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A Two-Paper Mixed Method Pilot Study on Perceived Social Support, Self Esteem, and Racial-Ethnic Microaggressions among Undergraduate, Graduate, and Professional College Students in the United States

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Abstract
The retention, success, and well-being of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students in the United States is a critical issue in the field of higher education. Colleges and Universities across the United States often reflect intractable conflicts and dynamics of the larger society. Consequently, institutions of higher education have grappled with the dynamic of systemic and interpersonal racism throughout history. Racial and ethnic microaggressions is a recent dynamic that has been described to impact the well-being of college students of color. Racial microaggressions are perceived intentional or unintentional slights that have been suggested to impact the self-esteem of college students. The following is a two-paper mixed method dissertation pilot study examining the relationship between racial-ethnic microaggressions, self-esteem, and perceived social support among college students in the United States. The first paper is a literature review examining racial-ethnic microaggressions, self-esteem, and perceived social support. The second paper is a mixed method pilot study among college students examining the relationship amongst the three variables. A sample of \( N = 5 \) semi-structured interviews were conducted for the qualitative section of the second paper and a sample of \( N = 81 \) college students completed a survey which included the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale. A descriptive and correlational analysis was conducted in the quantitative section of the second paper and a thematic analysis was utilized for the qualitative section. Findings from this pilot study identify a correlation among selective variables, emerging themes, protective factors, and implications for future research.

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A Two-Paper Mixed Method Pilot Study on Perceived Social Support, Self Esteem, and Racial-Ethnic Microaggressions among Undergraduate, Graduate, and Professional College Students in the United States

Bobby Noel Casiano, MS, LCSW

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in

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John L. Jackson, Jr., PhD
Dissertation Chair

Howard Stevenson, PhD
Dissertation Committee
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to all of my ancestors from the African Diaspora and the beautiful island of Puerto Rico. It is because of you that I am living your dreams beyond measure. I also dedicate this dissertation to all Queer Afro-Puerto Rican men, first generation college students, and foster youth. I will continue demanding love, dignity, justice, mercy, and well-being for all of you. I hope to make it a little bit easier for those that will come long after I have fulfilled my purpose on this planet. I love you.

“Our crown has already been bought and paid for. All we have to do is wear it.”

– James Baldwin

“I go forth along, and stand as ten thousand.”

– Maya Angelou
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ABSTRACT

A TWO-PAPER MIXED METHOD PILOT STUDY ON PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT, SELF ESTEEM, AND RACIAL-ETHNIC MICROAGGRESSIONS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE, GRADUATE, AND PROFESSIONAL COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES.

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The retention, success, and well-being of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students in the United States is a critical issue in the field of higher education. Colleges and Universities across the United States often reflect intractable conflicts and dynamics of the larger society. Consequently, institutions of higher education have grappled with the dynamic of systemic and interpersonal racism throughout history. Racial and ethnic microaggressions is a recent dynamic that has been described to impact the well-being of college students of color. Racial microaggressions are perceived intentional or unintentional slights that have been suggested to impact the self-esteem of college students. The following is a two-paper mixed method dissertation pilot study examining the relationship between racial-ethnic microaggressions, self-esteem, and perceived social support among college students in the United States. The first paper is a literature review examining racial-ethnic microaggressions, self-esteem, and perceived social support. The second paper is a mixed method pilot study among college students examining the relationship amongst the three variables. A sample of (N = 5) semi-structured interviews were conducted for the qualitative section of the second paper and a sample of (N = 81) college students completed a survey which included the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale. A descriptive and correlational
analysis was conducted in the quantitative section of the second paper and a thematic analysis was utilized for the qualitative section. Findings from this pilot study identify a correlation among selective variables, emerging themes, protective factors, and implications for future research.

**Key Words:** Higher Education, Microaggressions, Perceived Social Support, Self Esteem, College Students.
Dissertation Introduction

The National Association of Social Workers (2017) has a code of ethics based on six core values that drive the profession's intent and practice. The NASW six core values include service, social justice, dignity and worth of the individual, importance and centrality of human relationships, integrity, and competence (National Association of Social Workers, 2017). The six core values aim to address some of our most intractable problems in society. The NASW also has a call to action to engage in antiracist organizing to combat the institutional and historical impact of racism (National Association of Social Workers, 2007). The social work profession has a unique opportunity to organize and engage with contextual communities for undoing racism.

In addition, the social work profession must have an antiracist framework and understanding that the role of a social work practitioner goes beyond helping the marginalized and condemned. The social work profession has an opportunity to reflectively look at its programs and institutions to understand the definition of prejudice plus power, its role, and how it can be undone. This is an antiracist charge coined by the Peoples Institute for Survival and Beyond. Bonilla-Silva (2014) and Delgado (1995) describe this dynamic of racism without racists as a persistent phenomenon across our institutions in the United States. Bonilla-Silva (2014) and Delgado (1995) highlight examples of institutionalized racism based on the persistent and detrimental outcomes among people of color across many systems in the United States. There are many social, relational, and interpersonal consequences that may stem from institutionalized racism. The scope of this dissertation is focused on the relational perceptions of racial discrimination experienced by college students in the United States.
Derald Sue et al., (2007) describes racial microaggressions as unintentional or intentional slights or indignities that communicate messages of inferiority toward people of color across our institutions in the United States. The term was originally attributed to psychiatrist Chester Pierce et al., (1978) at Harvard University and suggested to have a harmful impact on the well-being of historically marginalized communities. Wong et al., (2014) has noted a significant amount of emerging research to understand the construct of racial microaggressions, measuring microaggressions, collecting data on the impact across various marginalized groups, and protective factors to mitigate the impact on the well-being of historically marginalized populations. Nadal et al., (2014) and Sue (2010) suggest that microaggressions do have an impact on the well-being of college students in the United States. However, Wong et al., (2014) suggests that additional research is needed to understand protective factors and indicators for well-being among populations that experience racial microaggressions.

The following dissertation is intended to contribute and appraise the current scholarship, understand descriptive and correlational relationships among variables, and explore protective factors for college student well-being. The first paper is a literature review on the variables of perceived social support, self-esteem, and racial microaggressions among college students in the United States. The second paper is a mixed method pilot study among undergraduate, graduate, and professional students in the United States.

The qualitative section of the study includes semi-structured interviews using a thematic analysis to decipher student experiences of racial microaggressions, social support, and self-esteem. The quantitative section of the second paper utilized the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale, and the Racial/Ethnic Microaggressions Scale. Developing an empirical understanding on the impact of racial microaggressions on
college student well-being and further research on protective factors may offer an opportunity for higher education professionals to address the impact of interactional perceptions of racism within its institutions.
# Table of Contents

Dedication..................................................................................................................3

Acknowledgements.................................................................................................4

Abstract..................................................................................................................5

Dissertation Introduction.......................................................................................7

Paper One: Literature Review on Racial-Ethnic Microaggressions, Self Esteem, and Perceived Social Support Among College Students

  Introduction...........................................................................................................12

  Foundational Frameworks: Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality........14

  Foundational Frameworks: Racial Paranoia and Racial Socialization.........16

  Foundational Frameworks: Racial Trauma, Health, and Microaggressions....17

  Theoretical Framework: Racial Microaggressions........................................19

  Impact of Racial Microaggressions .................................................................21

  Critiques of the Microaggressions Framework and Methodological Issues....22

  Findings on Self-Esteem, Racial Microaggressions, and College Students...27

  Findings on Social Support, Racial Microaggressions, and College Students.29

  Conclusion...........................................................................................................30

Paper Two: A Mixed Method Pilot Study on Racial-Ethnic Microaggressions, Self Esteem, and Perceived Social Support Among College Students in the United States

  Introduction...........................................................................................................31

  Purpose of the Study..........................................................................................33

  Research Questions ............................................................................................34

  Method..................................................................................................................34
# Table of Contents

Participants.............................................................................................................34

Recruitment........................................................................................................36

Measures................................................................................................................36

Procedure...........................................................................................................38

Results................................................................................................................39

Discussion...........................................................................................................54

Implications for College Students.................................................................58

Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Directions for Research.......................60

References.........................................................................................................63

Appendix A: Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support..............77

Appendix B: Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale.......................................................78

Appendix C: Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale.................................79

Appendix D: Semi Structured Interview Guide...............................................82
Introduction

Institutionalized racism and discrimination is a dynamic that continues to plague many institutions across the United States (Bell, 1992; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Delgado, 1995). The United States has long struggled since the predated battles of the civil rights era to provide equitable access and reconciliation of such hatred and violence experienced by people of color (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Delgado, 1995). Colleges and Universities across the United States have held on to the value of providing a campus climate that fosters equity and success for underrepresented groups in higher education (Nadal et al., 2014). Relationships of difference across the United States have been an ongoing challenge since its founding and have permeated across our institutions (Bell, 1992). Access to opportunity and the ability to thrive has been deterred by many issues of violence, health outcomes, discriminatory laws, and regulations that have stripped away the dignity of various racial and ethnic groups within the United States (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Lebron, et al., 2015). Americans across the United States continue to share perceptions and experiences of racial conflict. A March 2017 Gallup poll indicates that 42% of Americans worry a great deal about race relations when compared to 17% in 2014 (Gallup, 2017).

Institutions of higher education often reflect the context of intractable conflicts rooted in the greater communities at large. Institutions of higher education offer an opportunity for students to analyze, deconstruct, and offer scholarship to some of our most intractable problems.
The college student population, its staff, and faculty often engage in processing such dynamics however, it is important to understand that the developer of the framework and scholarship is not removed from such social problems and dynamics (Freire, 2014; Dixon-Roman, 2017). A university systems’ attempt to manage diversity and promote equitable outcomes may miss the mark by unintentionally omitting the lived experiences and dynamics that perpetuates interpersonal racial threat. It promotes a possibility for the practitioner, researcher, and student to take part in a dynamic process that carries power, consequence, and emboldens the status quo which may further harm the oppressed (Freire, 2014, Yosso et al., 2009). Institutional barriers and a notion of transforming society at large begins with interpersonal engagement and social support networks (Stevenson, 2014). Racial literacy and interpersonal communication is essential for addressing racial encounters that may impact health, social, and emotional outcomes for people of color (Stevenson, 2014; Lebron et al., 2015). Racial threat and dehumanizing encounters described as racial microaggressions trigger a great deal of anguish among communities of color on our college campuses (Sue et al, 2010). Sue (2010) describes these dynamics as dehumanizing indignities that may be communicated unconsciously by well-meaning people.

The following is a review of the literature on the impact of macroaggressions on college student’s well-being. This manuscript will provide an initial foundational analysis on the frameworks and constructs of critical race theory, intersectionality, racial paranoia, racial socialization, racial trauma and health, and microaggressions. In addition, an overview of the microaggressions framework, the critiques behind the framework, the impact on students of color across college campuses, and the need for further study of protective factors to promote well-being and self-esteem among college students of color. Specifically, an examination of the
relationship between the variables of perceived social support and self-esteem among students of color that have experienced racial microaggressions.

1.1 Foundational Frameworks: Critical Race Theory & Intersectionality

The study of critical race theory (CRT) can be traced back to the critical scholarship of W.E.B DuBois (1903) in the early 1900’s. The critical scholarship expanded as an area of inquiry in the field of legal studies in the 1980’s with the intent to analyze the impact of racism in the United States (Delgado, 1995; Yosso et al., 2009). Yosso et al., (2009) indicates that Critical Race Theory began its analysis of legal rights and poor outcomes for historically marginalized groups in the United States. CRT initially focused on a binary analysis of institutional discrimination and later began to examine the impact across other racial/ethnic groups (e.g. Native Americans, Chicano/a, Asian Americans, Latinx) (Yosso et al., 2009).

It is important to acknowledge the advancement and gains of the civil rights movement. Critical legislative and legal gains allowed for historically marginalized groups to have equal rights in the United States. There were many activist and courageous leaders that lost their lives to elevate the dignity and equity of each citizen. Though, it became evident that historically marginalized groups continued to experience poor outcomes in light of such historic gains (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). CRT suggests that persistent discrimination and poor outcomes remain for people of color due to a false notion that the United States system is inherently colorblind or race neutral (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). The CRT scholarship challenges the assumption that legislative and legal gains operate in a race neutral and colorblind system (Bell, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Delgado, 2003; Solorzano 1997). In addition, CRT challenges dominant ideology across institutions and within the field of higher education. (Yosso et al., 2009). CRT also suggests that higher education institutions may unintentionally perpetuate dominant ideology in its scholarship
(Bell, 1992; Delgado, 2003; Yosso et al., 2009). As a result, CRT scholarship places an emphasis on including a variety of narratives across racial/ethnic groups and further developing an understanding of intersecting identities (e.g. class, gender) (Cole, 2009, Crenshaw, 1989, Delgado, 1989, 1993, 1996; Espinoza, 1990; Yosso et al., 2009).

The CRT scholarship aligns with the Social Work profession on its commitment to social justice and liberation of historically marginalized groups that continue to experience poor outcomes across institutions in the United States (Bell, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2014, Freire, 2014, National Association of Social Workers, 2007). CRT scholars suggest that race and other identity categories may be perceived as a social construction however, such socially constructed categories carry power and detrimental outcomes for historically marginalized groups (Bell, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Freire, 2014; Yosso et al., 2009). Critical Race Theory adds an important analysis to the scholarship and encourages a sense of internal reflection of consequences that may perpetuate oppressive outcomes (Delgado, 2003; Freire, 2014). Freire (2014, p. 178) states that “leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on opposing their decision, do not organize the people-they manipulate them” and “they do not liberate, nor they liberated: they oppress.”

CRT adds an analysis and voice in the academy that encourages rigor of thought and the advancement of scholarship that is intended to include the lived experiences of the oppressed. Scholars in the academy have an opportunity to develop a scope that attempts to listen to the contextual and complex racialized identities across class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and geography (Crenshaw, 1989; Delgado, 2003; Espinoza, 1990). The foundational framework of CRT has informed a growing area of research that seeks to understand the interactional and perceived discrimination in human relationships.
1.2 Foundational Frameworks: Racial Paranoia & Racial Socialization

Jackson (2008) offers a construct of analysis for understanding some of the interpersonal perceptions of race in the United States. Jackson (2008) contributes to the conversation by describing racial paranoia as a dynamic where African Americans attempt to grapple an understanding of everyday racism. The racial paranoia consists of a deep skepticism that racism has been fully eroded by the legal and legislative gains of the civil rights movement. Jackson (2008) suggests that subtle acts of racism persist and may have detrimental consequences due to political correctness in the post-civil rights era. Jackson (2008) indicates that it takes an investment in relationships across difference in order to process the complexities of racialized experiences among African Americans of various identity groups (e.g. gender, class). Jackson (2008) also acknowledges that racial paranoia includes a de cardio racism where some African Americans may ponder on where all of the racism and racists departed to after the gains of the civil rights movement. The analysis implies that the language of equality is visible however, there is a paranoid skepticism that may manifest across relationships of difference (Jackson, 2008). There are also other scholars that contribute to the scope of interactional perceptions of racial discrimination. For example, Stevenson (2014) suggests that racial encounters that are overt or subtle may result in stress. Stevenson (2014) indicates that youth and families may experience detrimental outcomes as a result of racialized negative encounters that youth and families experience.

An emerging construct described as racial microaggressions has also surfaced as unintentional or intentional slights and indignities that communicate perceived experiences of inferiority among people of color (Sue, 2010). Sue et al., (2007) offers a taxonomy of microaggressions and infers the negative impact that people of color experience as a result of
subtle discriminatory messages. The aforementioned foundational frameworks offer an understanding of the interactional perceptions of subtle racial discrimination. However, it also brings forth the question: is having an operationalized definition of racial microaggressions a protective factor for racial paranoia? It may be helpful to have a definition that can normalize the paranoia of racial encounters which is suggested to have a negative impact on people of color. However, there is a lingering possibility that confirming the racial paranoia and subtle indignities may create more fear of engagement in the interactional process across human relationships.

Stevenson (2014) suggests that promoting racial literacy and racial socialization serves as a protective factor for such racial encounters across relationships. Stevenson (2014) suggests that preparing youth and families for racial encounters strengthens relationships and may promote positive health outcomes among youth. Stevenson et al., (1997) indicates that early discussions of confusion or racial hostility may serve as a protective factor for managing the impact of stress during a racial encounter. Racial Socialization is described as communication between caregivers and their children about cultural pride and preparation for adverse or confusing encounters they may experience (Brown, 2008). Further research is needed to explore such dynamics in institutions of higher education. However, Sue (2010) suggest that college students experience persistent challenges with microaggressions in the classroom. Sue et al., (2007) taxonomy on racial microaggressions expands and adds to the conversation of interactional discrimination in university settings. The scope of the microaggressions framework seeks to expand on understanding and aiding the potential detrimental outcomes of nuanced discrimination on people of color.

1.3 Foundational Frameworks: Racial Trauma, Health, and Microaggressions
Racial paranoia, microaggressions, and racial socialization begin to suggest an understanding of the interpersonal phenomenon and may assist with developing protective factors against perceptions of racial discrimination. There are many health implications that may also serve as a foundational framework for understanding the impact of microaggressions. For example, Lebron et al., (2015) suggests health implications as a result of accumulated acts of racial discrimination. Lebron et al., (2015, p. 10) suggests that the trauma of racism is:

“the result of chattel slavery, Jim Crow, lynching, de facto and legal discrimination, oppression, employment discrimination, poverty, social alienation, hate crimes, demonization of non-white cultures, discriminatory child welfare practices, mass incarceration, unjust imprisonment, racially biased justice systems, mandatory sentencing, inhumane treatment within societal institutions, unethical medical experiments on ethnic and racial minorities, forced sterilization of Black women, the school to prison pipeline, inferior schools and education, the achievement gap, the sequestering of students in special education programs, racial housing segregation, inhumane housing conditions, and discriminatory policing.”

Lebron et al., (2015) suggests that a culturally responsive form of assessment is needed to address some of the outcomes associated with the trauma of racism among people of color. In addition, further is known on potential health implications of historical trauma and the trauma of racism. For example, the terms Sojourner Syndrome and John Henryism have been utilized to described adverse health outcomes for African American men and women (Harburg et al., 1973; James, 1993; Kasl and Cobb 1970; Cobb and Rose, 1973; Lekan 2009; Mullings 2002, 2005).

The adverse outcomes resulted in higher levels of blood pressure and hypertension for African Americans living in low opportunity communities when compared to White Americans. Leary (2005) also named a construct called Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome which infers an impact of historical trauma and racism across intergenerational behaviors and attitudes among African Americans. Similarly, a study conducted by Ong et al., (2017) found that Asian
American college students that experienced racial macroaggressions had a greater level of sleep disturbances. The foundational frameworks of critical race theory, intersectionality, racial paranoia, racial socialization, and racial trauma inform a conversation that can be analyzed at the institutional and interactional level. The scope of this literature review will primarily focus on the interactional perceptions of discrimination informed by the aforementioned foundational theoretical frameworks. The racial microaggressions framework is an emerging area of research that has a focus on the interactional and nuanced experiences of discrimination.

1.4 Microaggressions Framework

The microaggressions framework was originally developed by Harvard University, psychiatrist and professor, Chester Pierce to describe a perceived experience of discrimination among African Americans in the United States (Sue, 2010). Per Pierce, “these are subtle, innocuous, preconscious, or unconscious degradations, and putdowns, often kinetic but capable of being verbal and/or kinetic” and “In and of itself a microaggression may seem harmless, but the cumulative burden of a lifetime of microaggression can theoretically contribute to diminished mortality, augmented morbidity, and flattened confidence” (Pierce 1995, p. 281). Over time, microaggressions theory has also been applied to historically marginalized groups based on religious identity, gender, disability, and members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities (Sue, 2010).

The racial microaggressions framework is described as a perceived dynamic where people of color may experience racial indignities, insults, and mistreatment on a consistent basis (Torres-Harding, Andrade, Romero Diaz, 2012). Derald Sue, a counseling psychologist and researcher at Columbia University describes racial microaggressions as manifesting an unintended or intended behavior that communicates deprecating or adverse racial insults aimed at a specific
group (Sue, et al., 2007). Sue, et al., (2007) provides descriptive categories of the experiences related to racial microaggressions as microinsults, microinvalidations, and microassaults. Microinsults describe a communication message of inferiority of the other by making generalized assumptions related to an individual’s racial and ethnic identity.

Microinvalidations are the active and passive dismissal of a person’s shared experience regarding racial discrimination or the experience of offensiveness. Microassaults tends to align with the overt experiences of racism and generalizations around an individual’s race (Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Davidoff, Sriken, 2014). Sue (2010) also indicates that microaggressions can be perpetuated and experienced by macro level policies, laws, and institutional regulation. Environmental microaggressions is the term used to describe the macro level implications of causing racial slights and experiences among people of color (Wong et al., 2014). Sue et al., (2007) offered a taxonomy of these lived experiences among many people of color across institutions in the United States. Derald Sue’s exploration and description of the term also align with other descriptive categories developed in the academy. There are many terms such as modern racism, symbolic racism, and aversive racism to describe similar experiences (McConahay 1986; Sears 1988; Dovidio et al., 2002). Sue et al., (2007) taxonomy indicates the challenge of empirically recording racial microaggression due to their indirect and insensible nature. Sue et al., (2007) recommends future research considering the challenges in order to understand the long-term implications of such indignities on the well-being of individuals. Sue et al., (2007) also recommends understanding the impact of microaggressions among people of color, prevention and awareness interventions among perpetrators, coping strategies for those encountering racial microaggressions, and the development of psychometric tools and scales to measure racial microaggressions.
1.5 Impact of Racial Microaggressions

Wong et al., (2014) review of the literature cites many studies on the adverse impact of deliberate forms of discrimination on the well-being of individuals. Discrimination takes a toll on the health and well-being of the individual that perceives discrimination and is found to have association with lower self-regard, depression, anxiety, high blood pressure, and respiratory challenges (Clark et al., 1999; Hatzenbuehler 2009; Herek 2009; Carter 2007; Harrell et al., 2003; Mays et al., 2007; Gee et al., 2007). Wong et al., (2014) suggests that the ambiguity of racial discrimination may also have an impact on the psychological well-being of individuals. Gee et al., (2007), highlights a relationship between adverse health effects and perceived racial discrimination while controlling for other stressors such as poverty. Sue et al, (2009) also suggests that experiencing racial microaggressions may occur more frequently than overt racial discrimination. Wong et al., (2014) also describes further need for scholarship to understand this refined description of racial microaggressions.

Less is known of this developing area of research though it is suggested to be a more common dynamic perceived by people of color (Wong et al., 2014; Sue et al., 2009). The impact of racial microaggressions has been documented in counseling and therapeutic settings (Constantine 2007; Crawford 2011; Owen et al., 2011; Schoultz et al, 2011; Sue et al., 2008), in supervision (Barnes 2011; Beaumont 2010; Constantine and Sue 2007), and community settings (Burdgey 2011; De Oliveira Braga Lopez 2011; Huber 2011; Nadal 2008; Nadal et al, 2011; Rivera et al, 2010; Sue et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2011). In addition, there has been research conducted among academic and university classroom settings (Cartwright et al., 2009; Constantine et al., 2008; Sue et al., 2008, 2009, 2011; Blume et al., 2012; Gomez et al., 2011;
Granger 2011; Grier-Reed 2010; Robinson 2011; Saudeda 2010; Smith et al., 2011; Sue and Constantine 2007; Sue et al., 2009, 2010; Torres et al., 2010; Yasso et al., 2009).

Wong et al., (2014) indicates that the literature and the academy is beginning to document the perception of racial microaggressions however, further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of this described phenomenon. Wong et al., (2014) cites one study (Torres et al., 2010) that aimed at describing the long-term impact of racial microaggressions on an individual’s well-being. The academy fosters an opportunity to have a scholarly discussion and to critique the scholarship of racial microaggressions. The critiques intent is to objectively address social justice values and to encourage rigor in the scholarship.

1.6 Critiques of Microaggressions Framework and Methodological Issues

The microaggressions framework has many areas that can be critiqued, analyzed, and evaluated for rigor utilizing the scientific method. The literature on intersectionality surfaces as a natural critique and provides an opportunity for integration with the microaggressions framework. The concept of intersectionality departs from race-alone microaggressions theory and provides additional analysis for inquiry on various identities (Collins, 1986; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Delgado 1995, 2002). The concept of intersectionality offers a tool of scholarship for considering the impact of various identities when they are racialized (Caldwell, 1995; Crenshaw, 1989; Delgado 1995). For example, exploring the intersection of race and gender, race and sexual preference, race and class are all variables that may experience the description of microaggressions in a very specific manner. The academy must continue to engage in the process of reflecting the lived experiences of the privileged and oppressed. It is critical to seek out the unheard voices to refine the interventions and also being mindful of the dynamic changes that are constantly taking place in the environment being researched. The concept of intersectionality
looks at the whole individual and the various identities associated with the person (Cole, 2009). The notion of intersectionality looks at the role of class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and various identities when examining how an individual perceives him or herself in relation to others (Cole, 2009).

Cole (2009) makes the argument that integrating intersectionality in social science research does not require a new method of inquiry rather, it requires that the researcher analyze the implications and impact of the classification. Cole (2009) describes the dynamic of intersecting identities as complex and requiring extensive contextual exploration by the researcher. The concept of intersectionality might enhance the scholarship on the microaggressions framework because it poses individual grouping and hierarchy of different experiences related to identity. There is an argument that these experiences are not isolated to an individual’s racial category of identity however, they are all involved in an interactional process. Cole (2009) suggests that researchers should strengthen their analysis by highlighting what categories or classifications are included in the narrative of a group being studied. Cole (2009) suggests that such analysis allows the researcher to assess identities that are not named or voiced in the scholarship. Cole (2009) offers a critique that is rooted in strength and encourages the researcher to pose critical questions within the scholarship. Cole (2009) encourages asking questions related to the usefulness of the knowledge revealed in the research and to also analyze who is not included or missing from the research.

The scholars engaging in the conversation and aiming to understand the microaggressions framework have also began to explore the intersectional nature of racial microaggressions. Nadal, et al, (2015) explored multiple identities and described the phenomenon of intersectional microaggressions in most recent research. Intersectional microaggressions is a dynamic that
includes individual experiences of multiple slights because of multiple identities (Nadal, Davidoff, et al, 2015). Nadal et al, (2015) recommends further research on this dynamic and describes a perception of intersectional microaggressions as experiences based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and religion.

Wong et al., (2014) analysis of the research and critiques on microaggressions state that the initial methods that were utilized in the inquiry were focus groups which included African Americans, Asian Americans, and other marginalized groups (e.g. LGBTQ). Focus groups were also utilized to further understand the impact on the well-being and mental health of individuals. Wong et al., (2014) indicates that the studies were qualitative in order to obtain a rich understanding of this growing area of research on the microaggressions framework. Padgett (2008) describes qualitative research as a useful research method for understanding the context of lived experiences among complex dynamics and constructs. Wong et al., (2014) also cites various studies focusing on multiracial backgrounds (Clark et al., 2011; Johnson and Nadal 2010; Nadal et al., 2011) and race ethnic/racial categories outside the United States (Burdsey, 2011; De Oliverira Braga Lopez, 2011). However, the recent studies indicate unique experiences of microaggressions based on racial and ethnic identification (Johnson and Nadal, 2010; Nadal, 2008, Nadal Et al., 2011; Rivera et al., 2010). Continued depth to multiple identities and experiences is an area that requires more scholarship and attention in the research related to the microaggressions framework.

Wong et al., (2014) also unveils that the existing research has limitations on the sample and length of studies that were conducted throughout the exploration and analysis of the microaggressions framework. For example, Wong et al., (2014) cites samples sizes of 5 (Allen 2010; Henfield 2011; Robinson 2011) to 97 (Torres et al., 2010). Wong et al., (2014) also
highlights that a significant number of the research participants have been among university students, faculty, and often involved within the field of psychology or related social/emotional disciplines. The research participants also had prior knowledge of racial microaggressions. These methodological outcomes establishes a new opportunity to continue to unfold a deeper understanding of the microaggressions framework in a variety of contexts, ages, and populations. As scholars, having an understanding of such methodological limitations opens new directions for future research and better understanding of racial microaggressions across the United States.

There are also several scales that have been constructed to explore, understand, and decipher the impact of racial microaggressions at a larger scope (Wong et al., 2014). The scales are the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (Nadal, 2011), Racial Microaggressions Scale (Torres-Harding et al., 2012), and scales based on other groups that have experienced oppression such as the transgender population and other members of the LGBT community. Wong et al., (2014) cites (Sue et al., (2007) and (Watkins et al., 2010; Yasso et al., 2009) as an argument for using qualitative methods (e.g. focus groups) for developing and understanding new constructs for scale formation on racial microaggressions. However, Wong et al., (2014) describes a very important limitation on psychometrics developed around self-reporting and recalling such experiences. It also limits with capturing the immediate effects of racial microaggressions. Broadening the scope, setting, and population can enhance our intervention on this interactional dynamic that has impacted the well-being of those studied. The exploration of protective factors (e.g. social support) and relationship with other indicators of well-being (e.g. self-esteem) is also needed.

The conceptual lens of stereotype threat may also be an area of further correlational analysis with racial microaggressions. Steele and Aronson (1995) describe the experience of
stereotype threat as “being at risk of confirming, as a self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one’s group” (p. 797). Steele & Aronson (1995) found that Black students underperformed when exposed to a stereotype related to their academic aptitude and performed high when not exposed to the stereotype. Steele & Aronson (1995) state that “whenever African American students perform an explicitly scholastic or intellectual task; they face the threat of confirming or being judged by a negative societal stereotype – a suspicion – about their groups intellectual ability and competence” (p. 797). Steele & Aronson (1995) found that the stereotype threat interfered with the student’s ability to perform well academically. Specifically, Steele & Aronson (1995) found that it interfered with their performance on standardized tests. Exploring the relationship among these constructs may expand the conversation on the impact of racial microaggressions on everyday life.

The following critiques inform how the microaggressions framework may be enhanced by the replication of previous studies, continued development of psychometrics to understand racial microaggressions on a larger scale, exploring the impact on multiple identities that intersect, recruiting larger representative sample sizes, utilization of various methodologies to understand a constantly changing dynamic experienced by many groups, exploring protective factors and relationship with other variables that describe well-being, and further understanding the role of the perpetrator. In addition, a potential opportunity for future research is the impact of what Sue (2010) describes as macro, environmental microaggressions, or institutional oppression. The impact of racial microaggressions across universities within the United States continues to be a key point of discussion within the scholarship. The well-being of students is essential for academic progress and fostering a healthy environment for success. Self-esteem is a critical variable of importance when conceptualizing success.
1.7 Empirical Findings on Self Esteem, Microaggressions, and College Students

The concept of self-esteem is one of the most researched constructs in the field of psychology and social/emotional scholarship. A healthy self-esteem includes several elements which incorporate acceptance, respect, and the ability to feel good when faced with critical challenges (Maherswari and Maheswari, 2016). The literature suggest that self-esteem promotes thoughts and feelings of worth and competence which may encourage a positive view of an individual’s internal self-regard (Nadal, et al., 2014). Pyszczynski, et al., (2004) reports that high levels of self-esteem have been found to reduce anxiety and defensive behaviors correlated with anxiety. In addition, high levels of self-esteem also promote adaptive coping for individuals across age groups when encountered with emotional stressors (Pyszczynski, 2004).

Crocker (2004) has found that college students that base their self-worth on external approval and academic success experience greater levels of stress, risk for substance abuse, eating disorders, interpersonal conflicts, and academic challenges. However, students that focused on internal self-worth experienced better health outcomes related to alcohol/substance use and academic performance. The concept of self-esteem has also been cited as mitigating risk factors related to suicidality and issues of safety (Sharaf, Thompson, and Walsh, 2009). Nadal et al., (2014) cites several studies that suggest a correlation between self-esteem and discrimination (Harries Britt, Valrie, Kurtz-Cortes, & Rowley, 2007; Seaton, Caldwell, Sellers, and Jackson, 2010; Umana-Taylor & Updegraff, 2006). The correlation suggests that individuals that experienced high levels of discrimination also experience lower self-esteem. It’s important to highlight that the studies focused on overt discrimination and did not explore the experience of microaggressions (Nadal et al., 2014). Racial microaggressions have been reported to be experienced as nuanced and subtle messages that may promote feelings of inferiority among
people of color (Nadal, et al., 2014). There is an opportunity for further study and exploration on the potential relationship of self-esteem and racial/ethnic microaggressions.

The literature suggests that historically marginalized groups may experience higher levels of low self-esteem because of discrimination based on their identity (Aneshensel, 2009; Meyer, 2003). Nadal et al, (2014) suggests that the distress associated with being a member of a historically marginalized identity may have an impact on an individual’s self-esteem. Nadal et al., (2010) shares a study of Filipino students in the United States that experienced a sense of disconnectedness in their institution due to perceived microaggressions and overt racism. However, Nadal et al., (2014) highlights the study by Umana-Taylor and Updegraf (2006) where Latino students that experienced overt discrimination based on their race were able to increase their positive self-regard and mental health.

Nadal et al., (2014) conducted a study with 225 undergraduate students that indicated low self-esteem because of perceived experiences of racial microaggressions. Nadal et al., (2014) study suggests that a higher level of racial microaggressions experienced by college students of color may have impacted the lower level of self-esteem in the study. Nadal et al., (2014) implies that racial microaggressions experienced among the college student population may have a negative impact on their internal self-regard. The Nadal et al., (2014) study also suggests that the impact of low self-esteem based on experiencing racial microaggressions was experienced in a higher education context.

Nadal et al., (2014) suggests future directions for research include further exploration of the racial microaggressions and self-esteem variables. In addition, The Nadal et al., (2014) study offers the academy an opportunity to continue exploring the relationships between the two constructs. Nadal et al., (2014) highlights that further research is needed across various higher
education contexts due to the limited scope of sampling students in a northeast urban campus and at a predominantly minority university. Nadal et al., (2014) also suggests further research of other possible mediating and protective variables (e.g. social support). The authors suggest that further exploration of protective variables may mitigate the impact of low self-esteem among college students that experience racial microaggressions.

1.8 Social Support, Microaggressions, and College Students

Social support is a concept that consists of an individual’s perception that a network or person will provide assistance in times of need (Marshall et al., 2014). Social support networks may include a significant other, family member, and friend that offers additional layers of support to college students (House et al., 1988). Hefner & Eisenberg, (2009) reports that historically marginalized populations experience social isolation when compared to the traditional college student population. Student wellness and mental health is a critical issue in higher education (Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009). The increased onset of social emotional challenges and likelihood of social isolation among marginalized communities in university settings makes it even more important to develop support networks that promote wellness. In addition, college students that experience mental health challenges are expected to have long term effects across the lifespan which impacts employment, academic success, and relationships (Anlgst, 1996; Weitzman 2004; Kessler, et al., 1995; Ettner et al., 1997; Kessler et al., 1988).

Merianos et al., (2013) reference Mattanah et al., (2010) by stating that constructs of social support and self-esteem are interconnected and suggest that they may serve as protective factors for students at risk for mental illness. In addition, social support has been found as a moderating factor for social emotional challenges that impact the college student population (e.g. depression and anxiety) (Wang, et al., 2014). Overall, Merianos et al., (2013) suggests that
building social support and connectedness on college campuses may assist with improving student well-being. Thoits (1995) also reports that social support networks have been found to promote wellbeing and positive self-regard.

Nadal et al., (2014) suggests that further research is needed to foster understanding around how social support may mediate low self-esteem for students that experience racial microaggressions. Sue et al., (2010) reveals some of the shared experiences and the detriment for college students that experience the microinsults, microinvalidations, and microassaults of microaggressions. Sue et al., (2010) also suggests that such dynamics are prevalent among the college student population and university settings. Exploring potential protective variables such as social support are critical for historically marginalized groups that transition into college.

1.9 Conclusion

The following was a literature review on racial-ethnic microagressions, self-esteem, and perceived social support. This analysis presented foundational theoretical frameworks of critical race theory, intersectionality, racial paranoia, and racial socialization. An overview of the microaggressions framework was also presented as the primary source of analysis for interactional perceptions of discrimination. In addition, the impact of racial microaggressions, counter frameworks, critiques, and methodological issues with the framework were offered. This literature review also outlined some of the latest empirical research on self-esteem, social support, and microaggressions among the college student population. Overall, the emerging literature suggests the need for further study of protective factors to promote well-being among college students. Specifically, the exploration of protective factors (e.g. social support) for social emotional challenges such as self-esteem among students of color that have experienced racial microaggressions.
Introduction

Racial microaggressions are covert forms of racial discrimination that have been suggested to impact the well-being of people of color across the United States (Sue et al, 2007). The citizens of the United States remain in an ongoing struggle of systemic oppression and racial inequality. The systemic oppression, inequality, and violence is most evident in the outcomes and well-being of historically marginalized citizens (Bonilla Silva, 2010; Delgado, 1995; Lebron et al, 2015). An examination of any institution in the United States unveils inequitable outcomes for people of color within housing, employment, education, incarceration, and community violence (Bonilla Silva, 2010; Delgado 1995; Lebron et al., 2015). The civil rights movement pushed the social and moral consciousness of the citizens of the United States with laws that aimed to protect the most vulnerable (Bonilla Silva, 2010; Delgado 1995; Lebron et al., 2015). Yet, a nuanced racial bias lingers that communicates messages of internalized racial superiority and inferiority.

A 2016 Pew Research Center Poll reports that about 4 in 10 Black Americans are doubtful that the U.S. will ever achieve racial equality (Pew Social Trends, 2016). The majority of White Americans surveyed in the 2016 Pew Research poll viewed racism as an individual rather than a systemic problem. In addition, 71% of Black Americans surveyed reported discrimination based on their race/ethnicity and were twice as likely to report racial discrimination as a root cause to their upward mobility (Pew Social Trends, 2016). Institutional leaders and scholars must continue to understand the symptomology embedded in the power of
overt racism, institutional racism, and racial microaggressions in the United States. Having a universal language may help with developing protective factors and tools for antiracist organizing across the country.

Institutions of higher education offer a unique hub for the development of scholarship and praxis to counter some of our most intractable problems. Inevitably, systemic racism and racial microaggressions are also perpetuated throughout colleges/universities in the United States. Caplan and Ford (2014) indicate that in interviews and surveying of over 200 students at four year universities, expressed experiences of racial microaggressions and discrimination. Another Pew Research Center poll indicates that over 81% of African Americans that have attended college reported experiencing discrimination, 55% reported that “people acted as if they were suspicious” of them, and 52% stated that “people acted as if they thought” they weren’t smart (Anderson, 2016).

The term racial microaggressions was coined by psychiatrist Chester Peirce (1978) whom describes this dynamic as statements and nuanced behaviors that imply inferiority toward people of color. The concept of racial microaggressions has also been studied among other historically marginalized groups and identities (e.g. women, religion, disability, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender) (Nadal, 2011). Microaggressions research among college students has been found to impact academic success, mental health, and well-being (McCabe, 2009; Solórzano, et al, 2000; Sue et al, 2009; Torres et al, 2010). Nadal et al., (2014) cites quantitative and qualitative studies (Harper et el, 2011; Watkins et al, 2010; Yosso et al, 2009) with reported findings of racial microaggressions experienced by African American and Latinx students on college campuses.

Nadal et al., (2014) reports study participants reported experiencing racial microaggressions from students, faculty, and staff across institutions of higher education. Nadal et
al., (2014) builds on the notion that the concept of self is developed in a social context. Nadal et al., (2014) also suggests racial microaggressions may cause an internalized negative self-concept. In addition, Steele (1997) describes a dynamic called stereotype threat where stereotyping based on identity resulted in detrimental outcomes for marginalized groups. Nadal et al., (2014) and Smith et al., (2011) suggests that such stereotyping may further isolate students and may impact their academic performance. Nadal et al., (2014) recruited a college student sample of \( N = 225 \) students that experienced lower self-esteem as a result of experiencing racial microaggressions. Nadal et al., (2014) suggests that self-esteem may serve as a protective factor for college students that experience racial microaggressions. For example, Nadal et al., (2014) cites the Sharaf et al., (2009) study on greater self-esteem being correlated with low suicidality and hopelessness. Nadal et al., (2014) suggest additional research on the relationship between self-esteem and racial microaggressions. Nadal et al., (2014) also cites (Harris et al., 2007; Seaton et al., 2010; Umana-Taylor and Updegraff, 2006) indicating an inverse relationship between overt discrimination and self-esteem however, they suggests that not enough is known about subtle forms of discrimination and self-esteem in higher education. In addition, Nadal et al., (2014) also suggests that exploring additional protective factors (e.g. social support) may advance the scholarship on addressing the impact of racial microaggressions for college students of color.

2.1 Purpose of the Study

Promoting optimal self-esteem and social support networks is essential for college students to experience healthy social/emotional development and academic performance in higher education. Wong et al., (2014) highlights several opportunities for research on the impact of racial microaggressions across our institutions. Wong et al., (2014) encourages the need for further research on protective factors that may mitigate the impact of racial microaggressions.
Nadal et al., (2014) also underlines the adverse impact of microaggressions on college students and the need for the academy to understand the impact across various racial/ethnic groups. In addition, Nadal et al., (2014) outlines the gap in research on the relationship between subtle forms of discrimination and self-esteem. The vast majority of the research cited by Nadal et al., (2014) focuses on overt discrimination and its relationship with self-esteem. Exploring protective factors such as self-esteem and social support may promote overall academic success and healthy emotional functioning among college students of color.

2.2 Research Questions

Due to the need for more research on racial microaggressions, its impact on self-esteem, and its possible relationship with social support, the study utilized a mixed method pilot study. A pilot study is a small-scale study utilized before a full-scale research project (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). A mixed method study is a combination of quantitative and qualitative designs that is commonly used in social research (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). The mixed method pilot study explored the relationship between perceived social support, self-esteem, and racial microaggressions. Below are the research questions:

1. To what extent does perceived social support impact self-esteem for college students that experience racial microaggressions?
2. To what extent do racial microaggressions impact self-esteem?
3. What is the perceived social support, self-esteem, and experiences of racial microaggressions among college students in the United States?

2.3 Method

Participants
A total of 86 participants were recruited for the mixed method pilot study. A total of 81 students participated in the quantitative part of the study and a total of 5 students participated in the qualitative method. The study included undergraduate, graduate, and professional students across the United States. All other students were excluded from participation and analysis in this study. There were 51 females (68%) and 23 males (31%) that answered the identifiable question for the quantitative section. The qualitative section of the mixed method pilot study had 3 females and 2 male participants. The range in participant age was the following: 28 (38%) were 18-19, 2 (3%) were 20-21, 14 (19%) were 22-24, 30 (41%) were 25-above. The racial/ethnic makeup of the participants are as follows: 18 (22%) identified as Black or African American, 5 (6%) as Black or Afro-Latinx, 31 (37%) as Latino/Hispanic, 11 (13%) as an Asian/Pacific Islander, 3 (4%) as Multiracial, 0 (0%) as Native American/American Indian, 12 (14%) as White, 3 (4%) in the not listed category (2 Middle Eastern and 1 Indo-Guyanese). White participants were not initially included in the study however, Nadal et al., (2014) cites previous literature that White people may experience microaggressions however, at a lower rate than people of color.

The majority of the students were attending a college/university in Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania. There was one participant attending a university in a southern state (Florida), one student attending mid-western state university (Michigan), and one in a western state (California). The students were undergraduate, graduate, or professional students at the following 12 colleges/universities: Academy of Art University (San Francisco, CA), Daytona State College (Daytona Beach, FL), Harvard University (Cambridge, MA), Michigan Technological University (Houghton, MI), New York University (New York, NY), Pennsylvania State University (State College, PA), Quinnipiac University (Hamden, CT), Sacred Heart University (Fairfield, CT), State University of New York at Albany (Albany, NY), University of
Connecticut (Storrs, CT), University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, PA), and Yale University (New Haven, CT). The research participant class status: 27 (36%) were Freshman, 3 (4%) were Sophomore, 3 (3%) were a Junior, 2 (2%) were a Senior, 40 (51%) were graduate students, 1 (1%) a professional student, 2 (2%) a continuing education student. There were 36 (48%) of participants that reported to be the first member of their family to attend college.

**Recruitment**

This study began recruitment for research participants after receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Pennsylvania. The majority of research participants were recruited through university listservs and college student organizations in the United States. Undergraduate, graduate, and continuing professional students were recruited and encouraged others to participate with a snowball sampling technique (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). Additional outreach recruitment efforts were executed through social media platforms such as facebook, twitter, and instagram. A recruitment poster for semi structured interviews was also distributed to various college and university departments via email. Semi structured interviews are a qualitative research method of data collection and requires contact with participants to obtain their experiences on a research topic or question (Padget, 2008).

**Measures**

*Demographic Questionnaire and Interview Guide.* The research participants completed a demographic questionnaire with discreet categories. The demographic questionnaire was completed for both the quantitative and qualitative sections of the research. The discreet categories include: Sex/Gender, Race/Ethnicity, Class Status, Age Range, Marital Status, First generation college student, in-state/out-state, employment, household income, religion, veteran status, NCCA Athlete, international student, commuter/on campus, fraternity/sorority, and
school/major of study. There were categories that also allowed the students to self-identify and it was also optional to complete/omit any question in the quantitative and qualitative sections of the study. The option to self-identity was offered due to Nadal et al., (2014) suggesting that solely offering discreet categories may also unfold as a microaggression. Offering the additional options for self-identification may have mitigated any potential feelings of isolation or microaggressions (Nadal et al, 2014). An interview guide was developed for the qualitative section of the study and utilized for semi structured interviews (Padget, 2008). The interview questions probed student experiences on campus, probed lives experiences and definitions of the variables (e.g. social support, self-esteem, and racial microaggressions). The interview guide had some of the following questions: (tell me about your experiences on campus?), (what does a racial microaggressions mean to you?), (how do you seek support on campus?), (how do you feel confident on campus?).

*Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale (REMS).* The Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale was developed to measure subtle forms of discrimination. The scales have 45 items on experiences of racial/ethnic microaggressions (Nadal, 2011). The participants report if they have experienced the subtle forms of discrimination in the past 6 months (Nadal, 2011). The REMS also has six subscales which include: 1: Assumptions of Inferiority, 2: Second-Class Citizen and Assumptions of Criminality, 3: Microinvalidations, 4: Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity, 5: Environmental Microaggressions, 6: Workplace/School Microaggressions (Nadal, 2011). Examples of subscale questions include: 1: (“Someone assumed that I was poor because of my race.”), 2: (“Someone clenched her/his purse or wallet upon seeing me because of my race.”), 3: (“Someone told me that she or he was color-blind.”), 4: (“Someone told me that all people in my racial group look alike.”), 5: (“I observed people of my race in prominent positions
at my workplace or school.”), 6: (“My opinion was overlooked in a group discussion because of my race.”) (Nadal, 2011, p. 474). Nadal et al., (2014, p. 466) indicates that REMS scale has “moderate correlation” with the Racism and Life Experiences Scale-Brief and “strong positive correlation” with the Daily Life Experiences-Frequency Scale in (Nadal, 2011).

**Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.** The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was utilized to measure self-esteem among the college students surveyed. The scales ask questions such as “at times I think I am no good at all” and “I take a positive attitude toward myself” (Rosenberg, 1965). This scale follows a Likert format such as agreed, neutral, and disagree. The scale has also demonstrated reliability with college samples (Nadal et al., 2014; Rosenberg, 1965).

**Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support.** The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support was included in the quantitative section of the study to measure perceived social support. The scale asks questions like “there is a special person who is around when I am in need” and “I can talk about my problems with my friend” (Zimet et al., 1988). The questions are also answered in a Likert format (e.g. very strongly agree, strongly agree). The scale has high internal consistency, validity, reliability, and utility for measuring support from family, friends, and significant others (Canty-Mitchell & Zimet, 2000). The scale has also been utilized with multicultural populations and with adolescents.

**Procedure**

The scales and demographic questionnaire in this study were administered electronically via www.qualtrics.com. The research participants were provided with informed consent, then proceeded to complete the demographic questionnaire, and followed by the three scales. Each session lasted about 15 to 30 minutes for the quantitative section of the study. The participants could also stop at any time and the survey was anonymous. In addition, the survey did not collect
any identifying information (IP address, name, etc). The qualitative section of study included informed consent, completing a demographic questionnaire, and interview. The interviews ranged from 30-60 minutes. The participant interviews were recorded after the informed consent was obtained and the participant agreed to proceed.

2.4 Results

Quantitative Results

To get to the first set of results in this pilot study, the scales were scored, chi-square was conducted comparing non-completers, and a descriptive analysis was concluded. The results indicate that $N = 56$ out of $N = 81$ total cases completed the survey with the three scales. Overall, there was a 69% completion rate among the research participants in this pilot study. There were $N = 7$ participants that agreed to the informed consent however, did not answer any questions. There were $N = 15$ participants that agreed to the informed consent and answered the demographic questions and stopped at the first REMS question. Lastly, there were three that answered the demographic questions and stopped during and/or at the end of the REMS scale.

A chi-square analysis was conducted comparing the students that completed the survey and their reported demographic background. A chi-square analysis is a quantitative research method for analysis of correlation among variables (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). The results did not suggest any correlational differences between in/out of state, race/ethnicity, gender, first in their family to go to college, or hours worked per week. There was a correlational difference with commuter students much less likely to complete the survey. Those in the senior and freshman classes were much less likely to complete the survey. In addition, college students in the ages 18-19 were least likely to complete the survey when compared with the other age groups.
The analysis also explored corralational relationships among the constructs in the scales for this pilot study. This pilot study did not find a correlational relationship between many of the constructs. However, there were four constructs that demonstrated a strong correlational relationship in the study. The Support from Family construct and the Racial/Ethnic Microaggressions Scale – Second Class Citizen/Criminality subscale had a fairly weak and negative correlation. The fairly weak relationship suggests that the less family support a college student receives, makes it more likely that they will report second-class citizen/criminality due to their race/ethnicity. The construct of total support and self-esteem also had a positive and strong correlation. This relationship suggests that higher levels of total support predict higher levels of self-esteem. The construct on support from a significant other and self-esteem had a fairly weak and positive correlation among research participants.

There were also corralational relationships for the subscales in the same construct among participants. For example, second class/criminality and inferiority scale had a positive and strong correlation. The microinvalidation and inferiority subscales also had a strong and positive correlation. The relationship predicts that the experiences of second class/criminality and microinvalidation makes experiences of inferiority more likely. There were also fairly strong correlations between microinvalidations, exoticization/assumptions of similarity, and workplace/school microaggressions. The subscales of exoticization/assumption of similarity and inferiority also had a positive/strong correlation among the participants. Colleges students reporting on the scale also predict a very strong and positive correlation with workplace/school microaggressions and inferiority. Lastly, the results indicate a strong and positive relationship among the following subscales: workplace/school microaggressions with inferiority, second class citizen and assumptions of criminality, and exoticization/assumptions of similarity.
The Multidimensional Scale for Perceived Social Support also had subscales that were related to other subscales in the same construct. For example, the support from family subscale had a fairly strong and positive correlation with support from friends. The support from family and support from significant other also had a fairly strong and positive correlation among participants. In addition, the support from friends and support from significant other constructs had a strong/positive relationship in this pilot study.

Table 1: Quantitative Results – Chi-Square

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi Square analysis of completing the survey by class status</th>
<th>Continuing Education</th>
<th>Graduate Student</th>
<th>Professional Student</th>
<th>Senior</th>
<th>Sophomore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Completed Count</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>-7.60</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Residual</td>
<td>-0.70</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>-2.50</td>
<td>-0.70</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Count</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>-5.20</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>-0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Residual</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>-1.10</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>-0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi Square 26.21 (p=0.00)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Chi Square analysis of completing the survey by commuter status</th>
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<th>Commuter</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Residual</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Standardized Residual</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>74</td>
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</table>

Chi-Square 14.09 (p<0.00)

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Chi-Square 0.003 (p=0.96)

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Table 1: Quantitative Results – Chi-Square

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Table 3: Quantitative Results – Correlations

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Qualitative Results

There were a total of N = 5 semi structured interviews conducted in order to obtain descriptive perceptions and experiences related to social support, self-esteem, and microaggressions among undergraduate and graduate/professional students. The interviews were coded and a qualitative thematic analysis was applied in the process. A thematic analysis is a qualitative research method tool for deciphering themes within the data collected (Padget, 2008). The interviews resulted in four emergent codes which include: College Student Micro-Aggressive Experiences, Consequential Micro-Aggressive College Student Experiences, College Student Self-Esteem, and College Student Protective and Thriving Experiences.

The College Student Micro-Aggressive Experiences can be defined as nuanced or overt slights that infer messages of inferiority based on gender, sexual orientation, race, and expressed identity of undergraduate, graduate, and professional college students. This emergent theme was evident among all research participants in the semi structured interviews. The emergent theme and code also had subcodes. The subcodes include: Appearance and Look, Proximity and Fear, and Stereotypes and Jokes. Appearance and Look can be defined as a stressful encounter that projects derogatory slurs or violent language about a person’s physical feature based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and expressed identity. The subcode of Proximity and Fear is a gesture or expression that communicates stigmatized fright of an individual based on their gender, sexual orientation, and race, and expressed identity. The gesture or expression can be non-verbal or verbal. Stereotyped Jokes are nuanced or overt messages of inferiority communicated with tones of humor that results in perceived loss of dignity and promote an inaccurate/generalized view of a person based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or expressed identity.
The College Student Micro-Aggressive Experiences theme and subthemes were evident on the descriptive and challenging experiences that the students shared in the interviews. Many of the interview participants shared their appearance and look impacting their daily microaggressive experiences as college students. For example, a participant shared “…and back then you know they drew Black people…looking like monkeys, right? So…that’s what they did. They called it lazy town where it was just a rundown hick town...everybody was just in patches, torn up shirts.” The participant shared his experiences and depiction of descendants of the African diaspora being portrayed in a derogatory and offensive manner. One of the participants shared that their experiences with facial features and phenotype which resulted in daily perceived microaggressive experiences as a college student. For example, the participant shared “…I consider myself African American. I’m a dark skinned African American…and there are certain features that I have….and people search for them. They search for…okay, there’s something going on with your cheek bones, or the shape of your eyes, or your eyebrows, or the color of your hair, or the color of your eyes, or your lips, the shape of your lips. They're always looking for something else in the Blackness that I am.” One of the interview participants also shared their perception of othering based on their appearance and look. The research participant stated “they are always going to be like…who are you? You look a little different.” There was a common theme of othering and communicating assumptions of difference based on the appearance and look of the interview participants.

The college students interviewed also reported daily microaggressive experiences around the sub-theme of fear and proximity. The interview participants shared these perceptions and gestures of fear when they shared a space with someone in the community or college campus. For example, one participant reported “I remember when I was about to head into the elevator to
leave my dorm from my floor and head to class…and as I was waiting…well the door opened up and it was this guy and this girl. Both White….a couple….and there was no one else in there…and mind you, it’s kind of a decently sized elevator…plenty of room…so you know they didn't need to shimmy anywhere…but as soon as I stepped in, the white girl…she huddled back into the corner behind her boyfriend…and I'm just thinking okay…um that was really obvious.” In this case, the participant reports the experience of sharing an elevator and microaggressive gestures of fear being perceived.

A research participant also reported that “it just didn't occur to me until you know…I started realizing…just being around and walking around Chicago…and I’m pretty sure there were multiple…multiple…multiple times…to where there would be people you know…hugging their purses.” The participant is sharing another example of fear being perceived or communicated with a gesture of holding on to one’s purse or bag. In addition, another participant shared this perceived suspicion or fear while occupying a seat on the Chicago subway system. The participant reported “…and while I was talking to her I noticed those two cops, they were looking at me. Just staring at me. Can I help you? You're staring at me the whole ride. Nobody else. Me…and I had my book bag. I had my notepad…so, did she. I even had the book we all had. But we all got stared down.” Lastly, an additional sub-theme of stereotyping and jokes emerged among the research participants. The participant shared stereotypes and jokes that inferred perceived messages of inferiority. For example, a participant shared “I know where this is going…and then he said ‘oh come on, just let me say it please.’ Like they were begging me to let them make a joke about Black people loving fried chicken.”

The Consequential Micro-Aggressive College Student Experiences code can be defined as the residual or immediate impact of nuanced or overt smears based on identity among
undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. The subcodes include: Multiple Marginalization’s, Racial Defeat and Exhaustion, and followed by Isolation and Invisibility. Multiple marginalization’s can be defined as the experience of nuanced or overt slights and derogatory messages based on multiple expressed identities. The messages are based on generalizations and an inaccurate stereotype about an individual or group of people. The subcode of racial defeat and exhaustion is defined as the belief or experience that racially stressful encounters and outcomes will never change. The marginalized person accepts and concludes that it’s not worth correcting or communicating the impact of nuanced or overt derogatory slights. The sub-code of isolation and invisibility is described as an undergraduate, graduate, or professional students experience that they are the only representative of their identity group in a setting. The experience may imply that no one can acknowledge their unique contribution or identity. This experience may infer disconnection from a dominant culture or community. The subthemes that emerged under the College Student Micro-Aggressive Experiences code inferred messages of inferiority and otherness among the research participants.

The theme of multiple marginalization’s emerged from experiencing multiple slights based on more than one historically marginalized identity. For example, one participant shared “…there’s like a chip on your shoulder. Like I remember my mom telling me when I was a kid no matter where you're going, you need to remember you have two strikes against you. She was telling me this…like all of the time. Like you have two strikes against you. She's like…one you're Black…and two you’re a woman.” In this example, the participant shares her experience based on her gender and racial/ethnic identity. The participant shares this message being communicated by her parents. Participants also shared their affective responses as a consequence of perceived slights based on having multiple identities. For example, a research participant
shared “even other people around me might be passionate about it…but me wanting to check myself and restrain myself because I don't want to be portrayed as an angry Black female.” There were other participants that shared multiple identity slights based on being a member of their racial/ethnic identity and also being a member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender community. For example, “I feel that there’s a lot of fetishizing that goes along with being a Black gay person in the gay community” and “the way that it’s going, the LGBT community, oh my God it’s just crap…there’s racism inside the community as well.”

The participants also shared experiences that resulted in an emerging sub-theme of racial defeat and exhaustion. The participants share a sense of being tired and exhausted as a consequence of the nuanced racial slights perceived on a regular basis. For example, one participant shared “it means that I’m just tired of wasting my breath…and you know I’m tired of wasting my breath…” In addition, another participant shared that “…it feels exhausting. It feels exhausting…very exhausting…aside from just college itself, it feels pretty exhausting because…it was just exhausting to try and not give them any ammunition to feel like I’m that stereotype.”

Participants also verbalized a subtheme of isolation and invisibility as a consequence of slights experienced by college students. A qualitative research participant reported, “…two things…it feels like oh wow I’m proud of myself that I’m a person of color in this space…like that’s a good thing….and also, I feel like…kind of bad about it…like wow…I’m the only person of color, where are ya’ll?” and “I think my initial reaction was, especially with the campus that I was on, which was not a super diverse campus…you notice that there are not many people like you.” The two examples described experiences where the participants felt like the only one and experienced isolation by not witnessing representation of the same racial/ethnic group on a
college campus. In addition, there was perception of being dismissed and isolated based on one’s racial and ethnic category. For example, a research participant shared “so with me, I had to check myself...like is this really happening?...I was already being dismissed from the get.”

The code of College Student Self-Esteem can be defined as the perception of self-worth, value, competence, and dignity among undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. There was a subcode of Self-Doubt and Belonging which is defined as the reservation that one is capable of mastering or succeeding in a task or presenting challenge. The belief that one should not occupy or share a space with a group of people. The emergent sub theme of self-doubt and belonging was evident in the college student participant’s narrative of self-regard and belief that they belong in the university environment. For example, a participant shared “…I really didn't think that it was going to happen…there were times where I would get so paranoid…what if I fail, what if they don't approve?...what if it doesn't happen?...a whole bunch of negative what if’s.” This example, offers the contemplative nature verbalized by the participant and the belief of belonging in the university/college that she attended. For example, “…I think there is a level intimidation and you question whether or not your qualified to be there…I don't know if that’s normal for everyone but I definitely question whether or not I’m really qualified to do this…Am I really qualified to be here?...Am I as smart and intelligent…as all of those other people that are here?” In this case, the participant is questioning her ability and qualification of sharing the same learning environment with students that do not have the same racial and ethnic identity.

The final code for the qualitative results section is the College Student Protective and Thriving Experiences. The code is defined as descriptive elements that promote success and confidence among college students that also experience nuanced/overt slight and indignities based on their expressed identity. The subcodes include: Unfolding Confidence, Stereotype
Accountability, Racial Pride and Support, Family Support, Non-Traditional Communal Support, and Spirituality and Faith. Unfolding confidence is an emergent experience of self-assurance and ability to succeed for college students that have encountered slights/indignities based on their expressed identity. Stereotype accountability is a historically marginalized persons’ challenge to slights and indignities based on expressed identities. The person may communicate discomfort or discuss the perceived implication of the slight/indignity. The racial pride and support sub-code is an experience of value for one’s identity group and a sense of solidarity for the group to thrive. A sense of encouragement is experienced within one’s identity group and support is also extended.

The family support subcode is perceived support from a family member. The student experiences the family member as an individual that has well wishes for their success and may include gestures of support. Lastly, the non-traditional communal support subcode is an individual or group that is not related to the student and offers support in times of need. This individual or group may provide regular support or be experienced as someone that would be accessible in times of need. The spirituality and faith subcode is defined as reliance on a greater source or goal that is perceived as much larger than a presenting challenging circumstance.

The College Student Protective and Thriving Experiences emerged from the various narratives shared by the qualitative research participants. For example, the participants shared that the protective and thriving experiences emerged over time and were built on past experiences of success. One participant shared, “I wanted to experience what I could do, and I started finding myself then…not to mention when I started experiencing more outside, I started being on the road to a healthier lifestyle.” In this example, the participant described an experience that involved a gradual understanding of his passion. There was another participant
that shared “I was just not happy about myself…and people would tell me…yeah I can draw, I know that…but I want to see myself other than my drawing talent. I need to see myself as this person that I wish to be…rather than getting everyone else’s opinions” and “like I said in the beginning…I did not believe in myself as much as I do now.” Similar examples emerged from participants which included, “…so I think my confidence comes from the fact that I’ve been successful prior to this…and it will probably continue as long as I continue being successful” and “so yes, I let myself down, I let them down, initially, but I know I’m capable of doing this, and I’m going to do it…I’m not just going to do it, I’m gonna kill it…I’m gonna be the best at whatever I do.” The examples and verbal accounts of the participants indicated a protective experience despite the micro-aggressive perceptions and low self-esteem.

The qualitative research participants also shared an emerging theme of stereotype accountability. The theme emerged as a protective factor among the college student participants and implies a sense of communicating the impact of perceived indignities and slights. One participant stated, “well I’m very sarcastic, and I definitely would have handled it with some humor and making that person feel as uncomfortable as I am…I’ve learned that I can’t be the only uncomfortable person in a situation…and I won’t be the only uncomfortable person in a situation…so, I will put that back on that person…I will put it back on him…and I would say like…‘oh I think my skin tone is quite beautiful…I don't think it needs to be analyzed…but let’s talk about yours’...or ‘how would you feel?’…I would ask that person how would you feel.” Another participant reported...“I felt like I always had to have them pump the breaks before they even started the ignition...If you get what I’m saying” and also stated “it was just more calling them out on their bullshit.” The emergent theme of stereotype accountability seems to include a conversation or gesture of pointing out the perceived dynamic in the interactional encounter.
The college students also described an emergent sub-theme of racial pride and support as a protective factor for success. One of the participants described, “they're all of color except one…they're adamant about helping me succeed, looking for me to succeed…encouraging me…they are also very successful in academia and in their professional lives…so, they’ve given me a lot of advice…willingly, without conditions…it’s still pretty difficult for me to ask for help, but I know that I could ask for help.” In this description, there was a sense of solidarity that emerged from the interviews and described by the participants as an indicator of their success despite experiencing the microaggressive slights. A participant also stated that “we go to each other for support…so the experience now…I feel is a sense of relief…a little bit…because they are also minorities…so having the struggle of where we came from, our backgrounds, and when you look at our peers even again in this program, there tends to be more of a percentage of Caucasian students.”

The undergraduate, graduate, and professional students also implied sub-themes that include family support and non-traditional communal supports that served as protective factor for their success. For example, a participant stated, “…and there were other times when I would even call my mom just saying…mom just stay on the phone with me…just stay on the phone with me…if anything happens, you heard everything that went down…just stay on the phone with me…that was a regular day…just like I’m coming out; I’m trying to get where I need to go” and “my mama would call 5 times a day at least…and there were times when I would get home sick because I didn't know anybody in Chicago.” In this example, the participants describe profiling and fear however, also reporting the parent as a protective factor in the moment. The family member maintained regular contact and served as a protective factor notwithstanding the distance.
The interview participants also described an emerging sub-theme of non-traditional communal supports. The participants described individuals such as the campus shuttle bus driver and friends that didn’t attend their university as sources of support. For example, one participant states “there was an African American man and a Haitian man that drove the shuttle from the parking lot to my campus…and every day…every day they would encourage me…every day they would check…and say how are things going” and also sharing that “…I think just them being supportive, and not being like oh you're worthless, how could you do this, or throwing me out, also encouraged me…like people are believing me and people are rooting for me.” These examples demonstrates a group of supports that are not family however, served as a steady experience of encouragement for the research participants. For example, one participant said, “I think my friends were much more supportive….because a lot of us were going through the same experiences even though we were at different colleges and in different places in our academic career…we were very much our own support…we would get together often weekly…people would come from different schools, and were would all get together at my parent’s house or the library.”

Lastly, the results also had an emergent protective sub theme of spirituality and faith among the interview participants. One of the participants stated, “I don't think I would have been able to do it…and I don't know if people who are not Christian identify with that or understand it, but I think even if you're not a Christian or believe in God, I think people can identify as having something that anchors you, helps you through moments and times when you feel like there are gaps in what you need to succeed” and “I know for me, my faith is what definitely got me through…I tell people all of the time, I am where I am, I have done what I have done, and it is only because of God…there were so many obstacles that came up.” In this case, the participant
described her religious identity however, described an internal self-regard that anchored them in times of needs. Another participant described this sub-theme by stating “when I feel connected spiritually to who I am, to life, for being in those spaces…because those spaces are intentionally encouraging and emoting leaders.”

2.5 Discussion

The current mixed method pilot study aimed to understand descriptive and correlational relationships between perceived social support, self-esteem, and racial microaggressions among college students in the United States. The results did not demonstrate a correlation among many of the constructs in this initial mixed method pilot study. However, the results indicated a correlation among four constructs. First, the results demonstrated a fairly strong and positive correlation between total support and self-esteem. The results infer that a higher amount of total support may result in higher perceptions of self-esteem among college students. Additionally, there is a fairly strong and positive correlation between family support and self-esteem. The correlation predicts that more support from family infers higher self-esteem among undergraduate, graduate, and professional students.

The results indicate a number of subscales that had a correlation within the same construct in the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale. For example, the microinvalidation subscale had a fairly strong and positive correlation with inferiority, second class citizen/assumptions of criminality, and work/school microaggressions. The results also suggests that the work/school microaggressions construct has a positive and strong correlation with inferiority, second class citizen/criminality, and exoticism/similarity subscales. The construct of racial microaggressions did not demonstrate a significant correlation with the other constructs in the quantitative section of the study. The weak correlation may have been due to a small sample
size and the completion rate among research participants. However, the results inferred a fairly weak and negative correlation among support from family and the second-class citizen/assumptions of criminality construct. The correlation infers that lower levels of family support predicts more experiences of second class citizens/assumptions of criminality. The results from the qualitative interview data had a theme where the family was utilized as a support when assumptions of criminality were experienced. The students that participated in the qualitative interviews did share experiences of low self-regard and confidence that may have been due to racial microaggressions. The semi structured interviews indicate elements of microaggressions that were based on Fear and Proximity, Stereotyping and Jokes, and the Appearance and Look of the research participants. The three descriptive subcodes can be compared with some of the subscales in the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale. For example, the participants theme of fear and proximity may correlate with the second-class citizenship and inferiority subscale. Similarly, the Appearance and Look and Stereotyping and Jokes subcodes may correlate with the constructs of assumption of inferiority and exoticization/assumptions of similarity.

The qualitative results of this pilot study also described some of the emerging themes and codes related to the consequences of experiencing racial microaggressions. The results indicate emergent subcodes which include Multiple Marginalization’s, Racial Defeat and Exhaustion, and Isolation and Invisibility. The results indicate that the students may have experienced microaggressions based on more than one identity with Multiple Marginalization’s. In addition, there was a sense of fatigue and exhaustion from the multiple encounters of microaggressions among the qualitative research participants. The results also describe that the students expressed low recognition and isolation due to the stigma associated with their identity or racial makeup.
The students reported the subcode of self-doubt and belonging due their racial and ethnic background.

The qualitative interview results also inferred many protective factors for students that have expressed experiences of microaggressions. The emerging subcodes were Unfolding Confidence, Stereotype Accountability, Racial Pride and Support, Family Support, Non-Traditional Student/Communal Support, and Spirituality/Faith. The students shared strengths in naming and verbalizing the impact of an offensive racial or identity encounter. The students also expressed a sense of solidarity in their racial make-up and identity group at their schools.

The qualitative results infer that the students also received supports from non-traditional people that are not necessarily providing the course instruction (e.g. campus shuttle bus driver). The participants also shared experiences of their families being a source of confidence, motivation, and support in times of need. In addition, the qualitative results also described an unfolding confidence that was developed over time and strengthened by past successes. Lastly, the qualitative interview participants also shared spiritual and religious reliance in times of need. The interview participants reported experiencing a belief that was much more profound and bigger than their circumstance as a protective factor for self-regard, confidence, and perceptions of success in college.

2.5.1 Discussion – Integrating the Quantitative & Qualitative

The mixed method pilot study provides an opportunity for scholars to examine the constructs that have been developed and the integration of new language in order to understand the impact of racial microaggressions on college student well-being. The quantitative section of the study demonstrated a correlation within the same measure of the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale. The racial microaggressions subscale of experiencing messages of
second class citizen and assumptions of criminality had a positive correlation with the inferiority subscale. The qualitative code of college student micro-aggressive experiences and subcodes of stereotypes/jokes and proximity/fear also implied perceptions of inferiority among college students. The quantitative and qualitative may imply that assumptions of fear and criminality may impact perceptions of inferiority among college students in the United States.

Perceptions of inferiority were also correlated with such subscales as microinvalidations, exoticization/assumptions of similarity, and workplace/school microaggressions. The interrelationships may infer that the participants perceived experiences of inferiority based on microinvalidations, assumptions of similarity, and context specific microaggressions at work or school. The qualitative results also had the emergent code of consequential micro-aggressive college student experiences which included the subcodes of isolation/invisibility and racial defeat/exhaustion. There are similarities among these quantitative constructs and qualitative codes. It can be inferred that the college students had perceived experiences of inferiority, invisibility, and isolation as a result of ignoring their individual lived experiences. Assumptions of similarity at work or school may have communicated perceptions of isolation and invisibility as well.

The results also demonstrate a correlation between assumptions of similarity in the work/school context and experiences of microinvalidations. This may infer that the college student participants experienced work/school microaggressions however, a prevalence for perceiving their racial identity was experienced as universal and not contextual. It also aligns with perceived feelings of isolation and invisibility described in the qualitative results. In addition, it appears that students reported perceived experiences of microinvalidations which had a correlation with many of the constructs in the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale.
(REMS). The microinvalidation correlation and alignment with many of the constructs may imply that the study participants may have perceived isolated experiences which in turn may impact their well-being. There was a subscode in the qualitative interview that emerged by a participant sharing perceptions of racial defeat and exhaustion as a result of perceiving racial microaggressions. However, it is important to highlight that the quantitative results did not show a strong correlation with the self-esteem variable and racial microaggressions variable.

The mixed method pilot study results reveals a correlation among some of the subscales in the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. There was a strong correlation among support from family and significant others. This finding infers that the participants that perceived greater levels of support from family were also likely to perceive support from a significant other. The qualitative results also had emerging codes and subcodes that indicated protective factors of support that were perceived by the college students. The codes include the college student protective/thriving experiences and family support/non-traditional/communal support. The interview participants shared perceptions of family serving as the main source of support however, there were participants that also shared multiple sources of support. The participants also shared that the sources of support served as a coping tool for managing their perceptions of self-esteem and racial microaggressions. This aligns with the quantitative correlation of family support resulting in lower perceptions of Second Class Citizen and Assumptions of Criminality.

2.6 Implications for Undergraduate, Graduate, and Professional Students

The nature of this study involving undergraduate, graduate, and professional students suggests many implications in the field of higher education. First, it was evident that college students experience racial microaggressions and variance in self-esteem across institutions of
higher education in the United States. A sense of urgency to mitigating such experiences is an important factor among higher education professionals (Nadal, et al., 2014). Second, it was also evident that the college students experienced many supports off campus during their transition however, many did not identify many university supports. It would be important for college professionals to continue exploring student engagement strategies that encourage social/emotional and physical well-being. Nadal, et al., (2014) cites (Chioqueta & Stiles, 2007; Sharaf et al., 2009; Umana-Taylor & Updegraff, 2006) highlighting that a greater level of self-esteem has been associated with mitigating suicide among college/university students. The exploration of social/emotional well-being is particularly important for underrepresented groups across universities in the United States (Nadal, et al., 2014).

The qualitative interview participants did report protective factors and supportive themes that may mitigate low self-regard among the college student population. The construct of microinvalidations often involves denial of difference and alienation among marginalized groups (Sue, 2010). However, providing a space to process such experiences may offer support for students that experience stressful encounters related to a historically marginalized identity (Nadal et al., 2014; Stevenson, 2014). Nadal et al., 2014 also cites Steele (1997) “stereotype threat” as having an impact on student perceptions of self. The impact of stereotype threat may effect college student social/emotional well-being and perceptions of success (Nadal et al., 2014).

Establishing a campus climate that has a historical and institutional understanding of racism and oppression in the United States is key to set a tone of dialogue, healing, and practice of processing stressful encounters related to various identities. It may be helpful to start with racism and include other identities that may often have a greater magnitude of detrimental outcomes when racialized. The results indicated some experiences of multiple stressful
encounters that were associated with more than one historically marginalized identity (Nadal, et al., 2015). Nadal et al., (2015) describes “intersectional microaggressions” as the experience of unintentional or intentional slurs and slights based on more than one identity. Lastly, it would be important for higher education professionals to hone in on contextual experiences of microaggressions based on the student population and location of the university. For example, the majority of the research participants were from predominantly white institutions which may encounter contextual microaggressions when compared to students on campuses with a more diverse makeup (Nadal et al., 2014). Nadal et al., (2014) also suggests that involving White professionals and students in the process may be helpful with fostering a partnership to counter the impact of microaggressions.

The social/emotional and physical health of college students is essential in order for them to function well academically (Nadal et al., 2014). It is critical to further explore these correlational relationships that offer a depth of understanding and intervention of college student success in the field of higher education (Nadal et al., 2014; Yosso et al, 2009). It is essential to offer protective experiences for the whole student throughout their university tenure. Steele & Aronson (1995) offer an analysis of students that experienced poor academic outcomes as a result of racial discrimination. Higher education professionals and the academy must uphold this commitment with action and scholarship on the impact of interactional perceptions of discrimination on academic success (Nadal et al., 2014).

2.7 Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Research Directions

There are some limitations to this current mixed method pilot study. First, the majority of the participants reported attending school in a northeastern state and the institutions were predominantly White. The majority of the participants are also attending a university in an Urban
setting across the United States. This may result in the sample not being generalized to all undergraduate, graduate, and professional students in the United States. Secondly, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale, and Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions are self-reporting tools that attempt to measure self-esteem, racial microaggressions and social support; however, these constructs may not describe authentic experiences or true lived perceptions among the participants (Dixon-Roman, 2017; Nadal et al., 2014, Yosso et al., 2009). Dixon-Roman (2017) also infers that there is inherent possibility that the constructs and psychometric tools that are utilized in the academy may not always reflect the reality of the populations that it intends to understand. Critical Race Theory is also vigilant of such psychometric research tools and analytics (Yosso, et al., 2009). The Dixon-Roman (2017) analysis is an essential contribution to the scholarship and fundamental when analyzing experiences of oppression among historically marginalized groups (Yosso et al., 2009).

Thirdly, pilot studies often have a small sample size which may not meet sufficient power for generalization to the larger population. In addition, all of the students completed an electronic qualtrics survey with all of the scales in the same order which creates a potential for a priming effect of the Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale, followed by the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, and Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale. The priming effect may be a possibility as the students completed the REMS, followed by the MSPSS, which may have impacted the RSC numbers. Lastly, the statistical analysis conducted was purely descriptive and correlational among the variables. Conducting a mediator analysis of variance, analysis of variance, or regression analysis might be able to provide a better understanding of the relationships and protective factors among the constructs. It may also go further than chi-square with understanding multivariate and directional relationships among the variables. The sample
size for the qualitative interviews was also small and limited to the contextual experiences of the research participants. Lastly, the researcher did not include a secondary coder in the qualitative analysis process which may have been helpful with deciphering additional themes and mitigating potential bias (Padget, 2008).

There are various directions for future research that may result from this study. Wong et al., (2014) and Sue et al., (2007) suggests studying protective factors for college students that experience racial microaggressions. It was evident that total support, family support, and support from a significant other had fairly strong and positive correlations with self-esteem. This study may encourage further research on social support as a potential mediating factor for self-esteem. This pilot study is also an initial attempt of encouraging more mixed method research approaches to enhance an understanding and potential prevention science of such experiences in higher education (Wong et al., 2014). Future research is also essential with understanding if the perception of self-esteem is racialized. Further research is also needed to explore the correlation between racial microaggressions, academic success, and well-being among college students.

This study also demonstrates the importance of having a large sample size and the potential benefit of measuring racial microaggressions for a longer period of time (Wong et al., 2014). In addition, there may be some opportunities to understand the impact of multiple microaggressions on the well-being of college students. Nadal et al., (2014) also suggests additional research on the impact of racial microaggressions on different ethnic/racial groups. This study did not demonstrate a significant correlation between the self-esteem and racial microaggression construct however, Nadal et al., (2014) suggests further study in this area as self-esteem has been correlated with social/emotional well-being.
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Appendix A: Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988)

Instructions: We are interested in how you feel about the following statements. Read each statement carefully. Indicate how you feel about each statement.

  Circle the “1” if you **Very Strongly Disagree**
  Circle the “2” if you **Strongly Disagree**
  Circle the “3” if you **Mildly Disagree**
  Circle the “4” if you are **Neutral**
  Circle the “5” if you **Mildly Agree**
  Circle the “6” if you **Strongly Agree**
  Circle the “7” if you **Very Strongly Agree**

1. There is a special person who is around when I am in need.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  SO
2. There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  SO
3. My family really tries to help me.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Fam
4. I get the emotional help and support I need from my family.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Fam
5. I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  SO
6. My friends really try to help me.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Fri
7. I can count on my friends when things go wrong.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Fri
8. I can talk about my problems with my family.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Fam
9. I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Fri
10. There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  SO
11. My family is willing to help me make decisions.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Fam
12. I can talk about my problems with my friends.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Fri

The items tended to divide into factor groups relating to the source of the social support, namely family (Fam), friends (Fri) or significant other (SO).
Appendix B: Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

The scale is a ten item Likert scale with items answered on a four point scale - from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The original sample for which the scale was developed consisted of 5,024 High School Juniors and Seniors from 10 randomly selected schools in New York State.

Instructions: Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. If you strongly agree, circle SA. If you agree with the statement, circle A. If you disagree, circle D. If you strongly disagree, circle SD.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. SA A D SD
2.* At times, I think I am no good at all. SA A D SD
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities. SA A D SD
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people. SA A D SD
5.* I feel I do not have much to be proud of. SA A D SD
6.* I certainly feel useless at times. SA A D SD
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others. SA A D SD
8.* I wish I could have more respect for myself. SA A D SD
9.* All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. SA A D SD
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself. SA A D SD

Scoring: SA=3, A=2, D=1, SD=0. Items with an asterisk are reverse scored, that is, SA=0, A=1, D=2, SD=3. Sum the scores for the 10 items. The higher the score, the higher the self esteem.

The scale may be used without explicit permission. The author's family, however, would like to be kept informed of its use:

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University of Maryland
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College Park, MD 20742-1315
Appendix C: Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale

Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS)
Kevin L. Nadal, Ph.D.
John Jay College of Criminal Justice- City University of New York

Instructions: Think about your experiences with race. Please read each item and think of how many times this event has happened to you in the PAST SIX MONTHS.

0 = I did not experience this event.
1 = I experienced this event 1 time in the past six months.
2 = I experienced this event 2 times in the past six months.
3 = I experienced this event 3 times in the past six months.
4 = I experienced this event 4 times in the past six months.
5 = I experienced this event 5 or more times.

1. I was ignored at school or at work because of my race.
2. Someone’s body language showed they were scared of me, because of my race.
3. Someone assumed that I spoke a language other than English.
4. I was told that I should not complain about race.
5. Someone assumed that I grew up in a particular neighborhood because of my race.
6. Someone avoided walking near me on the street because of my race.
7. Someone told me that she or he was colorblind.
8. Someone avoided sitting next to me in a public space (e.g., restaurants, movie theaters, subways, buses) because of my race.
9. Someone assumed that I would not be intelligent because of my race.
10. I was told that I complain about race too much.
11. I received substandard service in stores compared to customers of other racial groups.
12. I observed people of my race in prominent positions at my workplace or school.
13. Someone wanted to date me only because of my race.
14. I was told that people of all racial groups experience the same obstacles.
15. My opinion was overlooked in a group discussion because of my race.
16. Someone assumed that my work would be inferior to people of other racial groups.
17. Someone acted surprised at my scholastic or professional success because of my race.
18. I observed that people of my race were the CEOs of major corporations.
19. I observed people of my race portrayed positively on television.
20. Someone did not believe me when I told them I was born in the US.
21. Someone assumed that I would not be educated because of my race.
22. Someone told me that I was “articulate” after she/he assumed I wouldn’t be.
23. Someone told me that all people in my racial group are all the same.
24. I observed people of my race portrayed positively in magazines.
25. An employer or co-worker was unfriendly or unwelcoming toward me because of my race.
26. I was told that people of color do not experience racism anymore.
27. Someone told me that they “don’t see color.”
28. I read popular books or magazines in which a majority of contributions featured people from my racial group.
29. Someone asked me to teach them words in my “native language."
30. Someone told me that they do not see race.
31. Someone clenched her/his purse or wallet upon seeing me because of my race.
32. Someone assumed that I would have a lower education because of my race.
33. Someone of a different racial group has stated that there is no difference between the two of us.
34. Someone assumed that I would physically hurt them because of my race.
35. Someone assumed that I ate foods associated with my race/culture every day.
36. Someone assumed that I held a lower paying job because of my race.
37. I observed people of my race portrayed positively in movies.
38. Someone assumed that I was poor because of my race.
39. Someone told me that people should not think about race anymore.
40. Someone avoided eye contact with me because of my race.
41. I observed that someone of my race is a government official in my state
42. Someone told me that all people in my racial group look alike.
43. Someone objectified one of my physical features because of my race.
44. An employer or co-worker treated me differently than White co-workers.
45. Someone assumed that I speak similar languages to other people in my race.
Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS)

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1. To calculate the REMS Total score:
   a. Convert items 12, 18, 19, 24, 28, 37, 41 into inverse scores. (e.g., if “5” is marked, convert to “1.” If “4” is marked, convert to “2,” etc.).
   b. Including the converted scores, add ALL scores for all 45 items for the total score.
   c. Divide the total score by 45 to obtain the scale score.

2. To calculate the REMS Subscale scores:
   a. Assumptions of Inferiority Subscale:
      Add items #s 5, 9, 17, 21, 22, 32, 36, 38
      Divide the total by 8 to obtain the subscale score.
   
   b. Second-Class Citizen and Assumptions of Criminality Subscale:
      Add items #s 2, 6, 8, 11, 31, 34, 40
      Divide the total by 7 to obtain the subscale score.
   
   c. Microinvalidations Subscale:
      Add items #s 4, 7, 10, 14, 26, 27, 30, 33, 39
      Divide the total by 9 to obtain the subscale score.
   
   d. Exoticization and Assumptions of Similarity Subscale:
      Add items #s 3, 13, 20, 23, 29, 35, 42, 43, 45
      Divide the total by 9 to obtain the scale score.
   
   e. Environmental Microaggressions Subscale:
      Add items #s 12, 18, 19, 24, 28, 37, 41
      Divide the total by 7 to obtain the scale score.
   
   f. Workplace and School Microaggressions Subscale:
      Add items #s 1, 15, 16, 25, 44
      Divide the total by 7 to obtain the scale score.
Appendix D: Semi Structured Interview Guide

1. Tell me about your experiences on campus?
   a. Tell me about a regular day on campus?
      i. What’s your favorite place on campus?
      ii. Tell me about your friends and the people on campus?
   b. What has surprised you most about your college experience?

2. How does it feel to be a student of color on campus?
   a. In your opinion, what is the most difficult thing that you have experienced as a student of color in the classroom or with peers?

3. Tell me about your experiences with racial microaggressions on campus?
   a. How would you describe racial microaggression?
      i. What does a racial microaggression mean to you?
   b. Where have you experienced racial microaggressions on campus?
      i. What did the situation make you think and feel?
      ii. How did you manage the situation?
   c. Are there specific people that you may have perceived racial microaggressions from?

4. How do you seek support on campus?
   a. Tell me about a place on campus that makes you feel supported?
   b. Tell about about the person that you rely on the most since your transition to college?
   c. What has helped you succeed in college?
   d. How do you feel confident on campus?