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## “Have a Seat at our Table: Uncovering the Experiences of Black Students Attending a ‘Racially Diverse’ University”

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Have a Seat at our Table: Uncovering the Experiences of Black Students Attending a ‘Racially  
Diverse’ University

by

Diamond Briggs

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of the requirements for the degree of  
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## ABSTRACT

Recently, the diversity rates at universities in the United States have been increasing (Ortiz-Frontera 2013). With more minorities enrolling into predominantly white institutions (PWIs), one might infer that this signals a major step of progression for the United States. However, it is essential to understand the experiences and challenges that minorities may face when attending these institutions. Understanding these challenges are important because they are often minimized and ignored due to the ambiguity of microaggressions. This can be harmful for Black students psychologically and may impact their self confidence in many ways. In many instances, Black students face many forms of subtle racism, such as, microaggressions. Microaggressions can be defined as the subtle and dismissible insults that whites tend to inflict on people of color unconsciously and sometimes consciously (Pierce, 1974). Through conducting 12 in-depth semi-structured interviews with a sample of Black students attending a southeastern university. I aimed to answer the following questions: 1) What types of microaggressions do Black students face while attending a more racially diverse university? and 2) To what extent, and in what ways do students manage their emotions in response to microaggressions? Ultimately, I have found that students experience many forms of microaggressions. The main types of microaggressions that were experienced included: feelings of exclusion, tokenism, being stereotyped, and institutional neglect. Lastly, I found that students employ a combination of emotion work strategies in order to protect themselves from these insults, and to stay productive and successful. Policy implications to support students of color and future directions for research are discussed.

## CHAPTER ONE: CALL TO ORDER

Overall, black students experience microaggressions on a daily basis. However, these struggles tend to be overlooked due to statistics that suggest that Blacks are achieving more than ever before. For instance, studies suggest that Black women represent the largest racial minority group to receive educational degrees both in undergraduate and graduate school (Reynolds-Dobbs, Thomas, & Harrison, 2008). Although this is an outstanding accomplishment, it tends to minimize the everyday experiences that Black women face while they are striving toward receiving educational degrees. Others have also suggested that they experience higher and more frequent incidents of microaggressions while attending universities (Ortiz- Frontera 2013).

As for my study, I am interested in how black male and female students experience microaggressions. In addition to completing coursework, engaging in social activities and possibly taking on part-time jobs, I am interested in how students also have to take on a work load of emotion management. When researchers think about the types of work that students must complete as college students, they tend to focus less on the amount of emotion work involved. Being students of color along with possessing other marginalized identities, students are subject to subtle insensitive comments, insults and even explicit forms of racism and discrimination. Finding mechanisms in order to identify and mitigate these issues can be difficult for students. Students of color may also try to avoid being characterized as overly sensitive or overly aggressive and this can certainly cause students to engage in mental battles when trying to manage their emotions and the emotions of others.

My research questions are as follow: 1) What types of microaggressions do black students face while attending racially diverse institutions? 2) To what extent, and in what ways do students manage their emotions to cope with these experiences? I aim to answer these questions by analyzing 12 in-depth semi-structured interviews with a sample of black students attending a southeastern university. In addition, I asked the students that I interviewed to carry a personal journal for a week. Within the week, I asked students to jot down any microaggressions they had experienced during that day, how they reacted, and after reflecting; what they would have done differently at that particular moment.

### ***Microaggressions***

Chester Pierce (1974) first introduced the term “microaggression” in the 1970s in order to describe one form of modern day racism that is covert and subtle. He described it as the subtle and dismissible insults that whites tend to inflict on people of color unconsciously and sometimes consciously (Pierce, 1974). It is interesting and worth examining how these subtle and innocuous offenses have such a dramatic and threatening impact on the lives of many African Americans and other members of disadvantaged groups. Although blatant and overt forms of racism have been prohibited, many contemporary scholars have argued that a new form of racism has emerged (Bonilla Silva, 2008). Bonilla- Silva (2008, 132) states, “New racism practices maintains white privilege, and, unlike those typical of Jim Crow, tend to be slippery, institutional, and apparently nonracial.” Modern day racism and discrimination have become more covert and subtle, which makes it a lot more difficult to pinpoint and solve. Chester Pierce insisted that it is the insidious, hard to identify, subtle racist injuries that we must pay attention to if we are to understand and combat racism (Pierce, 1974).

## ***Microaggressions in Higher Education***

Since 1974, researchers have been studying microaggressions in a variety of public settings. While analyzing a school psychology program at a predominantly white institution, Sue and his colleagues (Sue & Capodilupo, 2008; Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007) found many cases of microaggressions being directed toward students of color. They defined microaggressions as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (2008, 273). Microaggressions have also been defined as “stunning automatic acts of disregard that stem from unconscious attitudes of white superiority and constitute a verification of black inferiority” (Vega, 2015).

It is important to research microaggressions in public spaces. However, for the purpose of this study I am focusing on college campuses. College campuses are an interesting place to examine due to the great amount of social interaction that tends to occur in classrooms, residence halls, student organization meetings, etc. Therefore, it is imperative and of interest to understand how students of color experience, cope with, and/or internalize these microaggressions, particularly in predominantly white spaces.

Scholars have studied the different forms of microaggressions that students of color tend to face on a daily basis on college campuses inside and outside of the classroom (Harwood et al., 2012, Smith et al., 2011, McCabe, 2009). Daniel Solórzano, Miguel Ceja and Tara Yosso (2000) examined how racial microaggressions influence the collegiate racial climate. For example, many African American students felt as if they were invisible on campus, especially in the classroom (Solórzano et al., 2000). They found that in class, being the numerical and disempowered

minority, made it easier for professors to disregard their concerns. Solórzano et al. (2000) also found that African Americans felt unwanted outside of the classroom as well. “Whether inside or outside the classroom, racial microaggressions within academic spaces are filtered through layers of racial stereotypes” (Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000). It is important to bring attention to this new form of racism that has become invisible. Black students often have to question themselves and their feelings. Constantly questioning oneself can cause students to lack self-confidence and this may also increase anxiety. In addition, this may minimize the experience of Black students to the point where they become accustomed to these implicit forms of racism. It is also crucial to unpack and understand how well-intentioned individuals may play a major role in causing students to feel uncomfortable, even though they may be unaware of it.

Reynolds-Dobbs et al. (2008) argued that in the US, many tend to believe that the increase of diversity in schools and graduation rates among minority groups equates to this idea of racial progression and equality. However, research shows that there are deeper issues that need to be examined. Conflating diversity with equality creates a universal idea that success and happiness go hand in hand with numerical outcomes. Therefore, when researchers think about student success, numerical outcomes are the focus and the students’ actual experiences are less focused on. In other words, when thinking about student success, the general public tends to think about graduation rates and this allows the general public to dismiss the lived experience of the student as a contributing factor to success. Minikel-Lacocque (2012) argued that too much emphasis and focus are put on numerical outcomes of success such as grade point averages and the rates of college acceptance and graduation. However, these numbers tend to say nothing about the stressful experiences that many Black students face at these institutions. It is interesting that Black women



represent the largest female minority group to receive educational degrees; but they also experience higher and more frequent incidents of microaggressions (Ortiz- Frontera, 2013).

### *Types of Microaggressions*

It is essential to understand how Black students experience microaggressions while attending white institutions. Sue and his colleagues (Sue & Capodilupo, 2008) developed a taxonomy of racial microaggressions that tend to occur on college campuses. They categorized microaggressions in three main groups. The three categories included microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations. Microassaults refer to the verbal or nonverbal behavior aimed at hurting someone. Microinsults refer to the subtly demeaning snubs or dismissive looks and gestures that are often unconscious. Microinvalidations refer to the minimizing or denying of the racialized experiences of people of color. They found that black participants experienced more microaggressions in general, and these were related to assumptions of inferiority followed by microinvalidations (2008, 26). Similarly, Holder, Jackson, and Ponterotto (2015) found similar patterns of racial microaggressions while examining Black corporate women in the workplace. They found that black corporate women deal with microaggressions coded as: environmental manifestations, stereotypes of black women and assumed universality of the black experience. These forms of microaggressions are examples of microinvalidations. Environmental manifestations referred to the lack of representation of black women and minorities at senior level positions. This sets up black women to feel uncomfortable in such settings. Stereotypes of black women consisted of assumptions being made that black women are intellectually inferior and not deserving of authority. As a result of this, black women often had to overcompensate, prove themselves

and validate their experience and expertise in order to gain credibility. Assumed universality of the black experience consisted of colleagues assuming that black women are a monolithic racial group in which every member shares the same experiences, opinions, and interests (Holder et al., 2015). These forms of microaggressions have a detrimental impact on the identity and self-esteem of black women (Holder et al., 2015). Consequently, it is helpful to examine these same themes within the educational experience where black women are the minority in a white context. Coping with these various forms of microaggressions that subliminally and overtly threaten a black woman's sense of self and belonging can be overwhelming for black female students in white spaces.

### ***Coping with Microaggressions***

Coping refers to the actions people take on to protect themselves from being psychologically harmed by life strains (Pearling & Schooler, 1978). Many black students experience microaggressions while attending predominantly white institutions (Holder et al., 2015). Given the amount of distress, black students need to develop a range of coping strategies in order to avoid feeling lower levels of belongingness to the college setting (Ortiz-Frontera, 2013).

Experiencing racism certainly has destructive effects on black students. There is a substantial amount of psychological and emotional harm that goes into coping with racism and microaggressions (Smith et al., 2011). Smith and his colleagues found that as educational attainment increases it is associated with a higher level of MEES (mundane and extreme environmental stress) resulting from racial microaggressions. They also found that societal problems have

large influences in MEES across all educational levels. Lastly, they found that for college graduates, both racial microaggressions and societal problems contribute approximately 40% of mundane stress (75). Solórzano et al. (2010) examined how microaggressions affected the campus climate and they found that many of the black female students felt a sense of discouragement, frustration, and exhaustion resulting from coping with racial microaggressions. In addition to this, many of the African American students felt that this impacted their academic performance (Solórzano et al., 2010).

Andrade Jr. (2013) identified popular coping strategies that black students employ in order to protect themselves from racial microaggressions: use of emotional support, use of instrumental support, religion, acceptance, planning, and venting. This shows that Blacks relied more on their support network to get through any troubles they had. Andrade Jr. (2013) considered these five strategies to be positive because they found ways to understand their position, relate to others who have experienced the same issues and help them get through difficult times. However, he was more interested and worried about how students coped negatively. Coping negatively referred to letting the negative feelings stemming from microaggressions build up without opening up about it, remaining silent, and trying to ignore microaggressions. Ultimately, this led to an increase in college-dropout rates and mental illnesses for black students (Andrade Jr., 2013). Lewis et al. (2013) found that the black women in her study employed five different coping strategies to deal with racial microaggressions: 1) Using one's voice as power, 2) Resisting Eurocentric standards, 3) Leaning on one's support network, 4) Becoming a black superwoman and, 5) Becoming desensitized and escaping. They considered the first two coping strategies to be resistance strategies because the black women went against the dominant culture of the school. The third coping strategy was considered a collective coping strategy because these

women relied on one another to deal with the pressures of racism. The last two consisted of self-protecting coping strategies because in both cases the women tried to shield themselves from the negative feelings of microaggressions. Ultimately, the researchers found that these black students used a combination of these strategies and picked the battles in which they should employ one based on the contextual situation. Holder et al. (2015) found that “cognitive reactions included addressing the perpetrator in an indirect manner in an attempt to convey awareness of the microaggressive slight while at the same time not being perceived as someone who complains or is aggressive” (172). They also found that many of their participants avoided responding to microaggressions because it would make them seem sensitive and fragile to the perpetrator who believes that they did nothing offensive. In the previous studies, it seems as if the women had to decipher whether they should feel offended or not (Andrade Jr., 2013; Holder et al., 2015). In both studies, the women had to decide what coping mechanism would work more efficiently based on the contextual situation. This suggests that black female students must engage in a great amount of work while dealing with racial microaggressions on a daily basis.

### ***Emotion Work***

Arlie Hochschild introduced the term “emotion work” in 1979. She defined emotion work as the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling (Hochschild, 1979). Hochschild posits that depending on the social context, individuals tend to manage their emotions through suppression and evoking; depending on what emotion is acceptable at that specific time and place. Suppression refers to keeping in how one feels instead of expressing it and evoking refers to expressing ones emotions. Hochschild also mentions that there are three types of

emotion work: cognitive, bodily, and expressive. Cognitive emotion work refers to attempting to change ideas and thoughts through changing the feelings associated with them, such as psyching oneself up. Bodily emotion work refers to attempting to change physical symptoms of emotion, such as shaking. Lastly, expressive emotion work refers to attempting to change one's emotional expression despite how they may feel inside. An example of expressive emotion work would be smiling although one feels angry inside. All three forms of emotion work show that in one way or another, individuals engage in some form of unpaid labor in order to alter their emotions to fit the feeling rules of the situation. Feeling rules can be defined as the social norms that outline how people should feel in particular situations (Hochschild, 1979). As a result, the goal of emotion work is to manage ones and others' emotions in order to be deemed acceptable in a given social context. Emotional labor focuses on how social actors manage their emotions within the workplace to comply with emotions expected on the job.

Many scholars have examined how emotional labor tends to be a part of many service jobs. Dieter Zapf (2001) examined how employees working in children's homes, kindergartens, hotels, banks, and call centers tend to engage in a great amount of emotion work. He argued that dealing with stressors from the job causes these workers to engage in emotional shaping. Workers must display desired emotions of the job at all times, even when they may feel the complete opposite. Emotion work has also been defined as the requirement to display organizationally desired emotions (Zapf 2001). This suggests that when workers enter the workplace, they are required to display a certain emotion that is appropriate for that particular social setting while disregarding or sheltering how they actually feel. For instance, most hosts are required to smile, be friendly and welcoming to each guest who enters a given restaurant. It is possible that the host could be angry, annoyed or feeling disrespected by some customers; however, no matter what

emotion they are feeling at the time, they are forced to manage their emotions in order to make others comfortable. In many service jobs, workers are encouraged to be responsible for their emotions as well as others. I argue that these same responsibilities that service workers have are similar to the same responsibilities that marginalized individuals have when managing emotions in a public place. However, I am interested in how this same emotion management may be displayed in situations where the individuals are not being paid.

Some researchers have examined how marginalized groups of people often feel the need to manage their own emotions in order to protect themselves (Aranda 2007; Greenfield 1991). Aranda (2007) examines how Puerto Ricans engage in a great amount of emotion work when interpreting their own experiences of mobility and integration, due to having multiple ties to places they call home. Ultimately, those who settle in the United States struggled more with their emotions and sense of belonging because of their marginalized racial identity. Issues with belonging and inclusion were complicated with experiences of U.S racism. Robert Greenfield (1991) examined how working class students managed their emotions in elite academic environments. He posited that those who experience stigma learn to hide their class background and emotions associated with it in order to manage their identity. People with marginalized identities also try to manage the emotions of others in order to make others feel comfortable (Loseke & Kusenbach, 2008; Cahill, 1994)

Social actors expect themselves, and are expected by others, to feel and act in ways defined as “emotionally competent” (Loseke & Kusenbach 2008). Emotionally competent can be defined as expressing emotions that are appropriate at a given time and place. Spencer E. Cahill (1994) examined how wheelchair users alter their emotions in order to make others feel comfortable. Cahill argues that wheelchair users fear being an embarrassing spectacle (Cahill, 302). In

addition, he argues that wheelchair users face embarrassing contingencies because the society in which they live tends to be unfamiliar with their use of mobility. Tristin K. Green (2013) examined how racial emotion is an outcome of microaggressions and tends to foster negative feelings in the workplace for minorities. She defines racial emotion as the emotion or emotions related to race that people experience when they engage in interracial interaction. She argues that minorities expect that they will be judged according to stereotypes and biases. Therefore, they try to manage feelings of fear, anger, frustration, and anxiety as a means to cope with feeling different and in order to avoid being stereotyped. In similar ways, black students may have to manage their emotions and the emotions of others while attending a predominately white institution.

Attending a predominantly white institution can be an emotional challenge for students of color (Wilkins 2012). In many ways students of color not only have to manage their emotions, but they also have to manage the emotions of others. Amy Wilkins (2012) examined African American male students attending predominantly white institutions. She found that the African American males in her study had a tendency to exhibit extraordinary emotional restraint. She further argued that black men constantly try to detach and distance themselves from the controlling image of the “angry black man.” The black men in her study were cautious of expressing any emotion that would consider them as being angry. This exemplifies how African American men managed their emotions as a mechanism to protect their self-image and identity for those who come into contact with them. It is important for them to restrain themselves so that they can preempt feelings of threat that whites may have in reaction to behaviors perceived as aligning with the “angry black male” stereotype. Understanding the emotion work that African American stu-

dents engage in while attending predominantly white institutions is of paramount importance; especially since they have to work extra hard to manage the emotions of others in order to fit the feeling rules of the institution, as well as trying to protect their self-identity.

Wolfe & Hallet (2008) mentioned that we should continue to move beyond studying emotion work in service sectors and focus more on researching emotion work in other interactive spaces, like college campuses. They also suggested that given the centrality of race in sociology and in American society more broadly, future research projects on emotion management should continue to address race. Roberts & Smith (2002) agreed that the classroom is an interesting site to examine and research emotion management and work due to the great amount of interaction and socialization.

### ***Contribution to the Literature***

I contribute to the literature on emotion work by examining how black students engage in emotion management through coping with microaggressions. In addition, I will also examine the extent to which the institution's racial demographics will impact students' experiences with microaggressions. I also plan to examine power, status, and exchange with regard to race in academic spaces through examining how black students make meaning out of coping with microaggressions at educational institutions (Meanwell, Wolfe & Hallet, 2008).



## **CHAPTER TWO: METHODS**

To address this project's research, I conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with a mixture of black undergraduate male and female students. The interviews were extremely casual and laid-back; mainly taking place within intimate study rooms located in the library. Conducting interviews in this particular space allowed students to open up and speak about personal issues surrounding racism and discrimination. Obtaining trust with my participants was a key factor in my methodological approach.

I recruited participants in two particular ways: 1) By contacting members from Black organizations on campus such as the Black Student Union, the Caribbean Student Association and the National Council for Negro Women at a southeastern university, and 2) By reaching out to and introducing my research agenda to an ISS class (Interdisciplinary Social Science). Those who were interested, were given a detailed summary of my research objectives. After allowing them to take the time to decide whether they wanted to participate in my study, those who agreed were set up for interviews that lasted about 45 minutes to one hour. After interviewing them, I asked them to refer me to other students who would be a great fit for my study. I used snowball sampling to recruit the rest of my participants.

Since my sample only consisted of black students, I cannot argue for any differences of experiences that I have found between black students and students who belong to other races. Therefore, this study offers an analysis of how black students experience microaggressions and

manage their emotions while attending a PWI that is transitioning into a racially diverse institution. My sample consisted of 7 black females and 5 black male students. The black students in my sample identified with a range of ethnicities including Jamaican American (4), Trinidadian (2), Tanzanian American (1), Rwandan American (1), and African American (6). Some students identified with more than one category. Each participant shared unique experiences given their different types of backgrounds and identities.

The interviews resembled unstructured conversations with open ended questions. In the beginning of all of the interviews that I conducted, my goal was to make each participant feel at ease and comfortable to talk about these intense issues. Generally, I started out by asking them to tell me a little about themselves and their experiences being a student at their institution. I then asked more specific questions that were directed toward understanding how they may have experience microaggressions. For example, I asked “Have you ever felt uncomfortable on campus?”; “Have you ever felt isolated in the classroom?”; “Can you tell me about anytime you felt offended?” I then asked more specific questions that were targeted toward understanding how students employed mechanisms of emotion work both in anticipation as well as in the process of experiencing microaggressions. For instance I asked, “What do you do to make yourself feel comfortable?”; “Have you ever felt the need to manage your emotions and/or behavior in the classroom?”; “Do you often worry about what other students may think about you?”; “Do you alter your behavior in order to fit certain expectations?” By asking these questions, my goal was to understand both 1. What microaggressions students have faced?; and 2. To what extent, and in what ways do students manage their emotions. My interview questions, which are located in Appendix 1, were developed to elicit the experiences that black students have on campus.

After interviewing each student, I asked them to carry a journal for a week. During the week, I asked students to jot down any microaggressions they had experienced during that day, how they reacted, and after reflecting, what they would have done differently at that particular moment. The goal of the journal entries was for them to be a methodological tool that would help me understand the process of emotion work. I wanted to get a primary descriptive understanding of how students may or may not internalize microaggressions, as well as how they manage their emotions in response to them. Unfortunately, the return rate and the brevity of the journals was not enough to analyze and draw conclusions from. I received one detailed journal and one journal that was generally brief. However, both journals certainly offered something interesting about the internal process of experiencing microaggressions and employing emotion work. Therefore, I did not rely much on the journals to draw conclusions, but I will indicate them when possible, within the data.

After every two interviews, I transcribed and created an analytic memo in order to organize and make sense of the data. Each and every participant provided unique narratives and stories that were both highly insightful, yet painful to digest. I began my process of analysis by summarizing each interview by jotting down emerging themes as well as anything novel. I began to notice that many of my participants experienced similar forms of microaggressions on campus. Therefore, I developed four major categories of microaggressions that the students had experienced: Feelings of exclusion, stereotypes, tokenism, and institutional neglect. Next, my goal was to make sense of how students managed their emotions in response to microaggressions. Therefore, I used Arlie Hochschild's three major categories of emotion work (cognitive, bodily and expressive) as a basis to organize my data.

As an African American student, I noticed that sharing a racial identity and a shared student status certainly helped in facilitating a level of openness between my participants and I. Speaking about microaggressions can be a sensitive issue for most; therefore, building rapport is essential. Interestingly, I myself had experienced microaggressions while recruiting for participants. When recruiting for participants, I remember introducing myself and the objective of my study to a small class of senior-level students. Before introducing myself to the class, one of the students asked the professor (who was also a black woman), if I was her niece or daughter. At that exact moment I battled with feelings of uncertainty and inferiority. Was she saying this because I was a black woman as well? Did she ask this because I look immature? Do I not look or sound like a graduate student who is pursuing her Master's? While all of these thoughts were racing through my mind, I was reminded of how important it is to examine the impact of microaggressions due to the uncertainty and ambiguity embedded within them. I am sure that the student did not intend to be malicious in any shape or form; however, her comment impacted me. Instead of becoming overwhelmed with frustration, I looked over to the professor and giggled. I then introduced the concept of microaggressions and stated that, that assumption was an example of one. Immediately, the conversation began flowing and students began sharing instances in which they felt microaggressed. Toward the end of the discussion, students spoke about feeling relieved after having the discussion and they expressed a great amount of eagerness to participate in my study. Sharing my experiences and opening up to my participants allowed my participants to be open to sharing their stories, experiences, and troubles. Many respondents expressed feeling relieved after speaking with me about these issues. Due to the ambiguity of microaggressions, students expressed that they constantly felt unsure about whether or not their feelings were valid. However, many also concluded that they felt reassured that their feelings were valid and

that they were able to make sense of their painful experiences through conversing with someone like them. The process of data collection and analysis was bittersweet. I certainly gained great insight. Wingfield (2010) writes about the benefits of sharing racial identities with your participants. She found that “respondents may have been more comfortable discussing their encounters with racial stereotypes, inequalities, and perceptions because they presumed that she could sympathize and identify with their experiences.”(pg. 255) During the interviews I was able to connect and sympathize with every single participant to the point that our meeting felt more like a deep personal conversation, as opposed to an semi-structured interview. Although there are many benefits to identifying with your participants, I must also acknowledge the drawbacks of sharing characteristics with participants. While transcribing and analyzing my data, I noticed that many of my participants would explain a feeling and conclude with, “You know what I am saying,” or “I am sure that you understand.” Therefore, instead of probing further, I found that I often assumed what my participants meant instead of allowing them to elaborate their position further. I found this limitation a bit frustrating; especially when I first began interviewing. However, after becoming cognizant of this, I learned to continue to ask students to explain in order to avoid any possible gaps in my interpretations.

### ***Studying Microaggressions at a Southeastern University***

Previous studies examining microaggressions and higher education tend to focus on how black students cope with these challenges while attending predominantly white institutions (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007; Solórzano et al., 2010; Andrade, 2013; Lewis et al., 2013). I argue that microaggressions are so obscured and embedded within all structures of society that these issues tend to play out at colleges and universities no matter how racially diverse the student body is. In

order to hide the identity of the institution, I will refer to it as USE (a university in the southeastern area of the United States.) USE is intriguing to look at because although it is considered a predominantly white institution, it is in the process of transitioning into a Hispanic Serving Institution. According to the “Student Diversity Profile” located within the USE system fact book, 12% of the students are African American, 7% of students are Asian, 21% of students are Hispanic and 55% of students are white. In many ways, the term diversity can cover and mask the idea that there may be inequality and racism present within the university. I aim to examine the different ways in which black students experience microaggressions while attending schools with a more diverse student body.

### CHAPTER THREE: ACKNOWLEDGING THE BAD SMELLS IN THE ROOM

*“When you grow up with it, it becomes hard to point out. It is like a bad smell in a room. You been in it too long to point out. It is hard to even smell it anymore.”*

-David

Interview results show that all students in the study experienced a variety of microaggressions despite their gender, sexuality, academic major and/or ethnic background. However, their unique individual backgrounds did impact the context and ways in which they experienced these racial microaggressions. Overall, all students did mention that they had experienced microaggressions; but they also mentioned that they felt worried about confronting them due to their subtle and ambiguous nature. The process of pointing out microaggressions in itself was a draining task for students because they were afraid that they were being overly sensitive, thinking too much about it, or it made them feel uncomfortable in one way or another. Based on the analysis of the interview data, I identified four types of microaggressions: feelings of exclusion, tokenism, being stereotyped, and institutional neglect. I plan to expand on each type of microaggression throughout this chapter; however, I will give a brief description of each. Feelings of exclusion refer to the ways in which students felt left out in an institution that is supposed to be inclusive. I provide examples that focus on how students feel this at a macro level (the institution), as well as how they experience it at the meso-level (student organizations), and at the micro level in the institution (friendships). Next I write about how students experience tokenism as a form of microaggression. Tokenism refers to the way in which students felt singled out due to their identity while engaging in sports, organizations, and classroom conversations. The next type of microaggression I address is being stereotyped. This refers to the ways in which students

are racially generalized and compared. Furthermore, I write about the ways in which students experienced having to deal with broad assumptions about the Black race that were typically negative and insulting. Lastly, I write about the last form of microaggression that I label as institutional neglect. Institutional neglect refers to the ways in which students felt unprotected and inferior under the administration of the institution. In many ways students shared many instances in which these types of microaggressions intersected as well. I found that experiencing microaggressions is a dynamic and complex process to understand because in many ways students experienced various forms at once and in many cases they explained that it was difficult to pinpoint why certain comments made them feel uncomfortable.

### ***Feelings of Exclusion***

After asking the interviewees what encouraged them to come to USE, a great majority of them spoke about the vibrancy and the diversity being the main attraction. They further explained that they were drawn to this particular institution because the university prided themselves on diversity in terms of race. However, when I inquired about the racial composition of most of their classrooms and different spaces on campus, almost all respondents argued that their classrooms were predominantly white or that they were usually the only person of color in their class. Karina, a Jamaican-American senior studying Psychology spoke a lot about the inequality of opportunities at USE. She stated:

Coming here it is like coming to the “land of opportunity” and I say that with quotations so you come and you think, “Well, I have the same opportunity as the person next to me” but really it is just like your skin color is the immediate barrier of what I am going to get versus what a non-Black person will receive.



Furthermore, they emphasized that these feelings of exclusion and isolation made them feel extremely uncomfortable while being in a “safe” educational space. They also mentioned feeling a bit betrayed by this trope of “diversity” mainly because it is often conflated with equality of opportunity. All participants spoke about feeling excluded in some sense. However, as mentioned before, the ways in which they felt excluded were impacted by their backgrounds. For example, one of my participants Maya, who identified as a queer black female senior majoring in anthropology spoke a lot about the complexities of feeling included in the classroom.

Something that I really dislike here at USE is when I realized that I am one of a kind in my classroom in the sense of some aspects of my identity; being a black woman, being a queer black woman in fact. That can be kind of discomfoting when I am around people who are not necessarily like me or people who do not understand me.

Maya further explained how painful her experiences were when trying to fit into certain student organizations on campus and inevitably feeling excluded due to her intersecting identities. She mentioned that being a queer woman of color was exceptionally difficult because, in order to find an exact fit for her identity, she had to be a part of many different organizations in order to satisfy the intersections of her identity as a whole. However, within each organization she joined she did not feel completely comfortable due to the microaggressions that she faced in each one. For instance, she spoke about the lack of black representation in a student organization geared toward the LGBTQ community. She joined this organization in order to find a safe space where she could speak about her sexuality openly. However, she found that she was barely able to connect and contribute with the members because most of them were white and she was the only woman of color. She then also spoke about the lack of representation of the LGBTQ community in black student organizations.

One time I went to a club meeting and we were talking about the LGBT community and I was really the only one in there advocating and I felt like people were just not agreeing and they were saying it was wrong. It just made me feel so uncomfortable because it was a black organization and I just felt like if we really care about the black student community, why can't we care about those who are not heterosexual or those who do not fall into gender binaries and things like that? So that was definitely a time where I felt pretty isolated.

Being a queer, black woman, Maya explained feeling perplexed when trying to find an organization that represents and advocates for her and her intersecting identities. Due to the different microaggressions she has faced in these different organizations, she ultimately always felt excluded while participating.

Jasmine, another respondent who identifies as being both Black and White mentioned feeling excluded when trying to branch out and join other organizations that were not predominantly Black. She recalled a time in which she was interested in joining a sorority within the Pan-Hellenic Council. The Pan-Hellenic Council is a predominantly white organization that is considered an umbrella for a variety of fraternities and sororities. Jasmine explained that she was mainly interested because she had many friends from high school who have joined in the past. She mentioned:

I went up to the recruitment table and I said I was interested, they responded saying, "Were you interested in Pan-Hellenic (predominantly white organization) or National Pan-Hellenic" (predominately Black organization)? And I said, "this one, I came here."

They looked at me in a confused way, so at that point I was just like, “No” for you to assume that.

This shows how excluded Black students may feel on campus when joining organizations. Jasmine explained that she was interested in joining a sorority that she believed was perfect for her. She spoke a lot about being excited to join this particular organization because many of her high school friends have joined in the past. However, when she went to the organization’s table to show her interest, the members of the organization automatically assumed that she was lost because of her race. Therefore, they tried to redirect her and encourage her to join a Black organization instead. This shows that even when black students try to branch out and join non-Black organizations, they still face a great amount of obstacles in the process.

### ***Tokenism***

Tokenism has been described as a double-edged sword in which institutions are applauded for reaching diversity goals; whereas the visibility of minority persons becomes heightened and scrutinized (Kanter, 1977). Due to the disproportionate racial demographics in many of the classrooms, many of the students mentioned that within the classroom, they felt singled out while engaging in classroom discussions. During different points in time, black students felt that their role as a token was to speak on behalf of all black people when issues of race tended to come up. David, a black male student mentioned:

There are times where, when race comes up, I know that there is a wait for me to speak. Being a black male specifically, when it's dominated by another race or culture specifically, white culture, you become the mouthpiece for all black people everywhere. Which is not fair.

Tokenism can lead to students feeling singled out and put on the spot to advocate for their entire race. Being one of a kind in a classroom can put tons of stress and anxiety on the student. In this particular case, David explained how draining it was to have to come into class and always be considered as "the other." If other students were not speaking for him as a black man, it was his responsibility to speak for all black people. This can definitely be a daunting task that comes along with being tokenized in a classroom setting. Interestingly, tokenism has not only occurred in academic spaces, but it has also surfaced in the athletic department as well.

Karina a Jamaican-American student athlete, mentioned that she had experienced many challenges being the only black student on one of the athletic teams. The microaggressions that she experienced were both physical and emotional. The impact of these microaggressions were much more severe due to the fact that they were not only mind boggling, but embodied as well. Karina explained that when confronted with microaggressions, she often felt as if she was engaging in mental battles. For one, she explained how difficult it was to pinpoint whether or not a person was being racist or if she was being too sensitive. She also mentioned feeling confused when deciphering whether or not she should address certain comments. When I asked Karina to describe any negative experiences she encountered while being at USE, she mentioned that one of her most daunting experiences was being the only black female on an athletic team. Being the only black woman she was subject to cultural misunderstandings. She also spoke about feeling pressured to change her natural appearance in order to look like everyone else. Physically she

mentioned: “The cheer coach had blonde hair and blue eyes, silky straight hair and she kind of imposed that look onto everybody and it was very hard for me.” She further explained the pain she endured when she was forced to wear makeup that did not compliment her skin tone:

She wants everybody to wear the same shade of make-up, but that makeup doesn't look good on my skin; I'm about to look ashy, it's not going to work. She wants my hair to be bone straight, but my hair is naturally so curly and poofy so as soon as one drop of water hits my hair, poof.

This student had to deal with feelings of embarrassment both internally and externally because her natural appearance was not up to par according to standards of whiteness. Due to being the only student of color on the team, the coach and other members did not understand how imposing a white aesthetic on her could have made her feel uncomfortable. They did not understand how much she had to struggle in order to fit into this standard of whiteness. Forcing this student to physically assimilate into whiteness, not only put an immense amount of stress on her, but it also devalued her culture, history, and her individuality as a black woman. She also mentioned that she was named the “problem child” because she often questioned the coach about things that made her feel uncomfortable. She explained:

She often called me her problem child because I would always say, “Coach, you know I can't do that,” or, “Coach, you know that is not going to work for me.” And even when it came to trying on spanx it was like, “Coach, you knowwww I am an xs but I still have a bigger bottom so if you give me an xs my bottom will be hanging out and that is cool for different races to do but for some reason when women of color do it, it isn't respectable, or respected and I had to do that.. I would look like a “hoochie” and that actually happened.

Being tokenized as the black problem child posed plenty of threats to Karina's identity as a black female. Was Karina wrong for asking questions whenever she felt uncomfortable? Was Karina wrong for acknowledging that there is more surveillance on colored bodies when wearing uniforms? Because Karina was uncomfortable, she decided to speak out about what was bothering her. However, when she confronted her coach, she was automatically labeled the problem child with a bad attitude. This definitely takes a toll on students of color both physically and emotionally. Karina being the only black girl on the team, as well as being the only "problem child" seems problematic; especially when looking at the history of how black girls are disciplined more than others. Diversity tends to be conflated with equality; and this tends to result in color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2008). It is important to acknowledge and understand cultural differences, instead of ignoring that there are differences. This certainly explains how microaggressions, like tokenism, are a product of color-blind racism. The perpetrators may say comments or compliments that they believe are innocent and congratulatory; however, that comment can be detrimental to the person on the receiving end because it bears stereotypical assumptions and racist undertones. Bonilla Silva (2006) writes about how racism is not only perpetuated by klan members in hoods, but by people in suits. This shows how racism continues to be reproduced by everyday people with good intentions like professors, classmates, etc. Bonilla Silva (2006) writes about the four frames of color-blind racism: abstract liberalism, cultural racism, naturalism, and minimization of racism. Abstract liberalism refers to the ways in which white people maintain their privilege by believing that everyone is equal and that everyone has access to equal opportunity in America. Cultural racism refers to the idea that black people are not able to make it out of inequality because of their culture and upbringing. Naturalism refers to the idea that racism happens naturally. For example, residential segregation occurs because black people naturally

gravitate to other people like themselves. Lastly, minimizing racism refers to the idea that racism does not impact the life chances of black people. In many ways, white liberals use these frames and do not understand how they are facilitating the reproduction of racism and inequality. Therefore, the reception and the impact of these comments are much more harmful than intended.

Iesha, a Trinidadian-American female student spoke about one of her classmates singling her out as one of the “good black girls.”

One time when I was in a classroom, one of my white female classmates reached over to me and told me that she has never met a black woman that she liked. I don't take that as a compliment, because she's 36, 37, so you're telling me that you have never met a black person that was nice to you or respectful? So what are you categorizing us as?

I consider this particular incident to be a direct racist comment although it was intended to be a compliment. In many cases, white people make assumptions about what it means to be Black. As mentioned before, many whites think in terms of the cultural racism frames. They see Blacks as a stereotype and believe that inequalities exist because of their culture. Therefore, when they actually meet a black person that is different from what they expected, they are labeled an exception to the rule; they are a “good black person.” In this particular case, Iesha, who has fine straight long hair, and who speaks eloquently, was set apart from ‘other’ Black people. It seemed as if Iesha’s classmate did not like Black people at all, but Iesha was different from other Black people possibly because of her straighter hair and because of the way she speaks. This also may suggest that Iesha’s classmate hasn't had much contact with other Black people, and her perception of Black people is jaded by negative stereotypes. Although she did not explicitly say anything extremely racist, the racism became clear and real through these back-sided compliments. When diversifying spaces, tokenism tends to take place. As mentioned before, there tends to be

this conflation of diversity and equality. Therefore, it is common for people to think that in many cases, these types of assumptions reproduce black stereotypes.

### ***Being Stereotyped***

Along with feeling excluded and tokenized, many students also stated that within the campus setting they tended to feel stereotyped and limited in terms of how people thought of them. It is known that many non-blacks tend to generalize the identity, experience, and characteristics of Blacks due to the saturation of negative stereotypes and representations of Blacks presented in society. Naturi, a Tanzanian woman from Saudi Arabia spoke about how she constantly felt pressured to limit herself: “On campus, it has always been an issue of having to let people know that I do not fit into a box.” As a result of doing this, I believe that they are generalizing blackness (the lived experiences of black people and what it means to be Black) by reverting to stereotypes. Although many non-blacks may not explicitly stereotype Blacks, there are many ways in which they may do so implicitly. Jasmine, a black female student who identifies as half white and half black mentioned feeling stereotyped while attending class one day. She stated, “There was one class I was in and we were talking about absentee fathers and off rip they tried to ask me about how I felt about it and I’m like, I mean, I have a dad so.” To many, this may seem like an innocent act. Some may argue that they just wanted Jasmine’s opinion on the topic. However, knowing the racial dynamic of the class with Jasmine being the only Black student, the fact that everyone turned to her for an answer was quite insensitive. Many would also argue that it was not intentional to make Jasmine feel offended; however, in the case of microaggressions intentions do not matter, it is the impact that matters. Assuming that black students are fatherless reinforces one of the many ridiculous false negative stereotypes about black



people and their experiences. In addition, microaggressions are particularly damaging because they are not isolated incidents that occur once in a while. Instead, microaggressions reoccur and become patterned in the experience of Black students. Black students have to deal with hearing the same negative generalizations about their culture and selves. Black students almost become a spectacle and are reminded on a everyday basis that they are not seen as a person, but as a stereotype. As a result, it reproduces and perpetuates inequality and invalidates the versatility and humanness of black people.

Naturi, is a female student who has a father who is African (Tanzanian) and mother that is African American (Chicago). She spoke extensively about her troubles of trying to get people and herself to understand her identity. She was raised for the most part overseas, in the Middle East, in Saudi Arabia, and she also identifies as Muslim. She mentioned that she thinks that she makes people feel extremely uncomfortable when they cannot label her and put her into categories based on her identity. Due to these intersecting identities, the microaggressions that she had experienced were very intense. In many ways she spoke about feeling out of place being a Black, Muslim woman from Saudi Arabia. Due to these intersecting identities, Naturi explained that people never know how to label her, understand her or interact with her. When she tells faculty, students, and other individuals in general that she was raised in the Middle East, they automatically make assumptions for why a black person would be overseas.

A lot of people are surprised when I tell them my background. They assume that I am from the military and I just have an issue with people assuming that I am Black so the only way I would go overseas is if I was in the military; that's not the case. So that is a reoccurring instance I see amongst students and faculty members when they speak to me. Why assume? It is always, "Oh you must be from the military." It wasn't, "Oh so what

took you overseas?” It has never been an open-ended question..... it’s a whole bunch of assumptions.

Assuming that Naturi is from the military suggests that black people do not engage in traveling practices unless they are associated with the military. These stereotypes show just how deep-rooted racist and discriminatory ideologies become embedded in the minds of people. These ideologies and stereotypes become reproduced through everyday interactions.

Naturi also mentioned feeling stereotyped by other African Americans who did not understand her Tanzanian background.

When I moved to the states and I met this African American male he asked me where I was from; so when I told him he jokingly said, “Oh you're African you must be the devil.” It made me feel like... I had to question myself as an American and it made me feel like there really is an issue of identity when it comes to African Americans... I think that the generations of being stripped of your identity has affected the youth in a negative way.

This particular incident that Naturi described caught me off guard. Typically, when we think about racial microaggressions we do not consider the ways in which Blacks may micro aggress other blacks due to ethnic differences. In this case, the man that she met from Houston, Texas had a stereotypical view of what it means to have been born and raised in Africa. Although he said this in a joking manner, the comment he made suggested that he had generalized a type of black person that is distant from himself (a Black-American) . Ultimately, he limited himself to what blackness consists of. On the other side, it is also interesting how Naturi placed African Americans in a box by assuming that all African Americans may view her in that way. She also mentioned feeling limited and devalued when first meeting professors.

In the classroom, I see how some teachers react when they first hear my voice. I don't sound like how they expect me to sound, but like I said, how do you specifically point that out with rhetoric when she isn't actually saying it? They are implying it. Or I had an online class, the teacher was shocked when she met me in person as opposed to what she was reading. I seen it all over her face but you can't prove it. You really can't prove it and that is disheartening.

In this case, Naturi discusses how she becomes overwhelmed when professors expect her to possess a certain identity because she speaks properly and writes eloquently. However, when she meets them in person, they are perplexed to see that she is Black. Naturi goes on to explain that she notices that instant pause, or the change in their faces. However, she cannot prove that they have made racist assumptions about her identity. As mentioned before, microaggressions are defined as being these slippery, insidious acts of racism. Although they are hard to pinpoint and address, they pose real consequences to those being micro-aggressed. In many cases, this affects students psychologically, they begin to question themselves, minimize their own experiences and this may lead to students losing confidence in themselves. Naturi mentioned that in order to cope with these feelings of self-doubt, she often watched YouTube videos that were self-empowering. Bonilla-Silva writes about the paradox of how racism occurs without racists. Racism has become embedded within institutions and everyday interactions to the point where the perpetrators do not realize that they are being racist. This form of racism is dangerous because of its ambiguous nature.

Another student shared a similar narrative of feeling stereotyped in regard to competence and intelligence. Kendall, a black male senior studying computer programming, spoke about feeling stereotyped as well. He discussed feeling stereotyped before he had even been given the

chance to speak: “Sometimes I feel like when I open my mouth to speak for the first time people might expect me to come off a certain way and then they get an initial shock when I talk. It’s that little pause that bothers me.” Kendall explains that he becomes anxious before speaking because he already anticipates the microaggression that is going to follow. He implicitly speaks about the expectations that people tend to have about how black people interact, speak, and behave. Therefore, he already expects the surprised look on their faces when he actually speaks for the first time.

The Black women in my study also mentioned feeling offended when they were complimented on their physical appearance and beauty. Black women often mentioned being complimented as if their attractiveness was an exception to the rule. For example, Iesha, a Trinidadian senior studying history stated in response to my question, “Have you ever felt singled out due to being both Black and a woman”:

Or being considered pretty and Black...like why can't black girls just be pretty women and not be singled out as the pretty Black girl ... I've gotten “You talk white.” That kind of sucks so I don't wanna say that it conflates with my identity but it makes me reconsider my identity.. Why can't I just be, you know, Black.

Iesha and many other women in my study further explained that although people say things like, “You’re pretty for a Black girl,” as a compliment, it is not received as such. Instead this is concluding that being Black and pretty is not possible. They explained that when a white woman is considered pretty, no one says, “Hey, you know, you are pretty for a white woman.” However, black women are constantly being singled out and congratulated for being pretty, given their race.

Some students spoke about the dangers of hearing the assumptions of others. However, a lot of students expressed that on top of being offended by students and professors, they also felt offended by administrators and the institution in general.

### *Institutional Neglect*

All of the students mentioned that they felt uncomfortable at this institution due to the daily microaggressions they experienced coming from other people. However, I also found that they felt uncomfortable due to the fact that they do not feel safe at the university and under its administration. Five students mentioned that they felt that they were not protected under the institution in the same way that white students were. There were many horrible explicit forms of racism that occurred on campus; however, many of the students mentioned that there was no acknowledgment and not even an e-mail sent out by college officials and administrators. One student recalled a terrifying incident:

For MLK day, you know we have that statue up in front of the big fountain of MLK and somebody put one of those Donald Trump hats on it and took a picture of it. They put it all over social media.. and we all are here like, “Why is that funny?” You know what I am saying like.. it’s not... something to joke about.. and USE didn't do anything.

Another respondent mentioned:

In response to the MLK incident I know a couple of us went to the office and tried to get some stuff done about it and even before that, a colored girl joined the Pan-Hellenic org. She joined the sorority and she ended up dropping out and saying she didn't want these letters anymore because she felt so disrespected by her sisters. She said they used the N word freely, they would dress up and do different things and they would talk about other people of color and that made her really uncomfortable. They would laugh and make

jokes about the situations that were going on you know, often during this time.. and she was like, it became too much and it got to the point since the girl dropped out she got bullied, harassed until she left USE and USE did nothing to help her. So it was to the point where all of the black student units found out about it after she left. We did a ceremony and we tried to bring awareness and we wanted to make demands but it didn't work out as planned.

She further explained that many student organizations tried to reach out to administrators about these condescending acts; however, they were automatically disregarded and ignored on multiple occasions. I noticed that 9 of my respondents repeated to me these same stories. Each and every respondent that told me these stories spoke about how much it affected them; they were angry and disappointed, yet nothing was done to even at least acknowledge the pain and irritation that they were carrying with them each day on campus. When researchers think about microaggressions they tend to think about it occurring on a micro level from person to person. However, in the case of institutional neglect we see the transformation of a microaggression becoming a macroaggression in which Black students are feeling neglected from the entire institution.

In addition to feeling vulnerable to overt racist acts, some of my respondents mentioned not feeling comfortable to seek help at the health center due to the lack of acknowledging that Black students feel attacked on a daily basis.

Because there is nothing worse than being here and all of the stuff that is going in the world that bothers you and you don't have anyone who understands you and supports your feelings and its not like USE sends out e-mails and says, "Hey there are traumatic events going on", with black people getting shot. So if you are internalizing this pain and you have internalized rage they don't say, "Hey we have resources and services to help

you.” They are not going to remind you of daily microaggressions and how that can harm your mental state.

In this particular quote, Karina writes about how she feels neglected even at the health center. She spoke about administrators sending e-mails about every traumatic incident that occurs nationally and globally. However, when the issue is about race there is little to no coverage about it. She also speaks about how Health Services needs to encourage students of color to come in and talk about subtle racism, instead of minimizing it as an issue because these are issues the students of color tend to face on an everyday basis.

Another form of institutional neglect came from perceptions of unequal support for student organizations. Jasmine spoke more about the inequality of funds and support that is given to black organizations versus white organizations.

As far as me being an active student in different black organizations, I have noticed that we don't 1) Get as much funding as other organizations, and 2) I like being a part of the Black community at USE because it is a tight knit community but at the same time we are kind of segregated from the general population, like white people don't come to our events and we aren't necessarily welcomed to theirs. So sometimes you can feel a little alienated being on campus and looking around and there's not that many people around that look like you.

Ashley talks about the subtle discrimination she has experienced will participating in a black organization. On a campus that prides themselves to be racially diverse, it is ironic that there are perceived inequalities between how black organizations are funded compared to white organizations. This type of microaggression also overlaps with the category of tokenism. Since these organizations were created to encourage and bolster the idea of diversity, in hopes that it would

translate into equality, it actually serves as an aid to segregate these populations on campus.

Ashley explained that student organizations for people of color (Black Student Union, Caribbean Student Association, NAACP, etc.) were created to make students of color to have a space to express their concerns and make changes. However, she noticed that white people do not attend their events and most people of color do not attend white events. Therefore, not much change has happened, instead it further segregated the campus. In addition, the organizations that are predominately white, have a much larger budget compared to the organizations for people of color. Therefore, this shows how organizations on campus are separate and unequal in a variety of ways.

### ***Differences between Native Born- Blacks and Foreign Born- Blacks***

As mentioned before, the students in my sample identified with a range of ethnicities including Jamaican American (4), Trinidadian (2), Tanzanian American (1), Rwandan American (1), and African American(6). I noticed many differences between the students who were native born opposed to those who were foreign born. For example, Iesha, who is foreign born, often tried to distance herself from African Americans and the culture associated with it in many ways. During the interview, I asked if she had ever had any conflicts within the residence halls. She said that she had many issues with a roommate who was African American: “I am different, we were raised different. There were differences in culture, in food, in music, obviously we did not listen to the same music, there was a difference in dialect, I did not understand her slang; there were issues there. Our values were different, things that I found important, she didn't and that was just a result of our upbringing.”

Deaux (2007) writes about how 1st generation and 2nd generation West Indian immigrants identify themselves in comparison to African Americans. She found that 1st generation



immigrants tend to distance themselves from African Americans because they tend to believe that West Indians have a more favorable cultural image. Therefore, it is interesting to see this same finding play out in Iesha's case. She also mentioned feeling singled out around other African Americans and she stated that she felt more comfortable around white students. When I asked if she had ever felt tokenized she stated: "I am usually the only Black girl in a group of white girls and guys, and that is not because of something I chose, I just feel more accepted there and I can relate with them a little more, so I often label myself the token, but no one has ever treated me as such." Interestingly, Iesha was the only student who mentioned feeling more comfortable around white people. Throughout the interview she mentioned growing up always having white friends. She also mentioned that she felt uncomfortable around African-American women because she often felt a sense of animosity due to her hair texture and dialect. Iesha spoke about other African Americans not being able to relate to her. She stated "I speak differently than them. I can not understand their way of talking and I had been criticized for speaking white by many classmates." She also mentioned, "I had struggles with my hair texture being a lot different from them so that caused a little bit of animosity."

In many ways, Iesha spoke about how she was different from African Americans and tried to identify more with her Trinidadian background. She mentioned that there were cultural, differences, differences in hair texture, and differences in upbringing. As Deaux (2007) suggests, she found it valuable to adhere to the cultural image that she perceived was more favorable to White Americans.

Naturi, a 1st generation immigrant from Saudi Arabia had a slightly different experience. Throughout the interview she spoke about how racism was much worse in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, she argued that her experience with racism was much more tolerable here in the United

States. She mentioned that she felt very comfortable around African Americans, but in many ways she also felt offended by African Americans because she never felt fully accepted. She explained how she often contemplates her identity because she is distraught by how being Black in Saudi Arabia is much different than being Black in America. She states: “So I am just trying to find that balance of just accepting who I am as a person and I am hoping that with confidence people will admire it and see that there are different ways to be an African American.” She spoke a lot about feeling limited in terms of being African American. In other words, she mentioned that she had to act a certain way and speak a certain way in order to be considered a real African-American. She also mentioned that since she was Tanzanian and born in Saudi Arabia, that she was not considered truly African American by her peers. In many ways she felt that she was judged by other African Americans as being inauthentic.

Overall, students spoke about experiencing microaggressions in different spaces at the institution, including student organizations, residence halls, within the athletic department and within the classroom. This shows that in a way, microaggressions tend to be inescapable for students of color attending USE. I also illustrated the ways in which microaggressions have transitioned into macroaggressions when students directly spoke about feeling slighted by the institution itself. Therefore, students discussed feeling microaggressed on both on a micro-level and macro-level. Although I categorized the most common types of microaggressions that students have experienced, the data suggests that in many cases these categories tended to overlap and inform one another. For example, feeling tokenized as the only Black student left room for that student to feel excluded by others. Taking this example further, by being the minority, others tend to stereotype them as well. I have also found that not only do Black students receive slights from

white students and professors, but they also receive slights from other Black people. This demonstrates how complex experiencing microaggressions can be. In addition, the anticipation of microaggressions tends to induce stress, anxiety, and inferiority for Black students. Students with intersectional identities spoke about how their intersecting identities intensified their experiences with microaggressions. Therefore, this shows how racial microaggressions become gendered, sexualized, and classed. The women in my study spoke about feeling micro aggressed about how other's perceived their beauty. One student spoke about feeling discriminated against due to her sexual identity. This exemplifies the dynamic ways in which students experience microaggressions. Furthermore, when they are approached with these microaggressions, students automatically have to manage their emotions, as well as the emotions of others. In the next chapter, by drawing from my data and previous data, I illustrate how dealing with microaggressions tends to morph into emotion work for black students at USE.

## CHAPTER FOUR: NAVIGATING THE BAD SMELL

In many instances, students mentioned that they had to manage their emotions both physically and emotionally in anticipation of microaggressions. Students also mentioned having to employ a variety of emotion management tactics in response to microaggressions. The data argues that inevitably, black students adapted themselves both physically and emotionally in order to fulfill a variety of goals. Students spoke about managing their emotions in order to come off less aggressive and students also mentioned managing their emotions as a means of survival, to simply make it through the day. As mentioned previously, Arlie Hochschild (1979) wrote about three forms of emotion work: cognitive, bodily, and expressive. In this chapter I will elaborate on how students employed these forms of emotion work in response to, and in anticipation of microaggressions.

### *Cognitive Emotion Work*

Cognitive emotion work refers to attempting to change ideas and thoughts through changing the feelings associated with them (Hochschild, 1979). David, a black student from Rwanda discussed that when dealing with microaggressions, he found that in order to keep his sanity he had to instill in his mind that there were always going to be unreasonable and offensive assumptions made about him; therefore, in order to progress and succeed at the university and in life in general, he has to alter his mindset and learn how to deal with it instead of allowing it to demoralize his character. He stated:

Just remembering that the spot light is on you, even if you don't want it. And so you have to have a strong personality. You have to live with the fact that it's here and you gotta stand strong for yourself and sadly for the race. Because that is what they expect of you. David spoke about changing his mindset and setting his expectations low about what people may assume him to be like. He learned that he must detach himself from the negative controlling stereotypes associated with being a black man because he does not want others to think about him in that way. In this particular case his goal is to make it through a world that will constantly make assumptions about his race. In addition, his goal of managing his emotions is to positively represent what it means to be Black.

In many cases, students also mentioned engaging in mental battles about whether or not they should speak up in class. They also spoke about trying to change their behavior in order to detach themselves from the negative controlling stereotypes associated with being black. They also responded in ways that would give their race a good representation.

I know that a lot of my coworkers perceive black women as ratchet or obnoxious loud or whatever, so I wonder if my professors feel that way about me and that if I open my mouth is that going to confirm whatever they believe about me, or not? But I think I'm more cautious about that when speaking in class.

Ashley talks about how anticipating these microaggressions causes her to engage in a great amount of mental work. She is constantly questioning whether people are thinking of her a certain way. In a way, she develops these insecurities and they influence how she acts and expresses herself. I will discuss shortly how cognitive emotion work transforms into both bodily and expressive emotion work.

Many students also spoke about their process of finding themselves and realizing that they no longer felt the need to make themselves feel uncomfortable in order to make others feel comfortable. They explain having pep talks with themselves in order to make sense of given situations just because they are aware of the fact that experiencing and dealing with these subtle acts of racism is inevitable. Ashley discussed this further:

Especially in the beginning of the semester, I always wondered how people perceive me. Uh, but I think over time, I've grown to become more vocal and open about how I feel or it's not as big of a deal for me to be judged. Because I feel that people are going to look at me however they want to so I might as well not make myself uncomfortable for their sake. I've grown little less worried about what they think.

In a study on how flight attendants and students both employ emotional labor in order to resist oppression while trying to succeed in white institutional spaces, researchers found that “people of color in white institutional spaces negotiate their responses to racist institutional practices in such a way that creates avenues to resist racial objectification and degradation and emotionally protect themselves from the damaging consequences of racism” (Evans & Moore, 2015). I believe that this same finding emerged in my study. I found the social patterns of these white institutional spaces interesting; no matter the location or occupational context, students and flight attendants both experienced having to employ emotional labor and micro resistance in order to be productive in their jobs and positions as students while trying to avoid degradation. Concurrently, I found this same pattern at the institution of USE. What is even more intriguing is that USE is considerably more diverse than other PWIs in terms of race; in fact, the institution is transitioning into a Hispanic Serving Institution. Therefore, it is interesting and of significance to ex-

amine how these same findings might appear in places that consider themselves “culturally diverse” and “multicultural.” Students explained the necessity of knowing when to pick their battles, when to say something, and/or when it was best to withdraw and alter their emotions based on the circumstance. In this case, I believe that emotion work becomes a naturalized strategy of survival and resistance interchangeably. In other words, students use emotion work strategies to get through the day, semester or year; and students also use emotion work in a way to resist microaggressions. Students have become so accustomed to changing and altering their emotions in order to make themselves and others comfortable that the emotion work that they employ becomes routinized; they do not even notice that they are changing themselves in order to fit expectations. Dealing with subtle forms of racism becomes naturalized and I believe that this is indeed very dangerous. Students who implicitly learn how to suppress their emotions instead of acknowledging what is bothering them, may develop feelings of anger, depression and anxiety, due to not being able to express their emotions and feelings. Furthermore, students may feel that this is reality and that their emotions and feelings are not worth expressing. One student compared dealing with microaggressions to dealing with a bad smell in the room; ultimately you get used to it and have to go on with life.

Jasmine also speaks about how this type of cognitive work becomes draining. She explains that she chooses not to confront microaggressions because it becomes a burden for her. Therefore, she finds that suppressing how she would really act is a better strategy to maintain her strategy. She stated:

So as far as like, trying to debate people on why Black lives matter or like whenever there is an issue, I am just so tired of trying to convince people that what is going on is wrong or what they are saying is offensive. It's to the point where I am just like, “You

know what, I know exactly what kind of person you are.. I know what rhetoric you're going to come at me with or I know exactly what type of racist you are.” So it’s just like I am just tired.. I am just tired of trying to make people see differently.

In this case Jasmine realized that the cognitive emotion work is not worth the stress or pressure on her mental health. Instead of even engaging in emotion work, she finds it useful to employ expressive emotion work, which I will address shortly. In other words, she believes that it is best to suppress how she really feels and ignore the issue opposed to becoming subject to mental strain.

### ***Bodily Emotion Work***

Bodily emotion work refers to attempting to change physical symptoms of emotion, such as shaking (Hochschild, 1979). Within the quote provided above, the student speaks about having to change his physical appearance in order to manage the emotional responses of others. He spoke a lot about being weary about his appearance as a black man in order to avoid coming off as the aggressive negative stereotype that plagues the minds of many Americans. Therefore, instead of being who he is and looking how he wants to look, he has to monitor himself physically. David stated: “Currently I am trying to see how much facial hair I could grow. So I’m like, “should I shave?” cause I don't wanna seem too aggressive. But then I am appeasing the person, rather than just being who I am.”

David explores the mental battle he goes through even when making everyday decisions that people tend to take for granted, instead of making automatic changes to his physical appearance. David has to think about managing the emotions, perceptions, and feelings of others. As a black man, he is aware that he has to be cautious about his appearance and movements because



he may come off as threatening or violent. Although he was excited about seeing how much facial hair he could possibly grow, he had to think about the consequences he may face in doing so. Being a black man in America comes with a cost. Therefore, straying away from the negative stereotypes associated with black men by staying well groomed was David's survival tactic not only in the classroom or on campus, but in life overall. Jasmine talked about altering her natural physical appearance as well, in order to manage the emotions and feelings of others. Jasmine stated: "I straightened my hair like everyday.. You know because it's college, I wanna look a certain way. I hated my natural hair and I wanted it to be bone straight so I would straighten it up until my 3rd semester of college then I decided to just stop." Jasmine mentioned feeling the pressure to straighten her hair over and over again in order to be assimilated into the norms of the university. In order to fit into this specific setting, she felt the need to disrupt the health of her natural hair by straightening it every day in order to manage how others may view her. Interestingly, she learned more and more as she became acclimated to the college experience that she should be able to present herself naturally regardless of what others may think or assume about her. After learning more about herself and joining organizations with people who are just like her, she learned to embrace herself and she learned the importance of not distancing herself from her racial background. However, she mentioned that in the beginning, she was highly conflicted and unsure of her place within the university being herself naturally. In these examples, students altered their bodily appearances in anticipation of microaggressions that they see as forthcoming.

Another student mentioned that in some cases when she experiences senseless microaggressions, instead of responding verbally, she gives the perpetrator a look. She explained a situation when a white female was trying to compliment a black football player. In the process of trying to get to know him and compliment him she stated: "You got chains on, and oh, look at

you, like pimp my ride type a style, like you rocking it boy.” In the midst of her trying to be “re-latable” she looked over to her and asked, “Thats how you say it right? Like blinged out like that is the terminology for it, right?” The student mentioned feeling full with rage but instead of addressing the issue by verbally confronting it, she decided that it would be better to just look.

Yes you know! I just gave her that look...Like ugh. I hate to say it but that is why they think we have attitudes because the face is probably better than what we would of said.. because there is no proper way to answer to that without making things immediately tense. Because of the fact that if you try to correct they don't want to hear it, but then if I sit there and entertain your foolishness, you think it is okay to keep doing it and I am going to have to always answer you. So I am just going to look at you.

This example illustrates how students must control and maneuver their bodies in order to manage the display of their emotions and the emotions of others. She mentioned that although she was fired up, instead of expressing it, she withdrew and employed a bodily gesture. Although I argue that this is a form of bodily emotion work, I also argue that this a form of expressive emotion work. I will explore expressive emotion work in the following section.

### ***Expressive Emotion Work***

Expressive emotion work refers to attempting to change one’s emotional expression despite how they may feel inside (Hochschild, 1979). In many cases, students expressed having to change their outward expression despite what they felt inside while experiencing or anticipating microaggressions. Mostly every student agreed that they tried to restrain their expressions whenever they felt anger in order to avoid being stereotyped as the angry aggressive black person in the class. One student mentioned: “If I would of flipped out in class, I would have forever been

perceived as an angry black girl; one who just carries the world on her shoulders. One who feels like everyone owes her something so that is why I had to stop myself from snapping in class.” Being the token minority in most cases, black students felt that it was their responsibility to show that “not all black people are angry and aggressive.” However, I noticed that upon reflection, a lot of students realized that they have a reason to be angry; especially when they are confronted with insulting microaggressions. However, in retrospect, they question whether or not their emotions and feelings of anger are worth validation due to the uncertain nature of microaggressions. As a result of this, many students stated that they constantly have to check themselves in order to decide whether or not to respond to a given circumstance. When asking Ashley about her process of responding to certain microaggressions as opposed to others, she stated:

I am always checking myself. Like is this worth arguing about, am I jumping the gun a little bit by assuming that they might be racist, sexist or homophobic? And it’s like that, I am always questioning if it is worth saying anything back.

This shows the problematic process that many students discussed going through. They mentioned going through these internal mental battles constantly. They are constantly wondering what subtle racist comments to respond to, which ones to point out, how to address it without insulting the perpetrator, and they also question the validity of their own emotions. Mostly, all of the students mentioned this process as “checking themselves” because of this level of uncertainty and ambiguity. For example, another student mentioned the process of checking herself when responding to microaggressions in order to monitor the emotions of others. Checking themselves is congruent to self-policing.

When people ask me if my hair is real. I mean it is a microaggression, subtle form of racism, so I’m like, “Dang should I really go off on them about that?” Like should I say,

”Oh why are you assuming this and that?” Or on the other hand, should I just answer the question and leave it at that? So yeah, there are times where I feel like I have to check myself and make sure I don't come across as too angry or too emotional about a topic even though it may be bothering me inside.

This certainly shows how self-policing may cause mental stress and anxiety, in addition to a lack of confidence for students of color. Having to question one's feelings and thoughts about how they should behave and/or speak in general on a everyday basis, is an insecurity that many may take for granted. Another student spoke about feeling the need to hide her sexual identity in order to lessen the impact of the microaggressions that she faces on a everyday basis.

Me being Black and me being a woman there are certain things I can't conceal; but my sexuality is something that I feel that I can keep hidden if I need to; but that can be kind of overwhelming because I shouldn't have to and I shouldn't have to be worried about what other people are gonna think of me, but in some instances it can lead to harassment or violence if people find that out about your identity.

She mentioned choosing not to express a part of her identity in order to prevent microaggressions. She explained that in many cases she tries to hide her sexuality in order to appease others and how they may feel toward her. Due to the fact that she cannot hide the color of her skin, she tries to hide parts of her marginalized identity that can be hidden in order to prevent hostility, aggressive behavior and microaggressions from others.

The data suggest that there are real consequences that come along with dealing with microaggressions. Although I separated the types of emotion work that students engaged in, in reality students engage in multiple types at the same time. After speaking with students, I found that

the emotion work that they engage in is extremely complex and that it is not at all mutually exclusive. Students spoke about engaging in all three forms of emotion work all at once. They employ different combinations of emotion work in order to deal with certain situations. In many cases, students speak about employing all forms of emotion work at once. In the journal that Ashley kept for a week, she wrote about the variety of tactics that she uses in order to combat the complexity of dealing with microaggressions:

I try to say how I feel ... if me speaking to another individual doesn't necessarily help then I'll go to vent to someone who I know is open to what I wanna say. Someone who understands my experience little bit more. And then if no one is available to vent, I try to just listen to music. Occasionally, I'll meditate if I'm really really really overwhelmed.

Ashley spoke about a variety of stress management tools that she uses whenever she is overwhelmed by microaggressions. In this example she wrote about how she has to mitigate these emotions and feelings through engaging in practices that stimulate her mind, body and soul essentially. This shows just how complex the impacts of experiencing microaggressions can be for students with marginalized identities. For example, Maya spoke a lot about her insecurities of having intersected and marginalized identities. In terms of possessing these identities, not only does she manage her emotions in response to microaggressions, but she also mentioned that she tries to hide her sexual identity in order to minimize the intensity of discrimination that she may face. This also demonstrated the importance of examining the intersectional view of microaggressions and the need to take into account how they become intensified when people possess a variety of marginalized identities.

### *Emotion Work Documented in Journals*

Although I was not able to obtain a significant number of journals from my interviewees, I was able to get a more direct examination of the mental process that students engage in when they are confronted with microaggressions. In Maya's journal, she explained how experiencing microaggressions informed how she would react to the next microaggression she may face in the future. For example, she wrote:

“Is that your real hair?” he said again. Recalling how annoyed I was by my roommate just the night before I decided to be less passive this time. “Why does it matter?” I replied. “I just want to know” he said. That answer wasn't good enough for me, so I pushed for a better one.

This shows how much cognitive work goes into dealing with microaggressions. In addition to the cognitive work, Maya also employed a great amount of expressive emotion work, when deciding what emotion was best to display. This shows how complex the process is of responding to microaggressions. Throughout the journal, most of the microaggressions have to do with her choice of hairstyle. She explained how emotionally draining it was to hear everyone's comment about it off campus, on campus, at home and anywhere else she decided to go. She wrote:

Our conversation was over but I had to reflect on how frustrating it was getting asked about my hair for what seemed like every day. Even members of my own race treat my hair like some kind of magic entity. I can't avoid being pointed out in public or private spaces. Going to class and the grocery store have become the arena for the spectacle that is my hair, and my black femininity at too.

She writes that her hair has become some sort of spectacle that she cannot escape. If she wears it natural, there are questions; if she wears braids, there are questions. She further explains that the microaggressions continue to worsen, but unfortunately, she just has to continue to learn how to deal with it.

All in all, the journals exposed the great amount of mental work that goes into experiencing and confronting microaggressions. Maya wrote about having constant conversations with herself to determine how she should emotionally respond to a given situation. She also mentioned how each encounter with microaggressions informed the next one that she would face. This shows how complex and mentally draining dealing with microaggressions can be for black students and other students with marginalized identities. The employment of journals really can help researchers get a better understanding of the internal process of dealing with microaggressions, when done efficiently. Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain a significant amount of journals. However, I was still able to receive substantive data on how students may deal with microaggressions internally.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

Microaggressions and other forms of racism tend to plague minority students at universities all across the United States. I believe that it is crucial to unpack and uncover forms of racism that tend to become obscured and hidden within institutions like USE. In addition, the tropes of diversity and inclusion tend to assist in masking the deep-rooted forms of racism and discrimination that students of color face on an every-day basis. Particularly in my study, I found that all students mentioned experiencing microaggressions in one way or another. I also found that along with being Black, possessing other marginalized identities as well, intensified and impacted the ways in which they experienced these microaggressions. The main forms of microaggressions that surfaced in my study were feelings of exclusion, tokenism, being stereotyped, and institutional neglect. Although the categories are clearly defined and separate, students spoke about instances in which these categories overlapped and led to one another. This demonstrated just how complex it is for one to experience microaggressions.

I also examined the forms of emotion work that students employed in anticipation of microaggressions and while dealing with them at that particular moment. I categorized the forms of emotion work according to Hochschild's cognitive, bodily, and expressive forms of emotion work. I found that the categories were not mutually exclusive and that students engaged in a combination of them during different scenarios. I also found that emotion work tends to become naturalized for black students. In many cases they spoke about not knowing that they were managing their own emotions because their goal was not only to save themselves from distress, but



to manage how others see them as well. When emotion work becomes naturalized it can be beneficial and detrimental. Naturalized emotion-work can be beneficial when students have the skill set to manage their emotions when trying to make it through their program or even through the day. Experiencing microaggressions on a daily basis, helps students develop a skill set in which they learn to manage their emotions in order to help them become successful students. However, in many ways this can be draining. In many cases, students learn to suppress their anger and negative emotions, without having an outlet to vent. This certainly can cause a great amount of distress, depression and anxiety.

Many scholars who studied microaggressions, did so at predominantly white institutions. By contributing to the literature on microaggressions, I studied how students experience microaggressions at an institution with different racial dynamics. USE is considered a PWI but it is transitioning into a Hispanic-serving institution. This shows that even in racially diverse universities, black students still experience a great amount of racial microaggressions. Though the school may pride itself on diversity, it does not necessarily equate to equality. Students are still experiencing severe forms of microaggressions and even explicit acts of racism on an everyday basis. Therefore, I believe that this study provides a nuanced display of the additional emotion work that students engage in when trying to integrate into these universities.

I also attempted to contribute to the literature by employing the methodological strategy of having students carry a journal around for a week. They were to document any experiences of microaggressions. They would, then, also document how they felt at that moment and after reflecting, they would jot down anything that they would have done differently. I believe that if I

was able to collect more journals from the students, I would have been able to elicit a better understanding of the internal process of emotion work that students engage in. This leads us to some of the limitations of my study.

There were certainly some limitations to my research. The students that I interviewed were mainly social science majors; therefore, in order to obtain a more representative sample of the university, I would make sure to recruit students from other disciplines as well. In addition, I would also try to implement the method of journaling more effectively. Due to the lack of returned journals, I would try to find ways in which I could motivate students to return detailed journals in order to get a more nuanced description of the process of responding to microaggressions. I also felt that my research was limited in terms of intersectionality. Although, I found some interesting differences based on gender and sexuality, I believe that by mainly focusing on racial microaggressions, the experiences of the intersections of class, gender, sexuality, etc. were not talked about as much.

In regards to future research, it would be interesting to focus more on how black students micro aggress other Blacks. In my study, I mainly focused on how white students and faculty members may micro aggress black students. However, during the interviews the students also mentioned feeling micro aggressed by other other black students. I believe that this dynamic is interesting to look at especially under the system of white supremacy; it demonstrates just how deeply rooted racism and discrimination have become. In addition, it illustrates the mechanisms of white supremacy and it highlights how marginalized groups can become complicit. It is also crucial to expose the white privilege involved. The perpetrators typically intend not to harm Black students. However, it is important to examine the role of the perpetrator. It is crucial to ex-

pose the invisibility of power and privilege. Conversations need to open up about how our actions can be biased and rooted in racism. Looking at in-group microaggressions in general are of particular interest. It would also be interesting to examine how students experience microaggressions at historically black institutions. In what ways do students manage their emotions and the emotions of their peers in these instances? It would be interesting to compare and contrast these institutions with different racial dynamics. For future research projects, I would also suggest having a larger sample of students in order to get a representative range of students who have different majors and ethnic backgrounds. Past research has suggested that it is crucial not to collapse Black students together when understanding how different ethnic groups within the Black race experience racism. Therefore, in future research projects I plan to ask more specific questions about how they may experience microaggressions differently based on their ethnic identification.

Lastly, I think it would be interesting to study the institutional messages across a variety of universities. I would be interested in studying their tropes, what they say about diversity and inclusion, then I would also like to see if they practically uphold these tropes. For example, I would like to analyze e-mails, notices, policies and administrative statements from universities that address racist acts that have occurred on campus. Similarly, Brunsma (1998) examined how uniform policies may indirectly affect school environment. Essentially, I would like to examine how these messages that they put out may play into these inequalities that they are aiming to diminish.

As for policy implications, I believe that it is important for institutions like USE to provide workshops and/or programs about institutional forms of racism and discrimination. Specifically, workshops about the very nature of microaggressions will help bring about awareness to all students, faculty, administrators, and staff; I believe that this will help in two major ways. For

one, students will learn how sometimes innocent comments can come off as insensitive and offensive to certain groups of marginalized people. Secondly, marginalized students will be reaffirmed that their emotions and feelings are valued and have legitimacy and importance. Next, I would suggest that the diversity and multicultural office promote their services to students and faculty members of color. It would be great for student organizations or residence life to collaborate with these offices so that students are aware that they have a support system on campus. Lastly, I believe that it is crucial for Race/Ethnicity courses to be a general education requirement for all students attending the university. As Bonilla-Silva stated "The more we assume that the problem of racism is limited to the Klan, the birthers, the tea party or to the Republican Party, the less we understand that racial domination is a collective process and we are all in this game." (Bonilla-Silva, 2006)

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## APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL



RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE  
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669  
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799  
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

September 6, 2016

Diamond Briggs  
Sociology  
Tampa , FL 33612

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**

IRB#: Pro00026778

Title: "Black Students attending PWIs: Coping with Microaggressions through Emotion Work"

**Study Approval Period: 9/1/2016 to 9/1/2017**

Dear Ms. Briggs:

On 9/1/2016, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

**Approved Item(s):**

**Protocol Document(s):**

[Final Study Protocol](#)

**Consent/Assent Document(s)\*:**

[Informed consent.pdf](#)

\*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent document(s) are only valid during the approval period indicated at the top of the form(s).



It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

## **APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

I am interested in learning about your experience being a black male/female student at this institution. I would like to have a very casual conversation with you in which we discuss what you like or dislike about the institution, what you like and dislike about the campus climate, any discomfort you may have felt on campus and how you may have dealt with this. Please feel comfortable to share your experiences openly. Everything and anything that you say will be kept confidential and anonymous. Also, please note that if at any point in our discussion you feel uncomfortable, you have the right to not answer certain question and request to skip any question and/or end our interview at anytime.

### General Questions

1. What is your name ?
2. Can you tell me a little about yourself?
3. What made you come to USF?
4. Are you involved in any organizations on campus?
5. If so, what motivated you to join this organization?
  1. If not, why aren't you involved with organizations on campus?
6. How are your experiences being a student at this institution?
7. What do you like about being a student here?

8. What do you dislike about being a student here?

#### Microaggressions

1. How do you identify yourself?

2. As a Black (male or female), have you ever felt singled out due to your identity?

3. Can you tell me about a time that you have felt uncomfortable in a classroom?

1. How did that make you feel?

2. How did you deal with it?

3. Is there anything you would of did differently whenever you may have had these negative experiences?

4. As a Black (enter gender) have you ever felt tokenized?

5. Have you ever felt stereotyped?

How did that make you feel?

1. How did you deal with it?

2. Is there anything you would of did differently whenever you may have had these negative experiences?

6. Can you tell me about a time that you have felt uncomfortable in the residence halls or on campus in general?

1. How did that make you feel?

2. How did you deal with it?

3. Is there anything you would of did differently whenever you may have had these negative experiences?

7. Have you ever had any conflicts with other students or professors with issues relating to your race or gender?

1. How did that make you feel?

2. How did you deal with it?

8. Can you tell me about anytime you felt that someone has offended you due to race and or gender?

1. In the classroom?

2. In the residence halls?

3. On campus?

4. How did that make you feel?

5. How did you deal with it?

Coping/ Emotion Work

1. Have any of these experiences caused you to feel stressed?

1. When you feel uncomfortable, what do you do in order to make yourself feel comfortable?

2. Did you ever have to hide your emotions or reactions in the classroom, residence halls, or on campus?
3. Do you often worry about what other students may think about you?
4. Do you often worry about what professors may think of you?
5. Do you change your behavior in order to fit certain expectations or situations?
6. Have you ever felt pressured to act a certain way in front of your peers?
7. Have you ever felt overwhelmed from these experiences?
8. What advice would you give incoming students about being a student at this institution?

After questions

- 1) What high school did you attend?(Will note details about the racial composition,location etc.)
- 2) How did you expect people to treat you as a Black (male/female student)?
- 3) After being enrolled in the institution, how did your expectations change?
- 4) Has anyone prepared you to deal with racism and/or sexism?