In this study, I argue that microaggressions that occur on college campuses are damaging and cause high levels of stress since students would expect their campus, dormitory, and classrooms to be safe spaces. Furthermore, in order to reduce stress and insure that the campus is a safe space, policy and programming needs to be aimed at reducing microaggressions throughout campus.

In terms of relationships, comments revealed that microaggressors could be: intimate in nature (a friend), an acquaintance (an instructor or classmate) or an unknown (a stranger on the street). In the context of an academic environment, microaggressions committed by a person in power (such as a coach, mentor,
instructor, or administrator) may prove to damaging not only to a student’s emotional well-being, but also to their academic career. In the future, policy and procedures should be readily available for students who have suffered race or gender based microaggressions on campus. Policy and procedure should include overt and covert forms of microaggressions. Procedures should ensure that students won’t be revictimized during the complaint process, and that microaggressors in positions of power are held accountable for their unprofessional and destructive behavior.

Students also provided a variety of responses to microaggressions that included being microaggressive, ignoring, excusing, endorsing, internalizing, being an inactive bystander, or becoming aware/empowered. In my assessment, all responses to microaggressions can be addressed through the appropriate training. Awareness training, cultural competence, cultural awareness, and bystander intervention training may prove beneficial to schools that are truly invested in combatting microaggressions (Banyard et. al, 2010; Potter, 2009).
CHAPTER V

RESULTS – STUDENTS BELIEFS

The purpose of chapter five is to examine the prevalence of racist, post-racist, sexist and post-sexist beliefs among college students and develop models of their origins by race and gender. The research questions and hypotheses for chapter five is as follows:

1. Are dominant racial group members more likely to hold racist beliefs and believe in a post-racist society than subaltern racial group members?

   H1. White students will hold more racist and beliefs than non-White students.

2. Are men more likely to hold sexist beliefs and believe in a post-sexist society than subaltern gender group members?

   H2. Men will hold more sexist beliefs than female students.

3. Are individuals with low levels of cultural competence more likely to believe in a post-racist society?

   H3. Individuals with low levels of cultural competence are more likely to believe in a post-racist society than individuals with high levels of cultural competence.
4. Are post-racist beliefs more likely to be held by individuals who haven’t experienced high levels of racist aggression?

\( H_4 \). Individuals with few or no experiences with racist aggression are more likely to believe in a post-racist society than individuals who have many experiences of racist aggression.

5. Are post-sexist beliefs more likely to be held by individuals who haven’t experienced high levels of sexist aggression?

\( H_5 \). Individuals with few or no experiences with sexist aggression are more likely to believe in a post-sexist society than individuals who have many experiences of sexist aggression.

5.1 Quantitative Results

5.1.1 Racist and Post-Racist Beliefs

Racist beliefs were measured using the Modern Racism scale (Henry & Sears, 2002). The baseline modern racism scale model shows that Black students score significantly lower than White students – indicating that they hold less racist attitudes. Asian and Latino students, however, score higher on the scale. Men also score higher. In the second modern racism scale model, Black students score the lowest on the scale. Attending a PWI is associated with lower scores on the modern racism scale. Involvement in sports is associated with more racist attitudes. (See Table 11).
I measured post-racist beliefs by asking two questions that I created based on relevant literature: 1) Racism is not as bad as it was in the past; and 2) The election of President Obama is proof that racism is not a major social issue anymore. The two items measure similar but distinct concepts. For instance, an individual can be aware that racism is not dead (item 2), but not think that it is currently a major social problem (item 1).

The next three models (in Table 11) examine whether students believe that the election of President Obama indicates racism is no longer a problem. Asian and Latino students are more likely to agree with this statement than White students, while women are more likely to agree with it than men. After including an additional set of experiential and demographic variables, Asian students and women continue to be more likely to agree with the statement. Students who score high on the modern racism scale are also more likely to agree with the statement. These models include White students as an independent variable, leaving Black students as the omitted category. This is so that an interaction between White students and the modern racism scale can be included the final (Post-Racist1) model. However, there is no additional effect for Whites who score high on the modern racism scale.

The final three models (Table 11) examine agreement with the belief that racism is not as bad as it was in the past. The baseline model shows that,
Table 11. OLS and Logistic Regressions of the Modern Racism Scale and Post-Racist Beliefs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Modern Racism</th>
<th>Post-Racist1</th>
<th>Post-Racist2</th>
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Note: The table shows the coefficients for the Modern Racism Scale and Post-Racist Beliefs for different groups and variables. The asterisks indicate the level of significance: **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05, †p < 0.10.
Table 11 Continued.

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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2042</td>
<td>1869</td>
<td>2235</td>
<td>1864</td>
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<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.07</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Odds ratios and pseudo R² presented for post-racist1 equations.
†<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001
compared to White students, Black, Asian, and Latino students tend to believe that racism is not as bad today as it was in the past. However, this effect disappears with the inclusion of additional demographic and experiential variables. In the interaction model, students who experience race-based insults believe that racism is not much better than it was in the past. Students who value sports tend to believe it is not as bad either. Students who score high on the modern racism scale also believe that racism is not as bad now. This effect is stronger for White students who score high on the modern racism scale. Students who score higher on the cultural competency scale hold less racist beliefs. They are also less likely to believe in a post-racist society.

5.1.2 Sexist and Post-Sexist Beliefs

Sexist beliefs were assessed using the eight-item Modern Sexism scale (Swim et al., 2001). Higher scores on the scale represent higher levels of sexist beliefs (Swim et al., 2001). I measured post-sexist beliefs by asking two questions that I created based on relevant literature: 1) The advancement of women is proof that sexism isn’t a major social issue anymore; and 2) Sexism is not as bad as it was in the past.

Table 12 displays the results for a series of models examining sexist and post-sexist attitudes. The baseline modern sexism scale model shows that Black students hold less sexist attitudes than White students, while Asian students
hold more sexist attitudes than White students. Men score significantly higher on the scale than women. The inclusion of additional control variables does not change these relationships. Students who experience gender microinvalidations and gender microassaults also score lower on the modern sexism scale. Similar to the racism scale, students who value personal sports score higher on the sexism scale (again sports involvement serves as a proxy for hypermasculinity).

The next three columns of Table 12 examine agreement with the belief that the advancement of women is proof that sexism no longer exists. Asian students were more likely to agree with this than White students. Men were marginally more likely to agree with the statement than were women. Including additional demographic variables does not alter these associations. However, students who score higher on the modern sexism scale are more likely to agree that sexism no longer exists.

The final three columns (Table 12) examine levels of agreement with the statement ‘sexism is no longer as bad as it was in the past.’ Black students and Latino students have a higher level of belief in this statement that White students, while women have lower levels of belief than men. While these variables exert the strongest effects, students who score high on the modern sexism scale also have higher levels of agreement with the statement.
Table 12. OLS and Logistic Regressions of the Modern Sexism Scale and Post-Sexist Beliefs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Modern Sexism</th>
<th>Post-Sexist1</th>
<th>Post-Sexist2</th>
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<td>Black</td>
<td>-1.20***</td>
<td>-.75*</td>
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<td>(.24)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(.27)</td>
<td>(.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>2.17***</td>
<td>1.23***</td>
<td>1.23†</td>
</tr>
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<td>(.17)</td>
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<td>(.08)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race invalidation</td>
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<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.12</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(.10)</td>
<td>(.10)</td>
<td>(.10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race assault</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender insult</td>
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<tr>
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Table 12 Continued.

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<td>.95†</td>
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<td>First generation</td>
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<td>1.11</td>
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<td>(.16)</td>
<td>(.16)</td>
<td>(.03)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraternity</td>
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<td>.92</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td></td>
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<td>(.37)</td>
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<td>(.06)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.95*</td>
<td>.95*</td>
<td>.01†</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(.03)</td>
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<td>.05***</td>
<td>.05***</td>
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<td>(.03)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Man x modern sexism scale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>16.38***</td>
<td>24.81***</td>
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<td>1945</td>
<td>2235</td>
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<td>R²</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.18</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Odds ratios and pseudo R² presented for post-sexist1 equations.
†<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001
Women had higher levels of cultural competence than men. Students who score higher on the cultural competency scale hold less racist beliefs. They are also less likely to believe in a post-sexist society.

5.1.3 Summary of Quantitative Results

Hypothesis 1 asks: “Are dominant racial group members more likely to hold racist beliefs and believe in a post-racist society than subaltern racial group members?” I argued that all students could hold racist beliefs but such beliefs would be more prevalent among dominant group members. The data supported these hypotheses. White students held more racist beliefs than Black students. However, Asian and Latino students held more racist beliefs than White students (the racism scale primarily focused on racism directed towards African Americans). Similarly, Asian and Hispanic students are more likely to agree with the post-racist statement (the election of President Obama indicates racism as no longer being a problem) than White students.

Due to the history and legacy of racism in this country, one would think that White people would score higher than other minorities regarding racist beliefs. However, the fact that White’s scored lower on overtly racist items and higher on covertly racist items is a very important finding and is proof that racism is mutating. First, many Whites may want to respond in a socially desirable way so that they can avoid the social penalty of being labeled racist.
While Whites disagreed with survey items that seemed overtly racist, they agreed with items that measured covert racism and post-racism. In other words, Whites are aware that racism still exists, but they remove themselves from being responsible for the perpetuation of racism by agreeing that racism is not as bad as it was in the past.

Asian and Latino students may be less concerned about the social penalty of being seen as racist towards African Americans. At the same time they are still susceptible to stereotypes and prejudices about African Americans. Asian and Latinos racist beliefs can also be explained by the concept of horizontal oppression. As explained in the above literature review, oppression can be manifested in many ways, and microaggressors can be dominant members and targeted members. Horizontal oppression occurs when interactions among targeted group members maintains and reinforces oppression (Hardiman and Jackson, 2007), so it is unsurprising that other minorities hold racist beliefs about African Americans.

Hypothesis 2 asks: “Are men more likely to hold sexist beliefs and believe in a post-sexist society than subaltern gender group members?” I argued that all students could hold sexist beliefs, but such beliefs would be more prevalent among men. The data supported the hypothesis. Men scored significantly higher on the scale than women. Students who value personal sports also scored
higher on the sexism scale. This is an important finding since it validates using sports-involvement as a proxy for hypermasculinity and as a potential factor in the perpetuation of sexism. In terms of the post-sexist beliefs, the hypothesis was supported. Men were more likely to agree with both post-sexist statements than were women.

Hypothesis 3 asks: “Are individuals with high levels of cultural competence less likely to believe in a post-racist society?” I argued that individuals with low levels of cultural competence are more likely to believe in a post-racist society than individuals with high levels of cultural competence. The data supports this hypothesis. Students who score higher on the cultural competency scale hold less post-racist, racist, post-sexist, and sexist beliefs. Students who are aware of social inequities, social problems, and cultural differences will be more in tune with the fact that racism and sexism still exist and will be less likely to hold bigoted beliefs.

Hypothesis 4 asks: “Are post-racist beliefs more likely to be held by individuals who have not experienced high levels of racist aggression? This finding is congruent with my hypothesis that students who experience racist microaggressions will not agree with post-racist ideas. Students who experience race-based insults believe that racism is not better than it was in the past.
Hypothesis 5 asks: “Are post-sexist beliefs more likely to be held by individuals who haven’t experienced high levels of sexist aggression? I argued that individuals with few or no experiences with sexist aggression are more likely to believe in a post-sexist society than individuals who have many experiences of sexist aggression. However, there were no significant findings.

5.2 Qualitative Results

The open-ended questions allowed me to gauge student’s beliefs regarding racism and sexism on campus. Respondents were asked: 1) Please describe your experiences with racism on your campus.; 2) Please describe your experiences with sexism on your campus.; and 3) Do you think that your school provides a comfortable environment for culturally diverse groups and women? In this section, I will specifically present major themes that are related to students beliefs related to racism and sexism, as well as their opinions about campus climate.

Reverse discrimination was the only major theme that arose in relation to students’ beliefs. In terms of campus climate, five main themes arose. The campus climate themes include: 1) seriousness of problem on campus, 2) diversity, 3) segregation, 4) alcohol, and 5) fraternities.
5.2.1 Reverse Discrimination

I begin the results section on reverse discrimination with the following quote, where Hardiman and Jackson (2007) argue that accusations of reverse discrimination are unlikely to be founded:

“Actions by members of a targeted group against a member of an advantaged group...are more complicated and are not equivalent to the actions of a member of an advantaged group against a member of a targeted group... [f]or example, individual people of color might feel or express prejudices against White people, just as individual women might have prejudices against men, but as a group neither people of color nor women hold many positions of power...that would enable them to turn their prejudices into widely held institutional and social policy. Claims of "reverse racism" or "reverse sexism" fail to take this power dynamic into account.” (Hardiman and Jackson, 2007).

In this study, claims of reverse discrimination were common and are one of the major themes across both schools. Claims of reverse discrimination specifically focused on reverse racism and reverse sexism. Claims of reverse discrimination are also related to racist, sexist, post-racist, and post-sexist beliefs in two main ways: 1) claims of reverse discrimination ignore the historical and continued significance of White privilege, male privilege, racism, and sexism; and 2) it supports post-racist and post-sexist arguments by suggesting that racism and sexism are no longer major social issues – instead it is the White majority who is being mistreated and discriminated against.
Claims of reverse racism included the following statements that focused on missed scholarship opportunities, and claims that the White majority has been neglected:

**University of Iowa**

ID212: I’m actually frustrated that I miss out of scholarship opportunities and internship opportunities because the color of my skin, it is frustrating. (White, man, 22)

ID453: People assume that if you are slack and muscular you play football or that A.I. scholarships are unfair. (Black, man, 21)

ID516: Preferential treatment of ethnic groups. Scholarships, groups, advisors, etc. easier access based on color/ethnicity can’t be racist against Whites, but majority gets forgotten. (White, man, 19)

ID826: minorities do get more scholarships and help. (White, woman, 19)

ID163: It is mostly against people of other cultures (not including Blacks) Such as Asians. Or it is Blacks being racist against White people. But both of these occurrences are very limited. (White, woman, 18)

ID234: Non-existent, everyone is tolerated, if anything, non-Caucasian people receive unfair benefits. (White, man, 20)

**University of Illinois at Chicago**

ID20: No experiences with direct racism. Sometimes I feel that the University looks down or doesn’t care because I’m White. (White, man, 20)

ID518: Our campus is very diverse. The biggest issue is that there are clubs for all races/cultures that do not include me as a Caucasian. (White, woman, 21)
ID885: I’m White and black workers here have refused to help me on multiple occasions. I need financial aid I can’t get any. (White, woman, 19)
ID994: Whites get no financial aid, even if it is needed because of family being middle-lower class. (White, woman, 20)

Claims of reverse sexism included the following statements that focused on discrimination in spaces where women were the majority, where women have been unfairly chosen for opportunities over qualified male candidates, and how women treat men:

*University of Iowa*

ID14: “Since there are more women here on campus, I feel sometimes men are used as a punching bag in classes where women dominate the class”. (White, man, 18)

ID112: There’s a lot of stereotyping of the male sex. And I’ve personally seen leadership positions go to women when there are more qualified men also vying for the job, just because they want to convey a feeling of diversity. (White, man, N/A)

ID431: Sexism on campus usually roots from how girls treat guys, otherwise women are always welcome wherever. (Multiracial, man, 18)

ID453: Men are treated as assaulters everywhere you look. (Black, man, 21)

ID516: Women are given provisions to not be attacked, raped etc. at expense of those who volunteer less likely to support night ride when males get mugged, stabbed, etc. Sexual assault as only a crime against women (White, man, 19)

*University of Illinois Chicago*
ID267: Jokes about women being for sex and sandwiches – prevalent; seriousness about these jokes – minor. Most sexism comes from feminists in my opinion (White, man, 20)

5.2.2 Campus Climate: Seriousness of Problem

The perceived seriousness of racism and sexism on campus varied among students. On one end of the spectrum some believed that racism and sexism were major issues that ruined campus climate, while others believed that it was actually White students and men that were targeted.

Some White students were seemingly upset at the presence of the survey and refused to complete it or wrote derogatory or cynical things on the survey. For example, one student even made fun of racism on campus—(he refused to fill out other areas on the survey):

Please describe your experiences with racism on campus. I was walking to my KKK meeting one evening (in my robes, of course), when a group of negroes began verbally assaulting me. I fled the scene, but one of them shot me in the leg.

Do you think that your school provides a good experience for culturally diverse groups and women? No. The school frowns upon us having Klan meetings on campus.

Other students had the opposite reaction and were grateful for the survey. At the end of her survey one student wrote:

Thank you for doing this work! I think it is very important.
As shown in the following responses, racist and sexist microaggressions are serious issues on both campuses:

University of Iowa

Racism

ID1057: What I have experienced as far as racism goes, can’t be summed up in a single paragraph. Generally I feel that racism on this campus is subtle from the looks you get from people or the feeling you get when walking into a room. However, I have had people straight up call me the N-word or tell me that they don’t like people of my race. (Black, m, 21)

ID378: Had people call me nigger. (Multiracial, man, 21)

ID937: I haven’t had any personally, but a group of my friends was called niggers when walking to Wal-Mart from Hillcrest. (Black, man, 20)

Sexism

ID89: “I was once attacked in a bathroom by a male; he was never identified or punished.” (White, woman, 21)

ID1043: Last year I was raped at a party by a guy and it stopped before it got worse but my friend at the party would not leave with me when I told her what happened and I was made to walk home alone (White, woman, 20)

ID529: Being a girl on campus, just last week I was verbally assaulted while walking to my car. (Latina, 21)

ID199: People think I’m dumb because I’m a blonde women, but I have a 3.8.GPA and am a math major. (White, woman, 21)

ID339: Women are seen as objects, their bodies are the eye of lots of men on campus, you can see groups of guys checking out a single girl like she’s meat. Women are not respected on campus, seen as dumb. (Latina, 19)

ID350: My friend almost got raped (White, man, 19)
ID574: I have been treated as “stupid” or not included in conversations because of my gender. It happens infrequently, but its enough to make me feel “othered” at times. (White, woman, 21)
ID577: I think this is still a large problem, most people believe it is okay to make sexist jokes but it is ignorant (White, woman, 21)
ID582: Personally I have been targeted with sexist remarks both in the classroom and in the campus setting. I feel that, being in a traditional Midwestern state, this campus facilitates much sexism (White, woman, 21)
ID587: Being ignored/interrupted during conversation. Being coddled just because of my gender even after expressing I am capable of the treatment is unwanted. Being called a Bitch for standing up for myself. (Asian, woman, 22)
ID843: Our campus is very sexist. I hear jokes about women constantly. I get called things like “whore”, “slut”, “bitch”, “sorstitute” without justification (White, woman, 19)
ID838: Most of the sexism I have experienced has been at the hands of men judging, condescending to or poorly treating women. Most of my experiences are at the hands of personal acquaintances, to strangers (White, woman, 21)
ID847: Women getting sexually assaulted. (White, woman, 19)
ID860: I’ve had Professors (male) act strangely with me. It’s a little too close for comfort and I took it as sexism because I felt like they knew I would say anything. Like [a] man over woman type of thing. (Latina, 19)
ID868: There isn’t much protection on campus. Men are not chastised when they say inappropriate/sexist things in class, in student org meetings, during events, on the street etc. Women’s opinions, intelligence, and safety are not respected/ of concern. (White, woman, 21)
University of Illinois Chicago

Racism

ID143: I have never been assaulted because of my race, however, I have seen a lot of racism towards African Americans. (White, woman, 18)

Sexism

ID542: The fact that there are “safe zones” tells you something. It is also not unheard of for students to undergo sexual assault depending on what part of campus they are on. (Jewish, man, 22)

ID558: I tend to identify as gender queer or androgynous so the difficulties I have with sexism are due to our campus being so general. (White, genderqueer, 24)

ID583: Men will always brush off opinions of women in class and argue with opinionated women (Asian, woman, 21)

ID921: UIC is very diverse so sexism is minimal. Sometimes male dominated fields seem discriminatory (science, math, engineering). (White, woman, 21)

5.2.3 Campus Climate: Diversity

Diversity was a major theme throughout the qualitative data. Comments ranged from a disappointment in a lack of diversity to disappointment that there was too much diversity. The below comments show that the University of Iowa lacks diversity and that the University of Illinois at Chicago is very diverse

University of Iowa

ID1036: No. They should try to encourage good experiences through diversity classes, more publicity of clubs/organizations than football, and scholarships etc. I think they sort of half-ass everything as it is now – like
they make a brochure that looks diverse, so I came here and really all the brochure’s were fake for publicity and not for commitment to equality. (White, woman, 21)

ID643: Not really, there are too many White people to be diverse. (Asian Man, 19)

ID957: My concern is the University’s false diversity advertising (White, woman, 19)

ID246: I feel diversity is very limited. The groups don’t intermingle. (Asian, man, 25)

ID258: None really. The campus is definitely not that diverse racially however.

ID817: There is not much diversity so there is a big separation most of the times. (White, woman, 18)

University of Illinois Chicago

ID17: This campus is extremely diverse; racism would be futile and stupid. I’m a “majority” race, but a minority race on campus as far as I can see. We’re a pretty good example of diversity and equality, maybe even overcompensated in my opinion. (White Male, 21)

ID184: UIC is a diverse school in numbers but on campus people of the same race are clumped together. (Multiracial, women, 20)

ID191: I haven’t really experienced any since our school is very diverse. (Asian, woman, 20)

ID270: Have not had a problem. This school is very diverse and different cultures are accepted. (Latina, 19)

422: Due to the high diversity o this campus, I personally have seen no racism whatsoever. (White, male, 20)

ID515: UIC is top 5 in cultural diversity in the country. SO needless to say, racism is not a problem on campus (Latino, male, 18)
ID568: UIC has no tolerance towards discrimination, this campus is very diverse. I have a very open mind to all cultures/races, so I love seeing diversity on campus. (Latina, 21)

ID600: The campus is diverse. (Latina, 22)
ID627 haven’t had any issues with racism on the UIC campus. UIC is a very diverse campus and people learn to appreciate the various cultures that they are surrounded by. (Arab, woman, 21)

5.2.4 Campus Climate: Segregation

Even though the University of Iowa is a predominantly White institution and the University of Illinois Chicago is diverse, students at both schools noted segregation as major issues on campus:

University of Iowa

ID1053: I don’t see much racism on campus; it is more of a racial divide. And I place the blame on majority members and minority members equally. (White, man, 20)

ID921: No I rarely see different groups of race co-mingle like opportunities to meet another race. They pride themselves on having many races of people but no sense of community is visible. Asians hang with other Asians, Latinos with other Latinos. Still tension or not knowing how to converse with other groups. I tried to be open but I was shunned when I attempt to try to say hi. (Latino, 26)

ID135: In campus, I feel people divided by race, Asian with Asian, White with White, but all people are nice. (Asian, woman, 20)

ID173: Just feel hard to step into the circle of Whites (majority). (Asian, woman, 21)

ID331: Jokes about other races and self-inflicted segregation of friend groups by race. (White, woman, 19)
ID588: I see a lot of discrimination and people choosing to be friends with people of the same race. (White, woman, 22)

ID249: It is equally segregated between White, Black, Indian, and Chinese; there is not a large racial problem, but is still fairly segregated. (White, man, 26)

University of Illinois Chicago

ID215: We are a diverse campus but there is still stereotyping and races tend to group together. (White, woman, 20)

ID237: There have been many racial jokes made between groups about other groups but, that’s more of a group mentality issue. Cliques form and stuff happens but most people don’t really mean it unless they say it with a serious tone. (Asian, man, 20)

ID330: Many races seclude/exclude themselves from others sometimes they hang out with the same type of people (Asian, woman, 20)

ID346: UIC is very diverse but racial groups tend to stay together, very segregated. (White, woman, 22)

ID393: Even though our campus promotes diversity, I feel that everyone is racially separated with their ethnic school groups (Asian, woman, 18)

ID428: There isn’t racism in my school however, people of the same race tend to stick together rather than being with people of different cultures or backgrounds. I think this is mainly because of their comfort level (Asian, woman, 18)

ID516: I think the problem at UIC is less about racism and more about the lack of culture mixing. We, as students, tend to stay in our race or ethnic based circles of friends. I don’t see much racism anymore but more ethnocentrism is here. (White, woman, 27)

ID547: Students are culturally segregated (Transgender, Latino, 22)

ID888: Lots of diversity causes cliques and exclusive clubs that technically anyone can join but most don’t (White, woman, 21)
ID898: This school is diverse but there is plenty of segregation present. (Latino, man, 21)

ID929: This campus is noticeably racially segregated. I think its great they learn about ones own culture and racial identity but at the same time the critical learning that emerges through intercultural interaction is transformational and I have been part of projects aimed at providing more opportunities for student dialogue on issues of race, gender, class etc. (Asian, woman, 20)

5.2.5 Campus Climate: Alcohol

Bar culture, particularly at the University of Iowa, fosters racism and sexism. This theme was unique to the University of Iowa. Many of the behaviors and beliefs that students learn in the bar are brought back with them to campus. Bar culture, alcohol, and sexual assault has become a major issue for many colleges. Some university and federal policies are specifically aimed at preventing and protecting students from sexual assault as well as sexual assault that occurs in conjunction with alcohol:

University of Iowa

ID458: From time to time when I am out with people and it’s like a Friday or Saturday night. Where a lot of people have been drinking, I will hear someone say to me slightly racist to blatantly racist remark for some reason people think that just because they have been drinking they can say whatever comes to their mind. (Black, man, 21)

ID430: I experience racism when I go to downtown Iowa City, mostly from men, who say comments when I am walking down the street. Since most of them are drunk, they feel like its ok to say those things. (Latina, 19)
ID868: Many students (especially downtown, while drinking) have some very nasty opinions that they make far too vocal. Many are rude and tend to stereotype, which makes others uncomfortable. (White, woman, 21)

ID950: There is a lot of inappropriate behavior by men on the weekends around the bar area downtown. (Multiracial, woman, 18)

ID750: The worst experiences of sexism come from drunk men. (White, woman, 19)

ID573: It consists mostly of off-handed, drunken experiences where a slur was thrown out during conversation or an argument. (Multiracial, Women, 20)

ID974: A drunk White male yelled racial slurs at a group of black men causing a physical fight (White, woman, 20)

ID186: Men calling me derogatory names while they were drunk.

ID482: Males getting drunk and treating girls as though they are not as important and only useful for certain things. (White, woman, 19)

1055: There’s always that one guy who is drunk late at night and thinks its cool to yell sexual assaulting comments. (Asian, woman, 21)

ID510: Guys think its ok to grab girls at bars. (White, woman, 19)

5.2.6 Campus Climate: Fraternities

Another unique theme at the University of Iowa was the negative behaviors of fraternity members. Some of the responses include descriptions of fraternity members that include alcohol while others do not:
University of Iowa

ID829: Frat boys usually at the bar hitting on girls or saying offensive things about my personal appearance and “accidentally” grabbing or bumping into me. (White, woman, 21)

ID818: Some arrogant predatory frat boys and general objectification. (White, man, 23)

ID1053: Attending frat parties is where I see it (sexism) the most. (White, man, 20)

ID285: The presence of fraternities contributes to sexism on campus. As a woman, I have been called out to on the street more times than I can count on weekend evenings. My boyfriend stands close to me in public places out of protectiveness. (White, woman, 19)

ID460: Many males, especially men in fraternities make sexist remarks. (White, woman, 19)

ID472: Frats have girls spend the night and are allowed. Sororities don’t/can’t. Men use women. (White, woman, 20)

ID938: Frat men being disrespectful. (White, multiracial, 19)

5.2.7 Summary of Qualitative Results: Students Beliefs and Campus Climate

The student responses to the open-ended questions also provided valuable information on students’ personal beliefs and their perception of campus climate. Reverse discrimination was the only major theme that arose in relation to students’ beliefs. In terms of campus climate, five main themes arose. The campus climate themes include: 1) seriousness of problem on campus, 2) diversity, 3) segregation, 4) alcohol, and 5) fraternities.
Claims of reverse discrimination specifically focused on reverse racism and reverse sexism. Analysis of these responses revealed that claims of reverse discrimination are also related to racist, sexist, post-racist, and post-sexist beliefs. Individuals who made claims of reverse discrimination ignored the historical and continued significance of White privilege, male privilege, racism, and sexism. These claims also reflect post-racist and post-sexist beliefs by suggesting that racism and sexism no longer affect racial minorities and women. Instead, such claims contend that it is the White majority and men who are being mistreated and discriminated against. The privileges that dominant members of society unfairly receive are rarely scrutinized by those who claim reverse racism and reverse sexism, while affirmative action policies and quotas receive negative attention since they are viewed as disadvantaging White people and men (Espenshade and Chung, 2005; Unz, 2003). In the above examples, some dominant members seemingly get upset when their unearned privileges are taken away or when the playing field is leveled.

In terms of campus climate, many students shared somber accounts that reflected the seriousness of racist and sexist microaggressions on their campus. Racial microaggressions were primarily verbal in nature. Sexist microaggressions were also verbal in nature but also included unwanted touching and sexual assaults.
As for diversity, students at the University of Illinois were generally pleased with the diversity on their campus, while students at the University of Iowa were displeased with the lack of diversity (with the exception of some White students who believed that there were too many Asians).

Segregation was cited as an issue on both campuses. Similar racial groups gathered together at the University of Chicago – isolating some White students who felt as though they couldn’t fit into such groups. There was an opposite effect at the University of Iowa, where students of color felt isolated by their White counterparts.

Issues related to alcohol and Greek Life were prominent at the University of Iowa, but were not issue at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Some students explained that it was common for their peers who drank to become microaggressive. Responses described both racist and sexist microaggressive experiences that involved alcohol. Also, students explained that fraternities created an uncomfortable campus climate particularly in terms of their sexist beliefs and treatment of women. Comments also suggested that alcohol was a large component of Greek Life which also aided in occurrences of sexist microaggressions.
CHAPTER VI

RESULTS – INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The purpose of chapter five is to focus on how an *environmental context* impacts student’s beliefs and experiences by comparing the prevalence of racist, sexist, post-racist and post-sexist beliefs, cultural competence as well as overt and covert racist and sexist experiences among college students at a Midwestern predominantly White institution that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture and a diverse urban institution that does not have a dominant sports and fraternity culture. The research questions and hypotheses for chapter 5 are as follows:

1. Are students who attend a diverse institution that does not have dominant sports and fraternity culture less likely to *experience* racist and sexist aggression than students at a racially homogenous institution that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture?  

H1. A diverse institution that does not have a dominant sports and fraternity culture may be more inclusive and progressive than a racially homogenous institution that does have a dominant sports and fraternity culture. Consequently, the students at diverse institution will report fewer incidences of covert and overt racist aggression.
2. Are students who attend a diverse institution that does not have a
dominant sports and fraternity culture less likely to hold racist and
sexist beliefs than students at a racially homogenous school that has a
dominant sports and fraternity culture?

H₂: Students at a diverse institution will be less likely to hold racist and
sexist beliefs.

3. Are students who attend a diverse institution that does not have a
dominant sports and fraternity culture less likely to hold post-racist
and post-sexist beliefs than students at a racially homogenous school
that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture?

H₃: Students at a diverse institution will be less likely to hold post-
racist and post-sexist beliefs.

4. Will mean cultural competency scores be higher at a diverse institution
that does not have a dominant sports and fraternity culture?

H₄: Students at a diverse institution will have higher levels of cultural
competency.

5. Will women of color experience multiple jeopardy within a racially
homogenous institution that has a dominant sports and fraternity
culture?
$H_5$. Women of color at a homogenous institution will experience more covert and overt sexism and racism than women of color at a diverse institution.

6.1 Quantitative Results

Table 13 displays the results of analyses that include three way interactions between race, gender, and institution type. While there are no significant interactions for gender-based microassaults, microinsults, or microinvalidations, there are significant interaction effects for race-based microaggressions.

Students attending a PWI experience fewer race-based microassaults than students attending a non-PWI. While the main effects of being a woman and attending a PWI suggest that there are benefits for women students and those attending a PWI, those benefits do not extend to all students. The three way interaction terms between race, gender, and institution type are all significant and positive – although only marginally significant for Asian students. This indicates that black women, Asian women, and Hispanic women are adversely affected by attending a predominantly-White institution. They experience a greater number of microaggressions than they would at a non-PWI.

The results are similar for race-based microinsults and race-based microinvalidations. While a main effect of being a woman is no longer present,
Table 13. OLS Regressions of Microaggressions

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†<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001
the interaction effects for Black, Asian, and Latino women at a PWI remain positive and significant for the model predicting microinsults. In the model predicting microinvalidations, the effect of being a Latina woman at a PWI is no longer significant. Overall, however, the results suggest that non-White women do not experience the protective effects against race-based microaggressions that other women at a PWI experience.

Students at a non-PWI score higher on the racism scale (See Table 12). Students at a non-PWI school are more likely to believe that the election of President Barack Obama is proof that racism isn’t a major social issue anymore. Students at PWI are more likely to believe that racism was not as bad as it was in the past (See Table 12). Going to a predominantly White university is associated with low levels of agreement with the statement that the election of President Obama is proof that racism isn’t a major social issue. Attending a sports-centered school is associated with high levels of agreement (See Table 10).

Compared to students at the non-sports centered institution, students at the sports-centered institution agree more with the statement that sexism is not as bad as it was in the past. Being at a sports-centered school increases the likelihood of agreeing with the statement that the advancement of women is proof that sexism is no longer a major social issue (Table 13). There was no difference in cultural competence scores between institutions.
6.1.1 Summary of Quantitative Results

Hypothesis 1 asks: “Are students who attend a diverse institution that does not have a dominant sports and fraternity culture less likely to experience racist and sexist microaggressions than students at a racially homogenous school that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture?” I argued that a diverse institution that does not have a dominant sports and fraternity culture would have less racist and sexist microaggressions. The data supports my hypothesis. Black women, Asian women, and Latina women are adversely affected by attending a predominantly-White institution. They experience a greater number of all forms of microaggressions than they would at a non-PWI.

Hypothesis 2 and 3 ask: “Are students who attend a diverse institution that does not have a dominant sports and fraternity culture less likely to hold racist, post-racist, sexist, and post-sexist beliefs than students at a racially homogenous institution that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture? The data supports my hypothesis. Students at the racially homogenous institution that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture were more likely to agree with sexist, post-sexist, and one post-racist statement (“racism is not as bad as it was in the past”). However, students at the diverse school were more likely to hold racist beliefs and more likely to agree with the post-racist statement “the election of President Obama is proof that racism doesn’t exist anymore.”
Hypothesis 4 asks: “Will mean cultural competency scores be higher at a diverse institution?” I argued that cultural competence would be greater at the diverse institution. However, there was no difference in cultural competence scores between institutions.

Hypothesis 5 asks: “Will women of color experience multiple jeopardy within a racially homogenous school that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture?” I argued that women of color would experience multiple jeopardy as a result of their race, gender, and their institution type. Black, Asian, and Latino students experience a greater number of race-based microassaults, microinvalidations and microinsults than White students at both schools.
CHAPTER VII

RESULTS – PATH ANALYSIS

The purpose of chapter 7 is to create path models that will test the relationships between demographic factors (race, gender, and institution type), experiences (racist and sexist victimization) and attitudes/outlook (racist, post-racist, sexist, post-sexist, campus climate, and stress). The research questions and hypotheses for this chapter are as follows:

1. The experiences of subaltern group members in relation to their perceptions of campus climate and stress.
   
   H₁. I hypothesize that subaltern group members will experience more microaggressions: racial minorities will experience more racist microaggressions; women will experience more sexist microaggressions and women of color will experience more racist and sexist microaggressions. These oppressive experiences will result in poor perceptions of campus climate and higher stress for these populations.

2. Institution type in relation to experiences and beliefs.

   H₂. I hypothesize that a predominantly White institution that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture will foster more
microaggressions than a diverse, urban school. This experience will create more negative perceptions of campus climate and more stress for students.

The models show how the experiences of subaltern group members affect their perceptions of campus climate and stress. I hypothesize that subaltern group members will experience more microaggressions, racial minorities will experience more racist microaggressions, women will experience more sexist microaggressions, and women of color will experience racist and sexist microaggressions. These oppressive experiences will result in poor perceptions of campus climate and higher stress for these populations.

7.1 Quantitative Results

Table 14 displays the results of the path models shown in Figures 1 and 2. It displays direct, indirect, and total effects, while the figures only show the direct effects from explanatory variables to their dependent variable(s). The final outcomes in each figure are campus climate and stress. The mediating variables are presented separately in the two figures by type of microaggression – race-based and gender-based. In addition to examining how the effects of race,
Figure 1. Path Model and Standardized Coefficients - Race-Based Microaggressions
Table 14. Standardized Path Coefficients – Race and Gender Microaggressions

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Gender: .23*** .07*** .06** .13*** .20*** .20***
Iowa: .06** .06** .27** .27**
Gender-Based: .31*** .31*** .12*** .12***
Black: .11*** .11***
Asian: -.07** -.02** .12*** .10*** -.09** .63*** .54***
Hispanic: -.07** -.02** .05* .02 -.08** .32* .23†

RMSEA: .06
CFI: .96

†<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001
gender, and PWI on campus climate and stress are mediated through the experience of microaggressions, the direct effects of race, gender, and institution type are also examined. All presented coefficients are standardized; the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the comparative fit index (CFI) are presented to indicate model fits. Generally, an RMSEA below .10 and a CFI above .90 indicate a good fitting model (MacCallum et al. 1996). The RMSEA and CFI of all models analyzed suggest an adequate fit.

Figure 1 shows that Black students, Asian students, and Latino students experience more race-based microaggressions than White students (the reference group). In turn, experiencing race-based microaggressions is associated with more negative perceptions of campus climate and higher levels of stress. There is also a main effect on campus climate for Black students and main effects on campus climate and stress for Asian students. There are also direct effects on campus climate and stress for women students. Women have more negative perceptions of campus and higher levels of stress than males. PWI results, however, are mixed. While attending a PWI is associated with a more negative perception of campus, it is also associated with lower levels of stress. While the direct effects are interesting, the indirect effects are important to microaggression theory and the hypotheses of this dissertation. There is a strong, significant indirect effect of race on campus climate via the microaggressions people of color
experience. Much of the negative perceptions by Black, Asian, and Latino students stem from the race-based microaggressions they experienced. The same is true for stress. The stress exhibited by Black, Asian, and Hispanic students is greater because of the race-based microaggressions they experience. Coefficients for direct, indirect, and total effects can be found in Table 14.

Figure 2 shows the results of the path analysis using gender-based microaggressions as the mediating variable. Compared to men, women experience a significantly higher number of gender-based microaggressions. This results in lower perceptions of campus climate and higher levels of stress. The results of the path analyses conducted in Figures 1 and 2 are consistent, producing similar findings. Race and gender usually have an effect on campus climate and stress – with non-White students and women having more negative perceptions of campus climate and higher levels of stress. However, the entire effect cannot be explained through a direct relationship. Rather, the experience of race-based microaggressions produces significantly more negative perceptions of campus climate and higher levels of stress for non-White students, while the experience of gender-based microaggressions does the same for women.

7.1.1 Summary of Quantitative Results

Black students, Asian students, and Latino students experience more microassaults than White students. Experiencing race-based microassaults is
associated with more negative perceptions of campus climate and higher levels of stress. Much of the negative perceptions by Black, Asian, and Latino students stem from the race-based microassaults they experienced. The same is true for stress. The stress exhibited by Black, Asian, and Latino students is greater because of the race-based microassaults they experience.

Women experience a significantly higher number of gender-based microassaults than men. This results in lower perceptions of campus climate and higher levels of stress. The same pattern exists for gender-based insults and invalidations.

Race and gender usually have an effect on campus climate and stress – with non-White students and women having more negative perceptions of campus climate and higher levels of stress. However, the entire effect cannot be explained through a direct relationship. Rather, the experience of race-based microaggressions produces significantly more negative perceptions of campus climate and higher levels of stress for non-White students, while the experience of gender-based microaggressions does the same for women.
CHAPTER VIII

DISCUSSION

Higher education has been linked to upward mobility in recent decades, and it has particularly served as a road to upward mobility for disadvantaged racial and gender groups. Colleges and universities are often considered bastions of progressive liberalism that will challenge racism and sexism; however, the presence of racism and sexism on college campuses is proof that there is still much work to be done. This study confirmed that students experience racist and sexist microaggressions on college campuses, students hold racist and sexist beliefs, and that there are differences between student’s experiences at a PWI and a diverse institution.

In this discussion section, I will review: 1) the main findings; 2) novel findings; and 3) I will add my insight about the findings. The topics covered in this section include: experiences with microaggressions; racist, post-racist, sexist and post-sexist beliefs; institutional differences and similarities; campus climate; microaggressions and stress; microaggressions, campus climate and stress; anti-Asian sentiment, anti-Black sentiment, segregation, alcohol, reverse discrimination, racist and sexist jokes, cultural competency, and fraternities and sexism.
8.1 Experiences

8.1.1 Race-based Microaggressions

Microaggressions are real and are prominent on college campuses. Students of color experienced more race-based microaggressions than White students, with Black and Asian students experiencing the highest levels of race-based microaggressions. Students of color also experienced victimization by members outside of their racial group at higher rates than White students. This finding is congruent with my hypotheses that students of color are likely to report more racist microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations than White students.

These findings also illuminate the point that race and racism are still significant within academic institutions. It shows that there is a fundamental difference between the experiences of students of color and White students and that the difference is caused by the fact that we live in a society organized by race. This means that, within the same institution, students of color and White students experience academic life differently.

These findings show that racial inequality is alive and that racism is not dead. Students are not separate; however, they are still unequal. These results are also consistent with recent literature that revealed that, compared to White students, Black and Asian students report more discrimination (Gomez et al.
2011). It is also in line with literature that reveals that White, male students account for the majority of identified perpetrators of violence towards minority students. Studies have found that the majority of the perpetrators were White, male fraternity members, but also included faculty, as well as people without campus affiliations, but who were connected to White supremacist or other extremist groups (Ehrlich 1998; Perry 2010:267). This finding also supports critical race theory, which suggests race is a social construction that creates privilege for White people and disadvantage for people of color.

8.1.2 Gender-based Microaggressions

Women experienced more gender-based microaggressions than men. These findings support my hypotheses that women would experience more gender-based microaggressions than men. Again, these findings are related to other studies that show women are more likely to be physically assaulted, verbally assaulted, disrespected and have their concerns ignored by someone of the opposite gender on college campuses.

These findings show that gender and sexism remain significant within academic institutions. It also shows there is a major difference between the experiences of students who are women and students who are men – and that difference is caused by the fact that we live in a society organized by gender. This means that, within the same institution, women and men have very
different college experiences – in other words, gender inequality is alive and sexism is not dead.

My findings are consistent with literature that found that sexism and gender-biased behavior are present on college campuses (Myers and Dugan 1996). It is also related to research that revealed that college age women are at risk for gender-based violence, rape, sexual assault, stalking, and intimate partner violence (Fleck-Henderson 2012; Armstrong et al. 2006). Students who are women may be particularly prone to experiencing gender-based microaggressions if they attend a school with a dominant sports and fraternity culture. Research shows fraternity members experience greater levels of peer pressure to have sex which, in turn, increases the likelihood of sexual assault (Franklin et al. 2012). Another study shows that fraternity members were disproportionately involved in perpetrating sexual aggression, while athletes displayed a greater proclivity to rape (Boeringer 1996). This finding supports an overarching hypothesis of this study that suggests women are more likely to experience gender-based microaggressions at a school with a dominant sports and fraternity culture. This finding also supports feminist theory, which suggests that gender is a social construction that creates privilege for men and disadvantage for women.
8.1.3 Women of Color, Multiple Jeopardy and Race-based Microassaults

Women of color – particularly Black, Asian and Latina women - experienced more race-based microassaults at the predominantly White institution. In other words, respondents with two disadvantaged statuses tend to experience greater victimization when in a largely White environment.

This finding supports my hypothesis that women of color would experience more race-based microaggressions on a predominantly White campus. This finding is in line with previous studies that reported that Black women experienced a significant amount of microaggressions within their schools (McCabe 2009). This finding also supports multiple jeopardy theory, which suggests that individuals who fall into several low social statuses or devalued groups (e.g. racial minority, women, minority at a predominantly White institution) may experience compounded oppression (King 1988).

Multiple jeopardy theory explains that as a result of compounded oppression, members of low social status groups may suffer physical abuse, emotional abuse, social discrimination, and cultural denigration – as well as immeasurable burdens of prejudice and mistreatment (King 1988). As a result of these negative experiences, women of color may experience a decreased quality of life, chronic distress and an obstruction on the road to achieving their scholastic and professional goals.
8.1.4 White Women and Gender-based Microassaults

It was established in the main findings that women experience more gender-based microaggressions than men and that women of color experience more race-based microassaults at the predominantly White institution. However, this study also shows that White women reported the largest number of gender-based microassaults. To explain this, I turn to this study’s finding on microaggressors. The data on microaggressors show that women are more likely than men to be physically and verbally assaulted by someone of the opposite gender.

While it is possible that White women are experiencing microassaults from unknown microaggressors, it is more likely that they know their microaggressor. In relation to sexual assaults, “85 to 90 percent of sexual assaults reported by college women are perpetrated by someone known to the victim; about half occur on a date…perpetrators may range from classmates to neighbors” (National Institute of Justice 2008). In terms of dating, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2009) reported that college aged women (16-24) experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence. While interracial relationships and marriages are becoming more common, intraracial relationships are still more common than interracial relationships (Herman and Campbell 2012).

Additionally, segregation on college campuses usually results in racial cliques –
where White students typically associate with other White students (Price et al., 2009). Lastly, one of the schools in the study has a dominant sports and fraternity culture, which may perpetuate sexist microaggressions (Miller 2008; Gage 2008; Murnen and Kohlman 2007; Franklin et. al 2012; Boeringer 1996; Humphrey and Kahn 2000).

Building off of these points, it is possible that the White women in the sample experience gender-based victimization by White male microaggressors, since White women are most likely to associate with White men. Within a predominantly White institution, many White male students accept and reinforce an environment of hypermasculinity which can lead to microaggressions against women.

This finding also supports activation theory, a theory that I created for this dissertation. Activation theory suggests that our social statuses become activated as a result of the social spaces that we occupy, and we will experience either privilege or oppression depending on where our social statuses are activated. According to activation theory, one can be privileged in one space and oppressed in another space, or one can be both privileged and oppressed in the same social setting. For instance, a student who identifies as a White woman may receive race-based privileges on a predominantly White campus that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture (since the Whiteness of said campus will foster
White privilege); however, she may experience sexist microaggressions on the same campus (since the hypermasculinity of said campus will foster gender oppression).

8.1.5 Black Men and Gender-based Microinsults

While Black women experienced more race-based microassaults than Black men, Black men experienced more gender-based microinsults and microinvalidations than Black women. It appears that male privilege is not available to all men within this sample. This finding supports activation theory – which suggests that our social statuses become activated as a result of the social spaces that we occupy, and we will experience either privilege or oppression depending on where our social statuses are activated. While being a White man on a predominantly White, hypermasculine campus results in male privilege for White men, it does not for Black men. Instead of receiving the same male privileges that White men enjoy, Black men reported experiencing microinsults, such as being watched or followed in public places as if they were a threat or dangerous, being treated as if others were afraid or intimidated by them and being treated as if they were abnormal or did not belong. This finding is in line with other research showing that Black male high school students are often the target of racial stereotyping and are consequently labeled as troublemakers and deviants more than other racial-ethnic groups of children (Ferguson 2000).
McCabe (2009) also points out that Black male students were viewed as threatening on campus. Drawing from the above points, it is likely that racial oppression nullifies male privilege for Black men on college campuses.

8.2 Beliefs

Racist and sexist beliefs are often a precursor to racist and sexist behavior. To reduce incidences of racist and sexist microaggressions, it is necessary to understand the prejudiced beliefs that people hold and then try to enlighten those individual’s through awareness training. This study confirmed racist, post-racist, sexist, and post-sexist beliefs were prevalent on both campuses.

8.2.1 Asian and Latino Racist and Post-Racist Beliefs

White students held more racist beliefs than Black students. This finding supports my hypothesis. However, the following results did not support my hypothesis: Asian and Latino students held more racist beliefs than White students (the racism scale primarily focused on racism directed toward African Americans). Similarly, Asian and Latino students are more likely to agree with the post-racist statement (the election of President Obama indicates racism is no longer a problem) than White students.

Due to the history and legacy of racism in this country, one would think that White people would score higher than other minorities regarding racist
beliefs. It is possible that Whites are more skilled than Asian and Latino’s at being covertly racist and giving socially desirable answers regarding race. Additionally, Asian and Latino students may be less concerned about the social penalty of being seen as racist towards African Americans.

This finding is particularly unexpected since one would imagine that sharing a “co-minority” status would create increased awareness and solidarity. However, it appears that Asians and Latinos are susceptible to believing the stereotypes and prejudices about African Americans regardless of their co-minority status. Instead, the data support the concept of horizontal oppression where members of targeted groups maintain and reinforce oppression (Hardiman and Jackson 2007).

8.2.2 Sexist and Post-Sexist Beliefs

Men scored significantly higher than women on the sexism scale and on both post-sexism items. These data support my hypotheses. Students who value personal sports also scored higher on the sexism scale. This finding supports my overarching hypothesis that sexism will be prevalent in schools that have a dominant sports and fraternity culture.

This is an important finding since it validates using sports-involvement as a proxy for hypermasculinity and as a potential factor in the perpetuation of sexism. This finding is also significant since it supports my theory on
microaggressions and is related to the finding that shows women are more likely to be physically assaulted, verbally assaulted, disrespected and have their concerns ignored by men. In this dissertation, I argue that sexist and post-sexist beliefs often preempt sexist microaggressions. Microaggressors, or perpetrators, usually hold sexist and post-sexist beliefs and prejudices before they commit oppressive acts or microaggressions. Therefore, it is unsurprising that men hold sexist and post-sexist beliefs and that they also commit gender-based microaggressions.

8.3 Institution

The schools in this study met important theoretical parameters that allowed me to study race-based and gender-based microaggressions. To study race-based microaggressions, beliefs and multiple jeopardy, I decided to compare students at a predominantly White institution and a racially diverse institution. To study gender-based microaggressions, I decided to compare students’ experiences at a school with a dominant sports and fraternity culture and a school without one.
8.3.1 Microaggressions at the Predominantly White Institution

Black women, Asian women, and Latina women are adversely affected by attending a predominantly-White institution with a dominant sports and fraternity culture. They experience a greater number of all forms of microaggressions than they would at a non-PWI. The data support my hypothesis. This finding also supports multiple jeopardy theory. As explained above, multiple jeopardy theory suggests that individuals who fall into several low social statuses or devalued groups (e.g. racial minority, women, minority at a predominantly White institution) may experience compounded oppression in the form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, social discrimination, cultural denigration, as well as immeasurable burdens of prejudice and mistreatment (King 1988).

8.3.2 Racist and Post-racist Beliefs at the Diverse School

Students at the racially homogenous institution that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture were more likely to agree with sexist, post-sexist, and one post-racist statement (“racism is not as bad as it was in the past”). This supports my hypothesis. However, students at the diverse school were more likely to hold racist beliefs and more likely to agree with the post-racist statement “the election of President Obama is proof that racism does not exist anymore.”
This finding was unexpected. However, this finding can be explained by considering the framework of Racism 2.0. Wise (2010:15) argues that there has been a shift in society from “Racism 1.0 to Racism 2.0 – an insidious upgrade that allows millions of Whites to cling to racist stereotypes about people of color generally, while nonetheless carving out exceptions for those who, like [President] Obama, make us comfortable by seeming so “different” from what we view as a much less desirable norm”. In addition to Wise’s (2010) framework, it is possible people of color also hold Racism 2.0 beliefs. While students (White and non-White) at the diverse institution hold racial stereotypes about Blacks in general, they can still carve out exceptions like President Obama or students of color on their campus who do not fit negative stereotypes to legitimate their post-racism.

8.3.3 Campus Climate

Individuals who experience a greater number of race-based insults, gender-based insults, gender-based invalidations, and gender-based assaults have more negative perceptions of campus climate. I argued that microaggressions would lead to negative perceptions of campus climate. This hypothesis was also supported. While individuals who experience race-based insults have more negative perceptions of campus climate, this effect is greater for Black women. Additionally, Asian students, women, and students attending
a PWI also have more negative perceptions. It is unsurprising that students who experience microaggressions have more negative perceptions. Nor is it surprising that women have more negative perceptions than men.

8.3.4 Microaggressions and Stress

I argued that microaggressions would increase stress. However, the hypothesis was only partially supported. Asian students and students who reported gender-based insults were the only students who had higher levels of stress. Theory suggests that students who possess a disadvantaged status (race or gender) may have higher levels of stress when they experience race or gender-based microaggressions.

Asian students may report more stress as the result of the anti-Asian sentiment that is directed towards them. Research suggests that racism is a cause of chronic stress for racial minorities and that racism-related stress can impact an individual’s well-being (Dion 2002; Harrell 2002). Frequent stressful, racist experiences can result in depression, anxiety and anger (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Surgeon General’s report, 2001).

Women in male dominated majors, or those who attend a sports and fraternity dominant school may experience more gender-based microinsults, which will result in them reporting higher levels of stress. Research also reveals that women experience more chronic stress and minor daily stress than men as a
consequence of sexism (Matud 2004). As reported above, Black men experience high levels of gender-based micro-insults. It is likely that racial oppression nullifies male privilege for Black men on college campuses. The oppression that Black men experience results in them reporting higher levels of stress.

8.3.5 Microaggressions, Campus Climate and Stress

The path analysis allows us to see the relationship between social status, experiences, perceptions of campus climate and stress. Race-based microaggressions produced significantly more negative perceptions of campus climate and higher levels of stress for non-White students. The stress exhibited by Black, Asian and Latino students is greater because of the race-based microassaults they experience. This result supports my hypotheses.

Gender-based microaggressions produced significantly more negative perceptions of campus climate and higher levels of stress for women. Compared to men, women experienced a significantly higher number of gender-based microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations. This results in lower perceptions of campus climate and higher levels of stress. This result supports my hypotheses.

It is unsurprising that students who are violated by microaggressions on campus have higher levels of stress and negative perception of campus climate. Research also supports this finding and shows that racism and sexism generate
negative emotions and that negative emotions create stress (Lazarus and Folkman 1984; Lazarus 1999; Dion 2002; Harrell 2002; Matud 2004).

8.4 Anti-Asian Sentiment

Another unexpected finding was the depth of anti-Asian sentiment at both schools, as well as its overtess. Both schools displayed an anti-Asian Sentiment, although this sentiment was more intense at the University of Iowa. The University of Iowa (the predominantly White institution in the study) has a goal of creating a critical mass of minority students (University of Iowa 2005). To achieve this goal, there has been an influx of minority and international students at the University of Iowa in recent years (Pradarelli 2011). During the 2011-2012 academic year (when these data were collected), Asian students were the largest minority group at the University of Iowa. Approximately 3000, or 10%, of University of Iowa students identify as Asian International Students (the most common countries of origin include China, South Korea, and Taiwan).

Approximately 1,020 or 3.4% of students identify as Asian American. In total, Asian students represent 13% of the student body. They are the largest minority group and the most visible minority group, which I assert makes it easier for them to be racially profiled and targeted. Approximately 3,000, or 9%, are of other minority groups (African American 2.7%, Latina(o) 4.8%, Native American 0.3%, Native Hawaiian 0.1%, Multiracial 1.3%). Even though 23,000 or 77% of the
student body are White (University of Iowa Admissions Website 2013; University Communication and Marketing Website 2013), as shown in the responses, many White students were upset that there were “too many” Asian students. There are over 6 times more White students at The University of Iowa than Asian students; however, some White students still yearn for more Whiteness. This desire may also be linked to stereotype threat or White students’ jealousy and beliefs of self-inferiority when it comes to the (real, perceived, or stereotypical) academic performance of Asian students (Steel and Aronson 1995; Steele 1997). In response to feeling as though their privilege and dominance is being jeopardized, White students may be responding in racist, microaggressive ways.

It is possible that the increase of international students and students of color is creating a White backlash in the form of Anti-Asian and Anti-International sentiments, as well as racist microaggressions. White backlash as the result of desegregation and increased diversity is not an uncommon occurrence and has occurred throughout history. Throughout the history of this country, we have seen a backlash when predominantly White schools or neighborhoods have been integrated (e.g. The Little Rock Nine being escorted by armed guards to protect them from volatile people that were against school desegregation) (Chadwick 2007). Levin and McDevitt (1993) explain that perpetrators of ethnic violence oftentimes commit aggressions for personal reasons, such as “defending their
territory”. Levin and McDevitt (1993) discuss the concept of “retaliatory” hate crimes. Retaliatory hate crimes occur when White people believe that there is a wrongful intrusion of racial/ethnic minorities into “White” environments, and, in an attempt to preserve their territory, Whites lash out. Stotzer and Hossellman (2012) explain that: “Given that colleges and universities are traditionally White domains, the increase of racial/ethnic minorities could potentially trigger resistance to their increasing presence through race-based hate crimes and other forms of ethnoviolence”. In other words, the anti-Asian sentiment may be the result of the increase in Asian students.

Other reasons for anger included language barriers and some students’ jealousy over Asian students’ academic performance. In terms of school performance, majority students may respond to stereotype threat. Stereotype threat occurs when a member of a group is at risk of confirming a negative stereotype about one's group (Steele & Aronson, 1995). In this case, Asian students are expected to be better students than White students and other students of color. Additionally, Asian students may be a threat to White students unearned majority privilege (such as White’s possibly receiving higher grades and better treatment than minority students).

Non-Asian students also reflected a perpetual foreigner sentiment about most Asian students, where they assumed that the majority of Asian students
were international students. Many non-Asian students also believed that Asian international students should not attend school in the United States because they take admission spots that belong to American born students.

8.5 Anti-Black Sentiment

Anti-Black microaggressions were common in both schools. This was an expected finding and fits well with critical race theory. There was also an Anti-Black sentiment, which consisted of Black students experiencing a host of covert and overt microaggressions. Covert microaggressions included racial profiling, White students not interacting with Black students, a lack of support from mentors, and others having lower expectations of Black students’ work. In terms of overt microaggressions, verbal harassment, such as name calling and verbally inciting acts of aggression, were some of the most commonly reported forms of overt microaggressions.

As one student noted, many people say harmful things about African Americans even though they claim not to be racist. Such behavior truly highlights the relationship between post-racism and racism where people: 1) believe that racism is no longer a major social problem (post-racist beliefs), 2) they engage in racist behavior (jokes, comments, or actions), and 3) when they are confronted about their behavior, they say that it is not problematic, since racism does not exist (downplays racist behavior). Such an individual might go on to commit a racist
microinvalidation by saying that the person who confronted them was too sensitive about race. In other words, the notion of post-racism is used by individuals in an attempt to conceal or downplay their racist behaviors. Furthermore, the act of concealing racist behaviors contributes to the increase in covert racism.

Other students reported hearing many negative comments and stereotypes about African Americans, which included Black students not being worthy of being in school. Some students reported being co-victims of racist microaggressions. Co-victims included close friends or significant others who were present when their companion was being targeted by a microaggressor.

In sum, what was different about the anti-Black sentiment as compared to the anti-Asian sentiment was that Asians and Asian Americans were often perceived as direct competition for White students or as being too capable, while African Americans were often perceived as not being capable enough. Interestingly, both forms of racist sentiment were used as reasons for students from both racial minorities to be targeted by Whites as individuals who should not be students at their respective campuses.

8.6 Segregation

Segregation was cited as an issue on both campuses; however, racial segregation at the diverse school was an unexpected finding. At the diverse
school, similar racial groups gathered together at – isolating some White students who felt as though they could not fit into such groups. There was an opposite effect at The University of Iowa, where students of color felt isolated by their White counterparts.

Although many students at The University of Illinois at Chicago reported that they appreciated the diversity of their school and that diversity of the school attracted them to attend UIC – many students also reported that racial segregation was rampant at their school. While this finding was unexpected, discrimination, ethnic enclave preservation, or protective barriers against racism could possibly explain it. In terms of discrimination, students at UIC were more likely to hold racist beliefs. These racist beliefs may lead students to self-segregate and not interact with Black students and other students who are outside of their ethnic group. In terms of ethnic enclave preservation, it may be the case that first generation immigrant students group together with individuals who speak the same language and share similar customs. Lastly, Black students and students of color may self-segregate as a response to racism on campus. To combat being isolated by other racial groups, students of color may choose to associate with students of their same racial group to replace the lack of cohesion found among them and other racial groups.

In terms of predominantly White schools, research shows that racist
ideologies held by the White majority were responsible for segregating White and Black students (Price et al. 2009). Additionally, the comfort found in White cliques bred White solidarity that effectively excluded, alienated, and marginalized Black students. On the other hand, Price et al. (2009) argue that “White students held Black students responsible for this perceived segregating act, tacitly shifting the problem away from White students and placing blame on Black students”. However, in this case it is apparent that Black students isolated themselves in an effort to find comfort that could not otherwise be guaranteed within the majority White student population. In terms of this finding, students of color may be self-segregating because of not feeling accepted by White students.

8.7 Alcohol

Issues related to alcohol were common at The University of Iowa, but not at The University of Illinois at Chicago. Responses described both racist and sexist microaggressive experiences that involved alcohol. Some students explained that it was common for their peers who drank to become microaggressive. Similar to the way that jokes are used to mask microaggressive behavior, alcohol is also used as an excuse for microaggressive behavior. One student explained that he has been targeted by drunken microaggressors several times. He explained that microaggressions included both overt and covert racist comments,
and he believes that microaggressors think that alcohol gives them an excuse to say whatever comes to their mind.

Another student explained that her worst experiences with sexism have come from drunken men. Other comments noted that most intoxicated microaggressors were usually White men. Research shows that between 50 and 75% of sexual assaults that occur on college campuses involve alcohol consumption on the part of the victim, the perpetrator, or both parties (Armstrong et al. 2006). Party rapes are a distinct form of rape that involves a perpetrator who targets women who are drinking alcohol or who are intoxicated. Sexual assaults, sexual aggression and party rapes may be more common at schools that have a dominant sports and fraternity culture and at schools where the sports and fraternities are considered high-risk (where parties at fraternity houses have skewed gender ratios and where alcohol is involved) (Humphrey and Kahn 2000). As highlighted earlier, research shows that fraternity members were disproportionately involved in perpetrating sexual aggression, while athletes displayed a greater proclivity to rape (Boeringer 1996).

8.8 Reverse Discrimination

Some dominant group members in the study argued that they experienced reverse discrimination as the result of equal opportunity policies and scholarships. Such individuals believe that women and racial minorities
receive unfair benefits, scholarships and opportunities. Analyses of these responses revealed that claims of reverse discrimination are also related to racist, sexist, post-racist and post-sexist beliefs. Individuals who made claims of reverse discrimination ignored the historical and continued significance of White privilege, male privilege, racism and sexism. These claims also reflect post-racist and post-sexist beliefs by suggesting that racism and sexism no longer affect racial minorities and women. Instead, such claims contend that it is the White majority who are experiencing mistreatment and discrimination. The reverse discrimination claim is seemingly used by people who want to preserve their privileged social status, unearned opportunities and benefits that they receive from being a member of a dominant social status. These claims are not really reverse discrimination, they are arguments made by dominant members who are angry that they are not receiving unearned privileges – privileges that they should not have received in the first place (since they were gained at the expense of subaltern group members).

8.9 Racist and Sexist Jokes

Jokes were among the most common form of microaggressions. This was an unexpected finding. However, it is supported by previous scholarship. Many respondents explained that they often hear racist and sexist jokes on campus. Other respondents believed that racist or sexist jokes were not harmful and
believed that targets were too sensitive. While many targets are resilient, they are also bombarded with various microaggressions (oftentimes on a daily basis), such as microaggressive jokes that can lead to an increase in stress.

Liquid racism occurs when a microaggressor says something racist and then labels their comment a joke. Similar to other “new” forms of racism, liquid racism or sexism allows a microaggressor to hide their true intentions. The prevalence of liquid racism and sexism also contributes to the increase of covert oppression in recent years.

8.10 Cultural Competency

Students who score higher on the cultural competency scale hold less post-racist, racist, post-sexist, and sexist beliefs. This is congruent with my hypotheses. Students who are aware of social inequities, social problems, and cultural differences will be more in tune with the fact that racism and sexism still exist and will be less likely to hold bigoted beliefs.

8.11 Fraternities and Sexism

Complaints regarding Greek Life were prominent at The University of Iowa, but not at The University of Illinois at Chicago. This was an expected finding, and it fits one of the overarching hypotheses of this study that suggests that women are more likely to experience gender-based microaggressions at a
school that has a dominant sports and fraternity culture. Students explained that fraternities created an uncomfortable campus climate, particularly in terms of their sexist behaviors, beliefs, and treatment of women. Comments also suggested that alcohol was a large component of Greek Life, which seemingly increased occurrences of sexist microaggressions. Fraternity members were described as engaging in “predatory” behaviors that included sexualized microaggressions and unwanted touching and grabbing. According to the open-ended responses, fraternity members frequently engaged in hypermasculine behaviors. As outlined in the above literature review, hypermasculinity occurs in environments that reward such behavior. Additionally, hypermasculinity is often achieved through participation in male-centered activities, such as involvement in fraternities and sports teams at sports centered academic institutions. Research has shown that academic environments that have a dominant sports culture are more likely to have a campus climate that is hypermasculine (Miller 2008; Gage 2008; Murnen and Kohlman 2007). Furthermore, fraternity members at sports-centered schools may be more likely to display hypermasculine characteristics and to participate in sexist behaviors. Also as explained above, fraternity members were disproportionately involved in perpetrating sexual aggression (Boeringer 1996). The data are also in line with research that states that sexism will abound at
schools that have high-risk fraternities where parties at fraternity houses have skewed gender ratios and where alcohol is involved (Humphrey and Kahn 2000).

8.11 Summary

This study does not support the notion that racism and sexism are dead. The data revealed nuanced patterns of racism, sexism, post-racism and post-sexism, which is what one would expect to find in 21st century institutions. Given the more covert nature of racism and sexism in the 21st century, perhaps my work will contribute to expanding the assumptions of critical race theory and other orientations to include new ways in which these forms of discrimination mutate and persist despite gains in civil rights over time.
CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

9.1 Strengths

This study expanded microaggression research and microaggression theory. This research supported existing theories like critical race theory, feminist theory, multiple jeopardy theory and new theories like activation theory. The study shed light on students’ experiences with microaggressions and revealed that microaggressions are prevalent on college campuses. As a result of this study, it is clear that students of color experience race-based microaggressions, and women experience gender-based microaggressions. The study also revealed that women of color experience multiple jeopardy on predominantly White campuses. It also revealed that White women experienced high levels of gender-based microassaults.

While racist, post-racist, sexist and post-sexist beliefs were prevalent on both campuses, it was unexpected that Asian and Latino students would hold more racist beliefs about Blacks than White students. It was also unexpected that students at the diverse institution would hold more racist beliefs than students at the predominantly White institution. It was also surprising that segregation was rampant at the diverse school. Another main finding was the depth and overtness of anti-Asian sentiment and anti-Black sentiment at both schools. The study also
shed light on liquid racism and sexism and showed that racist and sexist jokes were common on college campuses.

It was unsurprising that some students who experienced race-based microaggressions (Asian students), and students who experienced gender microaggressions (particularly microinsults) would report higher levels of stress. It was also unsurprising that race and gender-based microaggressions produced negative perceptions of campus climate, which resulted in higher levels of stress.

The study also shed light on the relationship between alcohol and microaggressions, with students sharing that it was common for microaggressors to be drunk. Some White respondents claimed that they were experiencing reverse discrimination as the result of equal opportunity policies and scholarships that students of color receive. Respondents also complained about fraternities at the school that had a dominant sports and fraternity culture. They specifically described fraternity members as engaging in predatory behaviors and sexist microaggressions.

9.2 Limitations

While the study had many strengths, there are some limitations that should be addressed. Although the study was conducted at a diverse school and a predominantly White school, the data would have been richer if several schools in different regions were included. Furthermore, some may consider the following
school characteristics confounding variables: racial diversity on campus, sport-minded campus, and fraternity rich campus. Consequently, these elements could potentially weaken related findings. Also, it would have been useful to include open-ended and closed-ended questions that captured students coping mechanisms for stress and students perception of how microaggressions directly affect their school performance and quality of life. In terms of measurement, there needs to be updated scales that can effectively measure modern forms of racism and sexism as well as post-racism and post-sexism. Scales that measure modern racism towards other minority groups such as: Latinos, Asians, Native Americans and multiracial individuals should also be created. Also, using scales with multiple response options instead of binary responses would give respondents more choices and would yield responses that are more accurate.

9.3 Future Research

In this dissertation, I outlined the frameworks regarding the relationship between microaggressors and their targets, private and public microaggressions, as well as responses to microaggressions. In the future, it would be useful to empirically explore these concepts. It would also be valuable to explore student’s coping mechanisms for microaggression related stress, as well as student’s perceptions of how microaggressions directly affect their school performance and quality of life. A study on alcohol consumption and microaggressions would also
be interesting to explore, since respondents reported that microaggressors are
tonetimes drunk. Also, a study that focuses on cyber-bullying or cyber-
microaggressions would be very fruitful. Many microaggressors may choose to
inflict overt and covert microaggressions online since they can remain anonymous
and avoid sanctions. As the world continues to expand electronically, we must
explore how microaggressions manifest in such spaces like chat rooms, social
media sites, or message boards where microaggressions can be simultaneously
private and public. We must continue to explore the relationship between racism
and post-racism. Many people hide behind the notion that society is post-racist
which allows them to invalidate the experiences of those who still experience
racism, and to downplay their role as microaggressors.

9.4 Policy, Programming and Practice Suggestions

Since this research highlights the manifestation of racism and sexism on
college campuses, it could be very useful in informing future policy,
programming, and procedures aimed at eliminating microaggressions.
This research revealed that students of color experience more race-based
microaggressions than Whites, women experienced more gender-based
microaggressions than men, women of color experienced multiple jeopardy
(race-based microassaults at the predominantly White institution) and White
women experienced high levels of gender-based assaults.
Current anti-sexism and anti-racism policies fail to capture many covert forms of sexism and racism. Therefore, policy needs to clearly include microaggressions so that microaggressors cannot feign ignorance of their behavior and so they cannot blame their target. Educational institutions also need to be aware of the relationship between microaggressors and their targets – paying special attention to how damaging a microaggressive relationship between a person in power and a student can be. While current policy penalizes romantic relationships between people in power and students and addresses blatant forms of racism - it fails to address microinsults and microinvalidations that are committed toward students by microaggressors in power.

University leaders can use this information to create anti-racism and anti-sexism policies on campuses. In addition to the anti-racism and anti-sexism policy, mandatory awareness, cultural competence and anti-microaggression training should be provided to faculty, staff, and students. Not only should training and programs provide awareness to participants, but it should also provide participants with bystander intervention skills to interrupt and challenge microaggressions when they occur. Schools should also provide cultural competency training so that individuals can learn how to effectively work with people of different races and genders. Lastly, when complaints about
microaggressions are made to school authorities, care should be taken to ensure that students are not revictimized or retaliated against by the microaggressor. Additionally, all spaces on campus should be safe spaces. Policy, programming and training that focuses on making and keeping dorm rooms, classrooms, offices, and gymnasiums safe spaces is particularly important. These are spaces where students may be especially vulnerable to microaggressors because microaggressors have the ability to catch targets off guard, and since students expect these spaces to be safe.

9.5 Conclusion

In summary, this research added to the burgeoning area of microaggressions. Race-based and gender-based microaggressions are prevalent on college campuses, and their presence adversely affects students. All students should be able to work towards their academic and professional goals without experiencing microaggressions within their schools. The knowledge gained through this study has the potential to inform policy, programming and practice that can eradicate microaggressions and impact the lives, well-being and success of all students, but particularly racially underrepresented students and women. Eliminating microaggressions requires university leaders, faculty, staff and students that are passionate about eliminating racial and gender inequality. Furthermore, university officials should be committed to leading the entire
university community on the road to achieving cultural proficiency and ending microaggressions.
REFERENCES


## APPENDIX

### SURVEY

Directions: Have any of the following incidents happened to you DURING COLLEGE because of your race or gender? Please circle: "1. Yes" or "2. No" for each experience based on YOUR RACE and YOUR GENDER.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Experiences During College</th>
<th>Based on Your Race</th>
<th>Based on Your Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. You were treated rudely or disrespectfully.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Your ideas, beliefs or opinions were ignored or disdained.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. You have been treated as if you were &quot;stupid&quot;.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. You have been left out of conversations or activities.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Others have expected your work to be inferior.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Others have avoided being around you.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Others have acted as if they were afraid of you or intimidated by you.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. You have been stared at as if you were abnormal or “didn’t belong”.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. You have been watched or followed in public places as if you were a threat or dangerous.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. You have heard an offensive joke or comment about your group.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. You have been mistaken for someone else because you are a member of the same race or gender group.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. You have heard stereotypes about your group.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. You have been called a name or verbally harassed.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. You have been mistaken for someone who serves others (i.e., janitor, or maid).</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Have been told that you were too sensitive about race or gender.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Someone has told you that they “don’t see race” or “don’t see gender”.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. You received offensive phone calls, letters or email.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. You had personal property damaged (e.g., laptop, car).</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. You have been threatened with physical assault.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. You have been physically assaulted or harmed.</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Directions: In this section, we want to know WHO assaulted you, insulted you and who ignored your feelings or concerns regarding issues that are important to you. Please circle: "1. Yes" or "2. No" for each experience. You circle yes, circle how many times you experienced such an incident.

| Have you been physically assaulted by a woman? | (a) Yes (b) No |
| Have you been physically assaulted by a man? | (a) Yes (b) No |
| Have you been physically assaulted by someone of the same race? | (a) Yes (b) No |
| Have you been physically assaulted by someone of a different race? | (a) Yes (b) No |
| Have you been verbally assaulted by a woman? | (a) Yes (b) No |
| Have you been verbally assaulted by a man? | (a) Yes (b) No |
| Have you been verbally assaulted by someone of the same race? | (a) Yes (b) No |
| Have you been verbally assaulted by someone of a different race? | (a) Yes (b) No |
| Have you been disrespected by a woman? | (a) Yes (b) No |
| Have you been disrespected by a man? | (a) Yes (b) No |
| Have you been disrespected by someone of the same race? | (a) Yes (b) No |
| Have you been disrespected by someone of a different race? | (a) Yes (b) No |
| Have your feelings or concerns ignored by a woman? | (a) Yes (b) No |
| Have your feelings or concerns ignored by a man? | (a) Yes (b) No |
| Have your feelings or concerns ignored by someone of the same race? | (a) Yes (b) No |
| Have your feelings or concerns ignored by someone of a different race? | (a) Yes (b) No |
1. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?  
(1) Never (2) Almost never (3) Fairly often (4) Very often

2. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?  
(1) Never (2) Almost never (3) Fairly often (4) Very often

3. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?  
(1) Never (2) Almost never (3) Fairly often (4) Very often

4. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?  
(1) Never (2) Almost never (3) Fairly often (4) Very often

The election of President Obama is proof that racism isn’t a major social issue anymore? Yes ___ No ___

The advancement of women is proof that sexism isn’t a major social issue anymore? Yes ___ No ___

Sexism is not as bad as it was in the past?  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

Racism is not as bad as it was in the past?  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

1. It’s really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

2. Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcome prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

3. Some say that black leaders have been trying to push too fast. Others feel that they haven’t pushed fast enough. What do you think?  
(1) Trying to push too fast (2) Going too slowly (3) Moving at right speed (4) Not much at all

4. How much of the racial tension that exists in the United States today do you think blacks are responsible for creating?  
(1) All of it (2) Most (3) Some (4) Not much at all

5. How much discrimination against blacks do you feel there is in the United States today, limiting their chances to get ahead?  
(1) A lot (2) Some (3) Just a little (4) None at all

6. Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

7. Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

8. Over the past few years, blacks have gotten more economically than they deserve.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

1. Is your university a sports-centered school? (1) Yes (2) No

2. Are attending games important to you? (1) Yes (2) No

3. Are watching games important to you? (1) Yes (2) No

4. Are sports important to you? (1) Yes (2) No

5. Are sports important to most people at your school? (1) Yes (2) No

6. How important is the role of sports within your school environment?  
(1) Not important (2) Somewhat important (3) Very important (4) Extremely important

7. How often do you watch sports?  
(1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Frequently

8. How often do you participate in sports?  
(1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Often

9. How many sports related activities go on at your school?  
(1) None (2) Little (3) Some (4) Substantial

10. Are you in a fraternity? (1) Yes (2) No

11. Are you in a sorority? (1) Yes (2) No

Based on your race are treated well at your school?  
(1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Always

Based on your gender do you feel that you are treated well at your school?  
(1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Always

Do you feel safe on your campus?  
(1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Always

Have you ever considered dropping out of school because of race experiences?  
(1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Frequently

Have you ever considered dropping out of school because of sex experiences?  
(1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Frequently

Do you believe that racism is a major problem on your campus?  
(1) Yes (2) No

Do you believe that sexism is a major problem on your campus?  
(1) Yes (2) No

1. Women often miss out on good jobs due to sexual discrimination.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

2. It is rare to see women treated in a sexist manner on television.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

3. Society has reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

4. It is easy to understand the anger of women’s groups in America.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

5. Over the past few years, the government and news media have been showing more concern about the treatment of women than is warranted by women’s actual experiences.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

6. Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the United States.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

7. On average, people in our society treat husbands and wives equally.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

8. It is easy to understand why women’s groups are still concerned about societal limitations of women’s opportunities.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

1. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

2. I don’t like to be with people from different cultures.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

3. I respect the values of people from different cultures.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

4. I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

5. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

6. I think my culture is better than other cultures.  
(1) Strongly agree (2) Somewhat agree (3) Somewhat disagree (4) Strongly disagree

I’ve heard people that I know say bad things about Black people? (1) Yes (2) No

I’ve heard people that I know say bad things about women? (1) Yes (2) No
### PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING ABOUT YOURSELF:

What is your sex: (1)Male (2)Female (3)Intersex
What is your gender: (1)Man (2)Woman (3)Transgender
What is your racial background?
(1)Black or African American  (2) Caucasian/White  (3) Arab  (4) Latino (5) Asian/Pacific Islander  (6) Multiracial (7) Other
What is your age:
Do you receive financial aid other than student loans?  (1)Yes  (2) No
Are you a first generation student?  (1) Yes  (2) No

### IN YOUR OWN WORDS:

Please describe your experiences with racism on your campus?

Please describe your experiences with sexism on your campus?

Do you think that your school provides a comfortable environment for culturally diverse groups and women?