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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, COPING WITH PERCEIVED RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION IN WOMEN OF COLOR IN GRADUATE EDUCATION, by PRITI SHAH, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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ABSTRACT

COPING WITH PERCEIVED RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION IN WOMEN OF COLOR IN GRADUATE EDUCATION
by
Priti Shah

How one perceives and copes with such experiences in graduate education can have profound impact upon the personal and professional experiences of minority women in higher education. This study utilized a grounded theory approach (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Cresswell, Fassinger, 2005) to investigate the impact of perceived racial and ethnic discrimination occurring in academia and effective methods of coping with perceived racial/ ethnic discrimination among 10 women of color in graduate education. Data sources included individual interviews and a group interview meeting. This study allowed women of color who have felt marginalized to experience a sense of connectedness as they shared their experiences as a means of coping in and of itself, and evaluated the experience of the women's participation in the research. Lastly, institutional factors that may be useful to the personal and professional development of women of color in higher education and in combating racial and ethnic discrimination were also assessed. Emerging results demonstrated that while women of color experience a wide range experiences of racism/discrimination, overwhelmingly they experienced microaggressions –mainly a lack of visibility and minimization of racial/cultural issues. The impact of racial and ethnic discrimination and microaggressions in academic environments ranged from the personal to the professional. Coping factors included a

variety of emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies, but highlighted social coping. Cognitive processes were found useful in terms of negotiating variables such as power, their ability to be educative, professional consequences, and emotional factors. Protective, educational, and institutional factors that may be helpful in moderating the impact of such experiences are discussed.

COPING WITH PERCEIVED RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION IN WOMEN OF COLOR IN GRADUATE EDUCATION

by
Priti Shah

A Dissertation

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in
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in
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in
the College of Education
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Atlanta, GA
2007

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CHAPTER ONE

Coping with perceived ethnic and racial discrimination in women of color in graduate education

Problem Statement

It is an interesting paradox: the very classrooms and institutions in which we learn about concepts of racism, discrimination, and prejudice may be steeped in ideology that create experiences for women of color that may be perceived as such. Instances of racial and ethnic discrimination within higher-level academia may be hurtful, stigmatizing, difficult to acknowledge, and invalidating (Gardner, 2005; Lacourt, 2003). How women of color cope with instances of racial and ethnic discrimination may be an important moderator with respect to the impact of these experiences. Moreover, how their supporting institutions view their experiences may be instructive in understanding how helping professionals, faculty, and training institutions can raise multicultural awareness and adopt multiculturally responsive policies and practices

The prevalence and experience of racial and ethnic discrimination in academia is well documented (Foster, 2000; Gardner, 2005; Kaul, 2002). In a study examining perceived discrimination and bias among 985 graduate students among academic departments, 14.5% of women reported experiencing a form of discrimination, while 9.3% of men reported similar experiences (Cairns, 1995). Lacourt (2003), a Native American academic, writes about her personal experiences in graduate training. “Writing about these events call to life the pain, humiliation, and feelings of inadequacy that I have

endured and continue to endure," (p. 296). She further reflects that discriminatory practices appear differently in graduate education, seemingly more covert, "They are not the standout moments of overt racism and discrimination –they happen here, too--but rather the disparity between what the university professes to do and the reality of what is done" (Lacourt, p. 105). Patricia Williams (1991) further writes about the disparity in academia between educational ideals and the day-to-day practice or reality. Although not overtly stated, perhaps the above quotes reflect a cognitive dissonance, so to speak, between the very constructs that are often studied, taught, and discussed on an intellectual level within academia at the graduate level–such as multiculturalism, racism, cultural sensitivity, oppression, or privilege –yet not necessarily applied or practiced on an institutional or a personal level. Paolo Friere (1993) discusses how an oppressive reality can absorb those within it. When applied to an academia, this may allow people within institutions to act in a manner in which they are consciously aware of or understand. Therefore, many academic departments may be unaware of such a disparity.

The effects of perceived discrimination are far reaching, affecting an individual on multiple levels. An individual may experience a host of psychological and emotional difficulties, including isolation, anxiety, and depression (Foster, 2000; Gardner, 2005). For international graduate students, personal and academic adjustment has been shown to be seriously and adversely influenced due to perceived racial/ethnic discrimination within their graduate programs, as well as feelings of fear, perceived hatred (towards them), stress, and culture shock due to change (Kaul, 2002). Perceived racial/ethnic discrimination may also have serious implications for a student's academic performance and retention, as many graduate students of color report feeling marginalized, isolated,

and unsupported in their studies; and an increased number of graduate students of color drop out compared to their Caucasian-American counterparts (Gardener). Many researchers contend that the experience of racial/ethnic discrimination leads to race-specific stressors in the lives of people of color (Allison, 1998, Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Utsey, Ponerotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli, 2000). Furthermore, how one copes with perceived experiences of discrimination may be a moderating factor in terms of potential negative emotional and psychological outcomes experienced (Barnes, 2005; Foster, 2000, Motoike, 1995; Nasrin, 2001; Ruggiero & Taylor, 1995; Scott, 2003; Yoo & Lee, 2005). Thus, it may be useful to examine the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) in order to understand and ameliorate the impact of racial/ethnic discrimination in the lives of women of color in graduate education. It has recently been shown that women who tend to utilize social forms of coping, finding buffering effects from feeling connected to others (Foster, 2000). Sharing one's experiences regarding racial/ethnic discrimination, although seemingly difficult, may have some benefit in terms of reducing feelings of isolation or validating one's feelings.

Many graduate institutions address multicultural issues and the impact of racial or ethnic discrimination via courses structured specifically around multicultural counseling and education. The content and quality of multicultural training across programs and departments, however, may vary widely (Pope-Davis, Reynolds, Dings, & Nielson, 1995; Rogers, Hoffman, & Wade, 1998). For example, while nearly 90% of graduate training directors believed strongly that multicultural education was an essential aspect of their program; only 60% reported integrating multicultural content into their core courses. Furthermore, although 87% of programs offer coursework in multicultural issues, only

59% require such coursework as part of the program (Rogers, et. al.). Moreover, few graduate institutions seem to address ways in which advanced graduate students of color can address the personal impact of racial or ethnic bias they may experience within their academic programs more directly. Given the impact that perceived acts of racial or ethnic discrimination appears to have upon psychological and educational outcomes of minority graduate students, the lack of such sensitivity within structured programming could be seen as contributing to institutional racism. Fouad and Carter (1992) particularly address the needs of visible minorities in the field of psychology, suggesting four professional competencies instructive for the career development for minority professionals in academia. These include interpersonal skills, political skills, career advancement skills, and lastly, advance coping skills.

Graduate experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination may appear covert and yet have serious implications psychologically and educationally (Foster, 2000; Lacourt, 2003, Nasrin, 2001). In light of research demonstrating that how women cope with racial and ethnic discrimination can determine the psychological outcomes for women (Foster), it may be particularly important to examine the coping strategies utilized by women of color in graduate education. Lastly, some institutions are proactive in addressing multicultural issues. However, implications of the present study may be useful in assisting many graduate departments in creating consciousness that experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination occur or are perceived by students, thus raising multicultural awareness among faculty, staff, and students regarding the nature and impact of such experiences. This may have further implications regarding education, research, training, policy, and program development that are specifically geared towards building

multicultural sensitivity and raising coping self-efficacy of students of color against discriminatory practices in order to maintain and complete their academic program with greater success.

Research Questions

Given the implications of racial and ethnic discrimination in higher education, the following study aimed to investigate experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination that were perceived by women of color in graduate education. Secondly, if such experiences were perceived, what meaning is constructed around these experiences? Next, the present study also explored the impact of these perceived experiences upon the lives of women of color, also asking women to discuss how they coped with these experiences and what their departments/institutions could do in order to assist in dealing with such experiences. Finally, given that the literature points of aspects of social coping as a moderator for instances of racial/ethnic discrimination, this study explored the impact of the research experience itself as the interviews may have allowed for a social experience in and of itself. The following specific research questions were asked in order to further understand the above:

1. What types of experiences of perceived racial and ethnic discrimination in graduate education do women of color experience?
2. What meaning do women of color in graduate education attribute to perceived experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination?
3. How do experiences of perceived ethnic and racial discrimination affect the personal and professional lives of women of color in graduate education?
4. How do women of color in graduate education report coping with perceived racial

and ethnic discrimination experiences?

5. What institutional and protective factors might be associated with better personal and professional outcomes in responding to racial and ethnic discrimination in graduate education for women of color?
6. How does participation in this research study affect women of color in graduate education?

Purpose and Significance

To date, there is little research regarding the experience or impact of coping upon women of color who have experienced discrimination in graduate education (Foster, 2000; Gardner, 2005; Kaul, 2002). The current literature supports the association between forms of coping with discrimination and positive outcomes; however, there is also considerable variation among different cultural groups. Additionally, there is little exploration of perceived racial and ethnic discrimination and coping in graduate education (Foster; Gardner; and Kaul). Thus, the current study aimed to explore racial and ethnic discrimination in graduate education and training and forms of coping utilized among women of color. Furthermore, the current literature alludes to forms of social coping as a strong resource for women to effectively cope with experiences of discrimination and gain support (Foster). Therefore, this study aimed to use qualitative methodology through individual interviews and group interview meetings. This research design both explored and served as an intervention to provide female graduate students support by recognition of other's experiences, education regarding coping skills utilized, and evaluated their experience in the research.

There are several research, training, educational, and practice implications that

may stem from this study. Results may be useful in creating greater awareness among academic departments regarding the prevalence, experience, and impact of racial and ethnic discrimination in various forms. Furthermore, few studies seek to understand the impact of more covert, institutional forms of racism and discrimination, or microaggressions (Constantine, 2007; Guthrie, 1995; Pierce, 1995; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007), upon the lives of individuals or how women of color cope with such experiences. This information may be very important to integrating multicultural sensitivity, awareness, and empowerment throughout training with respect to teaching practices, multicultural course work, addition of minority professional groups or student organizations, mentorship, and other multiculturally responsive policies. In terms of research implications, this study aimed to allow women of color who may have felt marginalized to have a voice. To that effect, a feminist and social advocacy model (Fassinger, 2005) was applied to this research, highlighting the impact of empowering individuals. This research protocol may allow for validation of the participant's experience as well as provide support for a social advocacy model of research with respect to studying coping with perceived racial and ethnic discrimination. Lastly, there are several clinical implications of this study. Although graduate students of color are a select group of the population, their experience of racial and/or ethnic discrimination, impact of such experiences, and how one copes, may have more general implications for how clinicians may explore such issues in their clinical work.

Assumptions and Limitations

Because the study focused on racial and ethnic discrimination, participants of this study were limited to *visible* ethnic minority women (African Descent, African, and

African American, Native American, Asian and Asian American including Pacific Islander groups, Latina and Latina American groups). International and Biracial individuals were not included, as it was assumed that these individuals, in terms of their multicultural and racial identity hold a multitude of rich factors that deserved individual attention and may go beyond the scope of this study (racial and ethnic discrimination). It was assumed that these women of color were not homogeneous in their coping responses or in their experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination. A qualitative approach was utilized in order to capture and respect their individual responses and understand their unique experiences as minority women in graduate education. Finally, the size of this sample was relatively small, however it allowed for in depth examination of a sensitive issue. Characteristics of this research precluded generalizability of results (Creswell, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness of results was considered via methodology inclusive of: member-checking, constant comparative and recursive analysis, triangulation of data, inter-rater reliability of coding, keeping an audit trail, and reflexive journaling to track researcher bias.

Overview of the Study

The current study aimed to explore, utilizing a grounded theory approach, the experiences and impact of racial and ethnic discrimination and coping responses, upon the personal and professional lives of women of color in graduate education. Two methods of qualitative inquiry (individual interviews and a group interview meeting) were conducted in order to understand these experiences as well as allow women to feel validated in their experiences.

Definition of Terms

The following are definitions of terms that are examined in the literature and specifically used in this study. Certain terms many have various definitions; however, the following list details how these terms were specifically used in this study.

Ethnocentric Monoculturalism: is a singular attitude or belief that one's race, culture, or nation is superior to all others, accompanied with the power to impose this expression on a less powerful group. In the United States, ethnocentric monoculturalism appears in the form of White Supremacy, racism, and discriminatory actions (Sue, 2003, 2004).

White Supremacy: An ideology or doctrine of White racial superiority that justifies discrimination, segregation, and oppression of persons of color based on a belief system that considers all non-White groups to be racially inferior. These set of beliefs occur through a cultural condition that occurs through socialization via education, media, family, and friends, which ultimately allows for acts of racism, discrimination, and oppression to occur (Sue, 2003).

Cultural Conditioning: Inculcation of beliefs and ideology regarding racial/ethnic groups based on education, media, society, family, and peer influences that create one's framework regarding their own race/ethnicity in relationship to others (Sue, 2003).

Racism: A system of dominance, power, and privilege based on racial group designations; rooted in the historical oppression of a group defined or perceived by dominant-group members as inferior, deviant, or undesirable; and occurring in circumstances where members of the dominant group create or accept their societal privilege by maintaining structures, ideology, values, and behavior that have the intent or effect of leaving non-

dominant group members relatively excluded from power, esteem, status, and/or equal access to societal resources (Harrell, 2000).

Racial and Ethnic Discrimination: Unfair action or negative treatment /action that is based upon racial/ethnic bias or prejudice (negative judgments and attitudes regarding an individual's racial/ethnic background) (Harrell, 2000).

Prejudice: Negative judgments and attitudes that may be based on a variety of human characteristics (Harrell, 2000); however, within the context of this study will focus on racial/ethnic background.

Stereotypes: Distorted and overgeneralized cognitive labels that may be based on a variety of human characteristics (Harrell, 2000); however, within the context of this study will focus on racial/ethnic background.

Inter-group Racism/ Discrimination: One racial/ethnic minority group has a biased or prejudiced outlook upon members of another racial/ethnic minority group, in which both groups are not part of the dominant racial/ethnic group (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999)

Intra-group Racism/ Discrimination: Members within the same racial/ethnic minority group have a biased or prejudiced outlook upon members of their own racial/ethnic group based on certain phenotypic characteristics such as skin color (Clark et. al, 1999)

Individual Discrimination/ Racism: Forms of discrimination / racism that may be perpetrated at an interpersonal level by an individual against another individual and stem from the belief in the inferiority of a racial/ethnic group (Harrell, 2000; Jones, 1997; Sue, 2003).

Covert Racism: Racially discriminatory acts or attitudes that occur far more often; however, they are frequently hidden, denied, or discounted. This may include acts such as hostility or social isolation (Jones, 1997; Sue, 2003)

Overt Racism: Racially discriminatory acts or attitudes that are easily detectable and may take the form of direct behavior or verbally racially discriminatory acts such as saying a racial slur to another (Jones, 1997; Sue, 2003).

Institutional Racism: Discrimination / racism refers to prejudiced or biases outlook, action, or treatment by a system of the majority racial/ethnic group towards someone or a system of a minority group. It refers to a systemic oppression or exploitation of a racial/ethnic group. This can take the form of exclusion or lack of acknowledgement of certain groups from policies (Jones, 1997; Harrell, 2000; Sue, 2003).

Cultural Racism: Cultural discrimination/ racism is the individual and institutional belief and expression of the superiority of one group's history, way of life, traditions, language, religion, arts, and values, over another group. One example of this is ethnocentrism (Jones, 1997; Sue, 2003).

Aversive Racism: A less obvious form of racism/ discrimination that is characterized by negative racial/ethnic feelings and beliefs toward people of color, despite the fact that they may perceive themselves to be non-racist or fair-minded (Dovidio & Gaetner, 1986; Jones, 1997; Whatley, 1998).

Microaggression: Unconscious expressions or communications that convey something denigrating to people of color related to their racial/ethnic background. Unintentional slights that can create an atmosphere of invisibility or present the idea that something

racist might happen for racial/ethnic minorities (Constantine, 2007; Guthrie, 1995; Sue 2007).

Stress: Based on the transactional model of stress, the result from an imbalance between appraised demands (intensity, consequences, etc.) and appraised resources (appropriateness, sufficiency, and timing) (Cox, 1978; Coyne & Lazarus, 1980; Hobfoll, 1988; Lazarus, 1966; Mason, 1975; McGrath, 1970).

Race-Related Stress: Race-related stress refers to experiences of racism embedded within interpersonal, collective, cultural, and sociopolitical context that can be sources of stress (Harrell, 2000).

Coping Resource: Resistance factors that may be drawn upon to lessen the impact of the perceived emotional stressor (Wheaton, 1983; Matheny, Aycock, Curlette, & Junker, 2003)

Coping Response: Behaviors that occur after a perceived stress has occurred that an individual may engage in order to lessen the impact of the perceived stressor (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

Active / Problem –Focused Coping: Coping response that focuses upon changing the stressor or perception of the stressor (Foster, 2000; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Passive/ Emotion –Focused Coping: Coping response that focuses upon managing the emotional stress resultant from the stressor (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991).

Protective Factors: The term protective factors is utilized in this study to refer to internal resources or resiliency factors an individual may hold that have been demonstrated to be

particularly effective in mediating the impact of racial and ethnic discrimination. Examples of protective factors include connectedness or strong racial/ethnic identity.

Institutional Factors: The term institutional factors is utilized in this study to refer to external resources or structures in place within one's educational institution or program that have been demonstrated to be particularly effective in mediating the impact of racial and ethnic discrimination. Examples of institutional factors include mentoring or faculty validation of experiences of racism or discrimination.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

The discussion of how women cope with perceived experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination cannot take place without a fuller understanding of the theoretical concepts of racism and discrimination as well as stress and coping. This chapter begins with how the literature understands defining features of racism and discrimination. Secondly, studies that have specifically examined experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination are highlighted and summarized. The impact of perceived instances of racial/ethnic discrimination is discussed by a review of studies as well as a presentation of proposed theories, which mediate the impact of race-related stress. Finally, constructs of coping and stress in relation to the impact of race-related events are detailed. Institutional or protective factors, which can influence how one copes, or buffer the impact of racism/discrimination in the academic environment, are also discussed.

A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Racism and Discrimination

Racism and discrimination are complex constructs, which need to be defined and deconstructed into its many forms in order to be understood (Harrell, 2000). There are many definitions and ways of conceptualizing aspects of racism and discrimination (Bulhan, 1985; Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Essed, 1991; Farley, 1988; Harrell; Jones, 1997; Ridley, 2005; Rothenberg, 1988; Sigelman & Welch, 1991; Yetman, 1985). First, however, Sue's (2003, 2004) concept of ethnocentric monoculturalism provides a larger conceptual framework for understanding how and why racism,

discrimination, prejudice, segregation, or oppression may occur. Ethnocentric monoculturalism is defined as a singular attitude or belief system that one's race, culture, or national origin, is superior to all others, and accompanied with the power to impose this expression on groups that are perceived as less powerful. Because of this belief system, within the United States, ethnocentric monoculturalism may be expressed in forms of racism, White supremacy, discrimination, or other forms of unfair treatment based on racial/ethnic affiliation (Sue, 2003).

Several components comprise the belief system of ethnocentric monoculturalism that specifically allow such actions to take place (Sue, 2003, 2004) and may have further relevance to the discussion of such practices or experiences in a graduate educational system. The first component includes the belief in superiority. It is not unusual for many to feel a sense of pride in their racial/ethnic background, national origin, or cultural practices, however throughout the world, White, Euro-Centric cultural practices and ideologies are not only seen as desirable, but normative. Blond hair, blue eyes, individualism, a Protestant work ethic, capitalism, speaking Standard English, controlling emotions, and the written tradition are all highly valued characteristics. Those possessing these traits may be perceived more favorably, receiving more privileges (Sue). The second aspect of ethnocentric monoculturalism is the belief in the inferiority of others. There may be a devaluing of traits such as dark features, non-Christian faiths and polytheism, collectivism, importance of shared wealth, non-Standard English or bilinguals, speaking with an accent, using nonverbal or contextual communication, or reliance on the oral tradition of communication (Sue). A third and defining feature of ethnocentric monoculturalism is the power to impose certain standards of one group upon

another. A fourth component discusses that as part of the cultural conditioning process, society imparts and enforces ethnocentric values and beliefs through various programs, policies, practices, structures, and institutions, such as training and educational systems, which often demand compliance (Sue). Lastly, the concept of the "invisible veil" (Sue, 2003, p. 105) is discussed in that because people are a product of cultural conditioning, many of these beliefs operate outside of one's conscious awareness, and that people assume universality, regardless of race, culture, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. Therefore, many of the practices, policies, and structures that may be unfair to different racial/ethnic minority groups become invisible in the ways that they may be controlling our lives or represent systemic barriers (Sue)

Forms of Racism and Racial and Ethnic Discrimination

Despite the historical prevalence of racism and discrimination, it should be noted that there is little consensus regarding the definition of racism in the academic literature (Farley, 1988). Clark et al. (1999, p. 805) define racism as "beliefs, attitudes, institutional arrangements, and acts that tend to denigrate individuals or groups because of phenotypic characteristics or ethnic group affiliation." This definition differs considerably from Sue (2003) who refers to racial and ethnic discrimination as a prejudiced outlook, action, or negative treatment of one racial/ethnic group by the dominant racial/ethnic group. As Harrell (2000) notes, there are many definitions of racism in the literature, however most have as a defining feature, a centrality of power (Bulhan, 1985; Essed, 1991; Jones, 1997; Ridley, 2005; Rothenberg, 1988). Harrell's (p. 43) definition of racism, similar to Sue's is as follows: "A system of dominance, power, and privilege based on racial group designation; rooted in the historical oppression of a group defined by or perceived by

dominant group members as inferior, deviant, or undesirable; and occurring in circumstances where members of the dominant group create or accept their societal privilege by maintaining structures, ideology, values, and behavior that have the intent or effect of leaving non-dominant group members relatively excluded from power, esteem, status, and/or equal access to society resources." The latter definitions (Harrell, Sue) are significantly different in that they imply an unfair relationship between oppressed and non-oppressed, dominant groups of society, whereas the former definition allows for racial/ethnic discrimination to take place between different ethnic groups (inter-group racism) and by members of the same ethnic group (intra-group racism) (Clark et al.,).

In the literature, racism, discrimination, prejudices, stereotypes, etc. are all aspects of ethnocentric monoculturalism (Sue, 2003). While racism may be defined in many ways, it stems from the belief in the inferiority of one group based on racial/ethnic affiliation (Clark et al., 1999; Sue; Harrell, 2000). In contrast, the constructs of stereotypes, prejudice, or discrimination can be based on a variety of human characteristics such as race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender, and may occur between and within dominant and non-dominant racial/ethnic groups (Harrell). For example, stereotypes can be defined as distorted and overgeneralized labels about a particular group of people. Prejudice refers to negative judgements and attitudes towards an individual/group. Finally, discrimination refers specifically to actions or unfair treatment as a result of prejudiced outlooks (Harrell). Some conceptualize discrimination as a form of racism. For example, the term attitudinal racism is used in order to differentiate attitudes or beliefs that denigrate individuals or groups based on phenotypic characteristics from what is termed behavioral racism (ethnic discrimination), which is

any act by an individual or institution that denies equitable treatment to an individual or group based on phenotypic characteristics (Clark et. at; Sigelman & Welch, 1991; Yetman, 1985). As this study is only centered upon issues of racial and ethnic heritage, the term racial/ethnic discrimination is used to refer to actions or unfair treatment based on racist or prejudicial attitudes and may take several forms.

Racism and racial/ethnic discrimination may manifest itself in many forms (Harrell, 2000; Jones, 1997; Sue, 2003). For example, racism or discriminatory actions may be covert or overt, against an individual, actions taken by a system or embedded within an institution or policy, and may be intentional or unintentional (Harrell; Jones; Sue; Ridley, 2005). Overt discrimination/ racism is easily detectable and may take the form of direct behavior or verbally racially discriminatory acts such as saying a racial slur to another (Harrell; Jones; Sue). Covert forms of discrimination /racism occur far more as often in graduate education and perhaps society, while acts of racism/ discrimination largely occur outside of one's awareness. Covert forms of racism or discrimination often include acts, which are hidden, denied, or discounted. This may include acts such as hostility or social isolation (Harrell, Jones; Sue).

Racist and discriminatory acts may also be perpetrated by an individual against another individual or they may take the form of institutional discrimination (Jones, 1997; Ridley, 2005; Sue, 2003). Institutional racism/discrimination refers to prejudiced or biased outlook, action, or treatment by a system of the majority racial/ethnic group towards someone or a system of a minority group. Institutional racism may be seen as a set of policies, priorities, and accepted normative patterns that are designed to subjugate, oppress, culturally condition, oppress, or force dependence of individuals or groups on a

larger society. This can also take the form of exclusion or lack of acknowledgement of certain groups from policies. In graduate education and perhaps the greater society at large, acts of racist or discriminatory behavior largely occurs outside of awareness. Further, it may not be expressed in overt acts with intention to hurt, but rather in inaction or the failure to help (Sue). Finally, cultural racism is an over-arching form of racism that allows both individual and institutional forms of racial and ethnic discrimination and bias to be perpetuated. Cultural discrimination/racism is the individual or institutional belief and expression of the superiority of one group's history, way of life, traditions, language, religion, arts, or values, over another group. One example of this may be the perception of desirability of certain phenotypes or physical characteristics such as blonde hair, blue eyes, or light skin (Harrell 2000; Jones, 1997; Sue, 2005). Cultural and institutional racism often provide a foundation for individual expressions of racism and discrimination (Harrell; Jones).

In order to understand expressions of racism and discrimination further, Jones (1997) delineates individual, institution, and cultural manifestations of racism and discrimination into the complex contexts that they interact with each other. These include the interpersonal context, collective context, cultural-symbolic context, and the sociopolitical context. Within the *interpersonal context*, racism is manifested directly (overtly), indirectly (covertly), or vicariously. Interpersonal interactions such as interactions with other people, observations, nonverbal behavior, and verbal statements can reflect individual, cultural, or institutional forms of racism, or prejudice and discrimination (Jones; Ridley, 2005; Sue, 2003). The *collective context* refers to racism or discrimination that is manifested through the status and functioning of large groups of

people. One example of this may be data on racial disparities in educational achievement, unemployment rates, incidence/prevalence of disease, or treatment in the criminal justice system. Jones suggests that the collective manifestation of racism and discrimination represent the combination of individual, cultural, and institutional forms of racism. Next, the *cultural-symbolic context* identifies racism that is expressed or contained in images, or impressions of non-dominant groups that may be portrayed by media, art/literature, education, or through the generation of knowledge/ scientific inquiry. Finally, within the *sociopolitical context*, racism may emerge through the nature of political debate, public discussion regarding race, race ideology, policy, and/or legislative practice (Jones). Again, at this level, all manifestation of racism –individual, cultural, and institution –may be present and play a role in how racism or discrimination may be operating on a sociopolitical level or context (Harrell, 2000).

The above characterizes somewhat more obvious forms of racism, prejudice, and discrimination. However, research over the past few decades, as there continues to be more multicultural education, has shown that such forms of racism/ discrimination have evolved into more subtle expressions by even the most well intentioned (Constantine, 2007). Instead of overt, direct, intentional, prejudicial attitudes and racist behaviors, racism may have evolved into more subtle, ambiguous, and unintentional manifestations (Dovidio, Gaetner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002; Sue, 2003).

Such expressions are termed, aversive racism/ discrimination, which is characterized as having negative racial feelings and beliefs towards people of color, despite the fact that they may consider themselves as well-intentioned, egalitarian, fair, or non-racist (Dovidio & Gaetner, 1986; Jones, 1997; Whatley, 1998). In such instances,

people are often actually unaware that they hold prejudicial or denigrating beliefs regarding racial/ethnic groups (Banaji, 2001 in Sue, Bucceri, Line, Nadal, & Torino, 2007). Common forms of aversive racism include microaggressions or microstressors (Constantine, 2007; Essed, 1991; Griffin, 1991; Franklin, 1993; Pierce, 1995; Sue et al., 2007). These are relatively new terms in the racism literature, and may have particular relevance to the discussion of experiences of perceived experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination within an academic environment. Pierce (1995, p. 281) defined "microaggressions" as "subtle, innocuous, preconscious or unconscious degradations and putdowns." Racial microaggressions specifically refer to subtle, commonplace, and even automatic exchanges that may convey something insulting or demeaning to people of color (Franklin, 1999; Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Willis, 1978 in Constantine; Sue et al,). The term microaggression can also refer to daily, small, attacks on one's race/ ethnicity that Guthrie (1995) further describes as unintentional slights that can create an atmosphere of invisibility, hostility, or present the idea that something racist might happen for people or color. These exchanges may be viewed by some as completely innocuous, but are frequently interpreted as having a denigrating message due to one's racial/ethnic membership. Those who might be communicating a racial microaggression are commonly unaware of their actions or the impact it has on another (Sue et al.).

There has been little research regarding what constitutes racial microaggreassions (Constantine, 2007; Sue et al, 2007), due in part to the implicit and unconscious nature of their expression; however some identified examples include being ignored in line, being mistaken for a server or salesclerk at a store (Pierce, 1995), or being mistaken for a foreigner due to your skin color. Constantine identified 12 commonly experienced racial

microaggressions specifically among African Americans in counseling. Examples include color blindness (“I don’t see you as Black”), overidentification (“I’m gay, I know what it’s like to be discriminated against.), and stereotyped assumption. Other examples include idealization (“I’m sure you can cope with this problem as a ‘strong, Black woman”), the meritocracy myth (“If Black people just worked harder, they could be just as successful as others”), or minimization of racial-cultural issues in the counseling relationship. Similarly, a study examining racial microaggressions commonly experienced among Asian and Asian Americans found some of the following examples: (1) being treated as if an Alien or foreigner, (2) being assigned the trait of intelligence, (3) denied experiences of discrimination (“Asians are the new Whites), (4) exoticization of Asian women, equating their identity to that of sexual objects, domestic servants, and passive companions, (5) invalidation of interethnic differences (“all Asians look alike”), (6) pathologizing cultural values or communication styles, (7) invisibility (“People talk about Black and White, where do we fit?”) (Sue et. al.).

The total experience of racism or discrimination –whether its expression is more overt or unconscious and unintentional –may differ widely for each individual and may involve simultaneous exposure to multiple levels of racism. Training institutions and educators of even the most multiculturally responsive programs are often already embedded within a Western ideal, making invisible and unconscious many of the exchanges that may occur (Margolis & Romero, 1998). Thus, the experience of racism or discrimination and potential impact of such behaviors cannot be ignored.

Experiences of Racism and Discrimination in Graduate Education

There is less research than might be expected regarding the experiences of racial

and ethnic discrimination in graduate education (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Erikson, 1996; Garder, 2005; Harrison, 2001; Lacourt, 2003; Nasrin, 2001; Pilkington & Cantor, 1996). In part, there may be a general assumption that such discriminatory acts do not take place at such levels of higher education. However, studies demonstrate the complicated interplay of individual, cultural, institutional, and aversive levels of racism and discrimination that are experienced by graduate students of color.

Gardner (2005) qualitatively explored experiences of ethnic minority nursing students. Participants reported feelings of loneliness, isolation, feelings of differentness, absence of acknowledgement by department, peers' lack of understanding and knowledge regarding cultural differences, and lack of support from teachers. These factors contributed to a considerably higher attrition rate within the program among minority nursing students. Biases in graduate education may also take various forms from exclusion of multiculturally relevant material in courses, and being denied opportunities such as assistantships, supervision, or financial resources, to more overt comments from instructors or advisors (Pilkington & Cantor, 1996). Harrison (2001) examined the experiences of African American doctoral students among a predominantly Caucasian American department. Nearly one third reported experiencing of race-related difficulties, which included experiencing resistance and feelings of resentment among peers regarding their presence, denial of opportunities, as well as an underestimation of their abilities and lack of encouragement.

More specifically, women of color may face several other challenges in graduate education, particularly if the cultural ideals and values they have been raised with, conflict with those practiced in a Western, academic culture (Lacourt, 2003; Nasrin,

2001). For example, it can be difficult adjusting to the communication style, which tends to be more open and direct in an environment of higher learning, whereas certain cultures may place more value upon listening, observing, or speaking only when a person of authority speaks to you (Lacourt). These challenges, without multicultural sensitivity or understanding on behalf of faculty or department, can result in considerable academic difficulties. In a study examining the perceptions of female international students, women expressed experiencing problems regarding language barriers, overt discrimination, and were met with a lack of awareness regarding other cultural groups from their American peers (Nasrin). Other graduate students of color may experience assumptions made on behalf of faculty and peers regarding interests in multicultural issues. Additionally, Erikson (1996) qualitatively explored obstacles that minority women may face in graduate education among four women working on their dissertation. Themes that emerged included lack of emotional and financial support and a power structure that marginalize women and students of color. Women further reported experiencing a decrease in their sense of self-worth.

As women often take on several roles outside of their academic and professional capacity, the social and personal lives of women of color may also be affected, and thus, indirectly influence their academic and professional development. Beoku-Betts (2004) qualitatively explored the issues of racism, gender bias, and third-world marginality in graduate education among 15 women. Women in graduate training reported that such biases influenced how they were mentored and perceived by faculty, interacted with peers, as well as managed their personal lives. The author further addressed that several women were not aware of how such biases affected their personal and/or professional

lives.

It is suggested that many graduate training programs are embedded in a “White, male, conservative” (Margolis & Romero, 1998, p. 1) framework that may have a “hidden curriculum” (Jackson, 1968 in Margolis & Romero, p. 2), which not only acts to train and socialize professionals but may simultaneously reproduce the same types of inequalities that exist outside of academia. In their analysis of 26 minority women in a doctoral sociology program, they found that graduate departments might stigmatize minority women students (overtly or covertly) as affirmative action students or behave in ways as to stereotype students (Margolis & Romero). Relevant to this discussion is what is termed the “null environment” (Betz, 1989, p.136; Freeman, 1979; Hackett, Betz, Casas, & Rocha –Singh, 1992). The null educational environment with respect to the professionalization or socialization of women of color is the idea that there is a lack of responsiveness, support, or encouragement of women of color within certain educational environments that are dominated by men, thus having an impact upon their personal and professional development (Betz, 1989).

There is little research regarding the experience and impact of racial and ethnic discrimination on the personal and professional lives of women in color in graduate education. However, prior research seems to have identified social, academic, and institutional challenges influencing the professional development of how women of color are perceived, mentored, and subsequently treated within their academic departments (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Erikson, 1996; Garder, 2005; Harrison, 2001; Lacourt, 2003; Margolis &Romero, 1998; Nasrin, 2001; Pilkington & Cantor, 1996). This has considerable implications for the career development of women of color, as well as the

future development of their respective fields among the helping professions.

Impact of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Microaggressions

Experiencing an act of racial or ethnic discrimination has been associated with a variety of negative emotional and psychological outcomes. For example, researchers have found that women who experience discrimination may experience feelings of depression, anxiety, physical symptoms such as headaches, and stress (Barnes, 2005; Dion, Dion, & Pak, 1992; Landrine, & Klonoff, 1996; Landrine, Klonoff, Gibbs, Manning, & Lund, 1995; Pak, Dion, & Dion, 1991). Such emotional reactions among graduate students may be distracting and effect academic performance (Myers & Dugan, 1996). Lastly, Schmader, Major, and Gramzow (2001) studied the impact of ethnic stereotypes and experiences of injustice in graduate training upon academic performance among 184 African American students, 270 Latino students, and 222 European American students. Results demonstrated that experiences of ethnic injustice predicted devaluing and discounting of their academic performance among African American and Latino graduate students.

Emotional stressors experienced that are specific to those incited by experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination have also been described (Harrell, 2000). Racism related life events that are episodic and cause stress (Wheaton, 1993 in Harrell), are a significant discriminatory event that may occur in a specific life domain such as school, work, one’s neighborhood, etc., and has a beginning and end. Examples include being rejected from a job due to racial or cultural background or being stopped by the police. While episodic race-related events may occur within a particular period, the emotional and psychological impact can vary and be quite long lasting. Additionally, the impact of racial/ethnic

discrimination cannot be fully understood without the inclusion of vicarious experiences of racial/ethnic discriminatory experiences, which may occur through observation or listening to others' experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination, such as those of one's family members or close friends (Essed, 1991; Root, 1993). Hearing about such experiences may cause distress, heightened anxiety, a sense of danger, or sadness. Such experiences also send messages to individuals about their own ethnic group, dominant groups, or could teach certain lessons regarding the relationship between these groups (Harrell).

More recently, a discussion of the impact of microaggressions has also emerged in the racism literature and has been likened to that of carbon monoxide –invisible yet lethal (Sue & Sue, 2003; Sue et al., 2007; Tinsley-Jones, 2003). While overt race-related events may occur infrequently, microstressors or microaggressions occur far more often. It is suggested that a person may encounter over a thousand experiences of microaggressions over a lifetime, however may not perceive them as "serious," or even recalls them unless asked (Pierce, 1995). As explained previously, these acts are often unconscious and unintentional and further, these experiences are often minimized by the individual and others, labeled as "non-racial" (Carter, 1994). However, the impact of such events over a lifetime is insidious. Such experiences can feel demoralizing, dehumanizing, disrespectful, and objectifying (Harrell, 1997). In addition, the accumulation of microaggressions can contributes to one's overall stress load, feelings of anger, and depression –impacting one's physical integrity and psychological well-being (Pierce, Sue et. al.).

Several theories have been proposed to help explain the emotional, behavioral, or

psychological effects or outcomes of racial and ethnic discrimination that women and minorities in particular may experience. For example, Crosby (1984) proposed the denial of personal discrimination hypothesis, which suggests that the experience of perceiving yourself as a victim may incite feelings of anxiety to the extent that an individual might deny or minimize the experience of discrimination. Thus, those who report experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination will experience a high degree of negative emotions and psychological outcomes, which is consistent with the current literature. On the other hand, a failure to perceive an event as discriminatory does not necessarily obviate its impact. A certain degree of denial may substantiate one's belief in a just world or idea of fairness, thus, avoiding feelings of vulnerability (Crosby). While this may allow short-term protection, however, it may also diminish the ability to develop adaptive long-term coping strategies and leave an individual somewhat unprepared (Harrell, 2000).

Alternatively, it is also proposed by more current group consciousness and social movement theories (Bartky, 1977; Dreifus, 1973 in Foster, 2000; Gamson, 1992) that perceiving discrimination may be associated with positive outcomes, depending on how the event is attributed. For example, when a woman defines a discriminatory experience attributable to her group status (as opposed to herself personally), she may feel less isolated and more validated. Further, defining an experience of discrimination as group discrimination involves a woman's recognition that what happens to the group effects her personally. Thus, she may also be more likely to engage in proactive behaviors aimed at enhancing group status and therefore enhancing her personal well-being. In such cases, experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination can result in feeling empowered (Foster).

The emotional, psychological, physical impact of racial and ethnic discrimination

has been clearly demonstrated. The significant stress that results from acts of racial/ethnic discrimination may also be moderated or buffered by how one perceives or copes with such experiences. Integrating transactional models of stress and coping (Cox, 1978; Coyne & Lazarus, 1980; Hobfoll, 1988; Lazarus, 1966; Mason, 1975; McGrath, 1970 in Matheny, Aycock, Curlette, & Junker, 2003) with an understanding of race-related stress (Harrell, 2000) may be particularly important in conceptualizing the impact of racial/ethnic discrimination among women of color.

Coping and other Protective Factors

Transactional models of stress and coping (Cox, 1978; Coyne & Lazarus, 1980; Hobfoll, 1988; Lazarus, 1966; Mason, 1975; McGrath, 1970 in Matheny et al., 2003) discuss that stressful outcomes or a stress reaction is the result of an imbalance between one's perceived demands and perceived resources to cope with those demands. As such, the role of appraisal (perception) of one's environmental demands as well as one's abilities or resources to cope becomes important in determining the impact of stress. Hobfall (1989) contends that the appraisal of one's resources may be more important with respect understanding stressful reactions and impact. In light of the potential impact of experiences of racism and discrimination, this model may be applied to how one copes with such experiences, when we consider racism-related stress (Harrell, 2000). Race-related stress refers to experiences of racism embedded within interpersonal, collective, cultural, and sociopolitical contexts (Jones, 1997) that can be sources of stress (Harrell).

Coping. As a point of clarification, coping responses refer to behaviors that occur after stressors have been engaged (Pearlin & Schroeder, 1978). Alternatively, coping resources refer to factors that are already in place before stressor occur and that can be

drawn upon to lessen the cost of dealing with them (Wheaton, 1983; Matheny et al., 2003). Research suggests that how one copes with perceived experiences of discrimination may be a moderating factor in terms of potential negative emotional and psychological outcomes experienced (Barnes, 2005; Foster, 2000, McCarthy, Fouladi, Junker, & Matheny, 2006; Ruggiero & Taylor, 1995). Given this, some theorists and researchers have maintained emphasis upon the (appraised) resource side of the stress equation (Hobfall, 1989; Matheny et. al, 2003). Furthermore, psychologists and researchers in the area of coping responses suggest that certain styles of coping may be more effective in dealing with negative events, acting as a buffer. For example, emotion-focused coping, which acts to manage negative emotions that may be evoked, but does not change the situation itself, may be less effective than active coping strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Matheny et al., 2002; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). Coping strategies such as avoidance, minimization, denial, or social coping may be all strategies used to help manage the feelings evoked from negative events such as discriminatory behavior. Active coping strategies, however, involve focusing energies on changing the situation or changing one's viewpoint of the situation. These coping styles have been theorized as being beneficial in coping with perceived emotional and psychological stressors such as acts of discrimination (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978; Brockner & Hullon, 1978; Foster, 2000; Hart, Earing, & Heady, 1995; Heakhausen, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Problem-solving, reframing, or collaborative group action would all be considered examples of active coping strategies.

Several studies have examined the various coping responses utilized by different racial/ethnic groups who have perceived instances of discrimination in order to

understand the complexity of how coping style might act to ameliorate the impact of such experiences. For example, it has been found that highly achieving Latina and African American women who utilize coping strategies such as reframing, flexibility, creativity, maintaining balance, and interconnectedness are better able to defend against social barriers (Fassinger, 1990; Gomez et. al, 2001; Richie, Sperber, & Fassinger, 1997). This may be helpful in understanding coping responses that are effective in guarding against biased, racist, or discriminatory experiences as well. Nasrin (2001) further explored the specific coping strategies utilized among international women in graduate education. Women reported experiencing acts of discrimination, considerable difficulty adjusting, language barriers, as well as a lack of cultural awareness about their surroundings. Most women coped with such challenges actively by learning more about their surrounding environment and understanding the system they were in. Students also expressed wanting institutional support to assist them in the acculturation and assimilation processes. Participants suggested that the institution foster discussion and awareness between themselves and their European American peers, as this seemed to be a source of the distress they experienced.

Motoike (1995) explored the attribution of perceived racism –blatant or subtle –in addition to types of coping utilized on emotional outcomes such as self-esteem among 362 Chinese and Japanese American undergraduate students. Participants were asked to read vignettes, which demonstrated situations depicting varying forms of discrimination and asked to respond regarding their attribution of the event and how they would cope with the event. Subtle forms of racial/ethnic discrimination were found to be associated with higher levels of shame, depression, and lower levels of self-esteem than the blatant

condition. This is particularly alarming when one considers the context of graduate education, where overt discrimination may not be as considerable, but embedded institutional or covert isolation practices may be more evident. Methods of coping did not differ significantly based on types of discrimination experience and seemed to focus upon active coping. This may highlight that cultural orientation or values influence one's coping style (Scott, 2003).

A more recent study (Foster, 2000) examined whether the method of coping with perceived discrimination among female university students (N = 262) would predict whether behavioral outcomes are negative or positive rather than the perception of the discriminatory behavior itself. It was found that coping mechanisms predicted psychosocial behavior better than did the type of perceived experiences of discrimination. Consistent with previous research, women who utilized avoidance forms of coping seemed to experience negative psychological symptoms (Evans & Evans, 1995; Spaccarelli & Fuchs, 1997; Ullman, 1996). Other studies demonstrated an association of avoidance coping with somatic symptoms (Pennebaker & Susman, 1988). Furthermore, it was demonstrated that female students who used forms of social coping skills seemed to have more positive outcomes, such as taking collective action, feeling less helpless, and feeling a greater sense of support.

Barnes (2005) studied 114 African American undergraduate students for perceived discrimination experiences as well as coping, life satisfaction, and stress. Interestingly, findings suggested that for African American students, forms of coping did not moderate stress related to racial discrimination, but did so for other forms of stress overall. Coping style also predicted overall life satisfaction and generally avoidance

coping was inversely related to stress and life satisfaction. This study suggests effective forms of coping may vary for dealing with forms of racial and ethnic discrimination and may vary by racial and ethnic group. This is further upheld in a study exploring discrimination among medical students, in which female students utilized social coping more readily and perceived this to be effective, while male students who also experienced discrimination and felt excluded from certain learning opportunities utilized avoidance, resulting in unresolved frustration (Nicholson, 2002).

Several studies have not only illustrated the impact of coping, but also point to individual protective factors or institutional resources which may be helpful in combating race related stress These include connectedness, ethnic identity, and aspects of mentoring and institutional support (Bartky, 1977; Dreifus, 1973 in Foster, 2000; Escoto; 2004; Gamson, 1992; Greene, 2002; Hayes & Lin, 1994; Harrison, 2001; Rabasca, 2000; Yoo & Lee, 2005). These factors may be particularly important for graduate training programs to consider in terms of raising multicultural awareness as well as more proactively addressing issues of racism or discrimination.

Connectedness. The use of active coping strategies can be extremely helpful. Hayes and Lin (1994) suggest that many international students in particular may prefer active strategies such as learning new skills or talking with others in order to learn more about their new environment. Harrison (2001) found that “connectedness” whether to family, peers, faculty, or God may be particularly effective in responding to discriminatory actions. This may also be seen as a method of social coping. The literature suggests that one protective and supportive factor in terms of how racial and ethnic discrimination is perceived, and its impact on the connectedness that an individual feels

connected with other students of color (Bartky, 1977; Foster, 2000; Gamson, 1992). Thus, it is suggested that students of color gain support for and from other students of minority status (Greene, 2002; Hayes & Lin). This may be particularly important for international graduate students or those who prefer active coping strategies.

Ethnic Identity. Having a well-developed ethnic identity has been studied as a protective factor against racial discrimination for Asian Americans. One study (Yoo & Lee, 2005) further demonstrated that those individuals with a strong ethnic identity were more likely to engage in active coping strategies, such as social coping, cognitive restructuring, and problem solving. However, the study also reflected that active coping strategies were only significantly effective in buffering the impact of racial/ethnic discrimination when perceived racial discrimination was low.

Escoto (2004) similarly explored the relationship between experiences of perceived discrimination, ethnic identity, religiosity and coping responses among 206 Mexican American undergraduate students. Results indicated that participants with a strong ethnic identity and religiosity are more likely to report incidences of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination. However, they are also more likely to utilize active coping strategies and planned, methodological interventions when coping with experiences of perceived ethnic / racial discrimination.

Mentors. While women overwhelmingly comprise the practice of counseling, psychology, and education, only 30% of faculty in these disciplines are women and only a fraction of these are women of color (Rabasca, 2000). Results of previous studies indicate that students who receive mentoring from those who are of similar backgrounds can be very powerful in their academic and professional success (Betz & Hackett, 1992;

Gomez et al. 2001). Women of color who are able to find mentors, even outside of their academic departments may experience a greater sense of support and feel better understood (Lacourt, 2003).

Institutional Support. In general, women tend to score lower in feelings of academic self-efficacy than men, and differences are consistent with stereotypical patterns of gender socialization, despite equal ability and skill levels (Betz & Hackett, 1981; Hackett et al., 1992). Women of color have even lower self-efficacy expectations especially due to experiences of oppression and racial bias (Hackett, et al.), which can be cultivated and maintained among graduate departments.

The educational environment itself may provide and endorse differential learning experiences and outcomes for women of color. Betz 1989, (p. 136; Freeman, 1979; Hackett, et al, 1992) discusses what is known as the "null environment," which neither restricts nor supports certain opportunities for women and minorities, while encouraging men. Differential learning experiences and opportunities in both social and educational environments may result in women and minority individuals feeling ill equipped to meet the requirements of their program and systemically reduce the self-efficacy of particular individuals (Betz; Stake, 1984). Institutional and faculty support and policies addressing such issues may be important in assisting women of color in higher education.

Summary

There are several forms of racial and ethnic discrimination, which includes individual, institutional, and cultural, which can occur on both covert and overt levels and across several contexts. Additionally, aversive forms of racism, particularly racial microaggressions, which are unintentional slights based on race/ethnic affiliation, may

create a sense of hostility or invisibility in order to indicate that a racist or discriminatory environment exists. Although there is not a clear consensus upon the definitions of racial or ethnic discrimination, the impact of experiences of racial or ethnic discrimination is clearly demonstrated and associated with a variety of negative emotional and psychological outcomes. How one experiences and copes with racial and ethnic discrimination in graduate education may be particularly important in determining their educational and professional outcomes. Additionally, there are several other mediators, such as protective factors or institutional resources that can affect the outcomes of racial and ethnic discrimination, particularly for women of color. These include, but may not be limited to ethnic identity, religiosity feelings of connectedness, institutional support, and mentoring.

CHAPTER THREE

Method

Participants

Participants included a convenient sample of 10 participants (*N* = 10), which continued until saturation was reached (Charmaz, 2000; Fassinger, 2005). Characteristics of participants included graduate-level, English-speaking, women of color within graduate level programs of various helping professions within a College of Education of a Southeastern University. The sample was also restricted to include only *visible ethnic minority* women in order to limit the bounds and scope of the study to only aspects of racial and ethnic discrimination (Creswell, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The term visible ethnic/racial group refers to non-Caucasian individuals/groups whose physical racial and ethnic characteristics are visible and salient. This commonly includes, *but is not limited to*, African Descent, African, and African American, Native American, Asian, and Asian American including Pacific Islander groups, Latina, and Latina American groups and can also include Biracial individuals. Alternatively, it is also important to note that individuals, who identify as a certain cultural/ethnic background, may not have physical or phenotypic racial characteristics as such (Cook & Helms, 1988; Kwong-Liem, 2001). Furthermore, while the U.S. Census Bureau (2002) does not necessarily define people of color or minorities similar as APA or the above psychological studies, within the context of this study, constructs of identity are based on psychological constructs (identity, self-identity, visible racial/ethnic group, and people of color). Lastly,

International and Biracial individuals were excluded, as these individuals may have factors associated with their multicultural identities that extend beyond the scope of this study and deserve individual attention in the literature (Gillem & Thompson, 2004; Nasrin, 2001; Root, 1994).

Sample characteristics include the following: The ages of the women ranged from 23 years of age to 41 years of age, with an average age was 30.88 years (SD = 7.67 years). Among the sample (*N* = 10), 9 women identified their racial/ethnic background as African American and one woman identified herself as Iranian American. With respect to marital status, 4 of the women were single/never married, 5 were married/ partnered, and one woman was separated/divorced. Eight women reported their sexual orientation as heterosexual, one woman identified as being a lesbian, and one of the participants reported that she was questioning her sexual orientation. With respect to religiosity and spirituality, 6 participants identified themselves as Christian, 3 indicated being spiritual, but not religious, while one woman stated that she was of the Bahaii faith. Participants were recruited from a variety of helping professions. Three of the respondents indicated they were obtaining their doctoral degrees within the following fields: Clinical Neuropsychology, Educational Psychology, and Counselor Education. Seven students were in the process of obtaining their Masters Degrees or Educational Specialist Degrees within the following helping professions: Professional Counseling and School Counseling. Average household income was used as a measure of capturing the socioeconomic status of participants. The average household income among participants, ranged from $45,000 to $68,200 (SD could not be determined as household income was broken into categorical variables/brackets). The range of annual household income was

less than $10,000 to a bracket of $150,000-$249,000.

Lastly, 5 women participated in the first Group Interview Meeting (A), while 4 women participated in the second Group Interview Meeting (B). One individual was unable to make the group interview meeting despite numerous efforts to schedule a mutually convenient time. Based on demographic make up of the participants, the racial/ethnic background of women who participated appeared to be mostly comparable across Group Interview Meetings. However, it should be noted that the racial/ethnic background of one participant, who identified as Iranian-American is different from the majority of the participants of this study, who identified as African/African-American descent. Thus, she may have unique experiences adding to the richness of this study as well as potentially influencing dynamics of that Group Interview Meeting (B). Please refer to Table 1 for a summary of the demographic characteristics of participants.

Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency/ Percentage/Mean
Gender	Female	10/ 100%
Age (Years)	Mean	30.88
	Range	23 to 41
	SD	
Race/Ethnicity	Black/African American	9/ 90%
	Other/ Iranian American	1/ 10%
Marital Status	Single/ Never Married	4/ 40%
	Married/ Partnered	5/ 50%

	Divorced/ Separated	1/ 10%
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	8/ 80%
	Lesbian	1/ 10%
	Questioning	1/ 10%
Religion/Spirituality	Christian	6/ 60%
	Spiritual /Not Religious	3/ 30%
	Other/ Bahaii	1/ 10%
Educational Program	Ph.D. (Clinical, Educational Psychology, Counselor Education)	3/ 30%
M.A. /Ed.S.	(Professional and School Counseling)	7/ 70%
Annual Household Income ($)	Mean	$45,000 to $68,200
	Range	< $10,000 to $150,000-$249,000
	SD*	

Note. Standard Deviation could not be determined, as household income was broken to income brackets.

Graduate level students were recruited via announcements to minority graduate student organizations and flyers posted within a College of Education of a Southeastern University. Flyers/announcements indicated the general purpose of the study and the requirements for participation, which included (a) being a graduate-level student in a graduate program and (b) being a woman of color. The researcher's contact information was made available on the announcements and interested students could contact the researcher for further information. Small monetary compensation for participation was

provided and discussed verbally as well as in the informed consent.

Once the researcher was contacted and appropriateness for participation was verified, researcher and the participant discussed the parameters of the study in more detail, confirmed interest in participation, discussed compensation for participation, and arranged a mutually convenient interview date and time. Participants received and completed the research packet on the day of their individual interview, which included: (1) a demographic questionnaire (Appendix A) and (2) consent form (two copies, one for participant and one for researcher) (Appendix B).

Data Sources

Two methods of qualitative inquiry were utilized:

(1) Individual interviews. An individual interview with each participant was conducted using a general interview guide approach (Fontana & Frey, 2002). A grounded theory approach to interviewing often utilizes some degree of structure that includes both open-ended questions allowing participants to reveal their stories, followed by more structured probes (Fassinger, 2005). Strauss and Corbin (1998) have further suggested a funnel-like approach to interviewing, moving from broader to more specific questions during the course of the interview. See Appendix C for specific interview questions and interview guide. Questions from interview were specifically derived from the research questions and then field tested (and modified) during three pilot interviews (Creswell, 1994).

Themes addressed in the initial interview included perceived racial/ethnic discriminatory experiences, impact of perceived experiences, coping with these experiences, and outcome of these experiences. Each individual interview lasted for

approximately one hour and was conducted within the graduate institution/ department of the PI in a confidential office. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, researcher debriefed with each participant as necessary after each individual interview. Each individual interview was transcribed and coded utilizing open coding.

Rennie (2000) applies Strauss and Corbin's (1998) approach to studies involving repeated interviews with participants by recommending increasingly directive questions based on an emerging theory being verified by the participants. Thus, after initial analysis of individual interviews a listing of themes was compiled and presented at a group interview meeting to allow an opportunity to clarify and to ask additional questions. Each participant chose a pseudonym to protect their identity, which was also attached to their respective quotes/themes. Participants were also told they need not divulge their names in the group if they do not feel comfortable. Nine out of ten participants who participated in individual interviews attended the group interview meeting.

(2) *Group Interview Meetings*. PI and participants discussed the general themes from individual interviews and their thoughts and reactions to the results in order to allow for member-checking, clarification, as well as exposure to other's experiences of discrimination and coping (Denizen, 1989 in Fontana & Frey, 2002; Rennie, 2000; Wellings, Branigan, & Mitchell, 2000). Participant's experience of participation in the research itself was also being assessed. These meetings lasted approximately one and a half hours and were conducted within the graduate institution/ department of the PI in a confidential office. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, researcher debriefed with the group as well as with any individuals as necessary (Wellings et. al, 2000). These group meetings were also transcribed and coded using open coding. Please see Appendix D and

E for an outline of these meetings and initial themes presented at these groups.

Interviews were conducted and organized such that five individual interviews were conducted and then followed by a group interview meeting (referred to as Group Interview A) with participants 1-5. Next, another five individual interviews were conducted, followed by another group interview meeting with participants 6-10 (referred to as Group Interview B). Groups were broken down in order to create a context of comfort given the sensitive nature of the topic as well as create two groups to validate with each other (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Wellings et. al, 2000). After the 10th individual interview, it was decided that further sampling was not necessary as saturation may have been reached based on criteria set and that further sampling would not likely not lead to additional data within the scope of this study (please refer to data analyses procedures).

Demographic Survey. A demographic survey was developed for this study that asked the following: age, race, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, SES, primary language, graduate program and degree, citizenship, and years in the U.S. Please see Appendix A for survey (Bradburn, Sudman, &Wanskink, 2004)

Design Rationale and Procedure

This study utilized a grounded theory approach (Glaser & A. L. Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998 in Creswell, 1994) to investigate distinctive experiences and impact of perceived racial and ethnic discrimination, coping styles, effective methods of coping with perceived racial/ethnic discrimination among women of color in graduate education and training, and experiences of participation in this research. This research was also intended to serve as an intervention, allowing women of color who have felt

marginalized or oppressed to have a voice and experience a sense of validation and connectedness via individual and group meetings. Thus, a secondary purpose of the study was to evaluate experiences of participating in the research study. A grounded theory approach allowed for data or information to emerge from the viewpoints or "voices" of these women (Glasser & Strass, 1967; Cresswell, Fassinger, 2005). Two methods of qualitative inquiry were used in examining experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination and coping styles among racially/ ethnically diverse graduate students. These included individual interviews (Appendix C) and a group interview meeting (Appendix D). Additionally, a structured demographic questionnaire (Appendix A) was used.

The grounded theory approach to qualitative research assumes that people construct their realities through social interactions (Cutcliffe, 2000). Grounded theorists extrapolate the meanings created in these social contexts, attempting to discover how groups of people define their realities (Cutcliffe). The hallmark of the grounded theory approach is to produce "a set of well-developed categories" that are "systematically interrelated through statements of relationship" into a "framework that explains some relevant social, psychological, . . . or other phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 22) that is "grounded" in data collected from participants on the basis of the complexities of their lived experiences in a social context.

Issues pertaining to racism, power, and multicultural sensitivity are particularly sensitive. Because of the sensitive nature and topic of this study, Fassinger (2005) highlights a feminist approach (poststructural or critical theory) to grounded theory research as being particularly effective and appropriate for addressing populations, issues, and goals that are specifically geared towards social change by giving voice to and

empowering marginalized groups. Grounded theory holds as its core tenet the construction of theory out of lived experiences of participants, integrating theory and practice. However, a grounded theory approach that further integrates post-structural and critical paradigms (feminist) may allow for a much needed representation of science-practice-advocacy model of research in counseling and psychology (Fassinger), which aligns with the ultimate goals of this study.

Data Analyses

(1) Analysis began after each individual interview with an immediate contact sheet (See Appendix F) as an account of the interview experience (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Consistent with the grounded theory approach, both Open and Axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Creswell, 1994) were utilized in order to understand themes that emerged from qualitative data sources (individual interviews and group interview meeting) among the following constructs: (a) experiences of perceived ethnic/ racial discrimination; (b) impact of racial/ethnic discrimination; (c) types of coping responses utilized; (d) institutional or protective resources; and (e) experience of research participation. (2) Open coding was used to reduce transcribed data into units of meaning (concepts) that were labeled (often with words close to those of the participant), and interrogated. Morrow and Smith (2005) detail that units of meaning may vary from as small as one word to as large as a paragraph; thus, the focus of this analytic phase will be to extrapolate meaning categories of the constructs being studied. (3) Axial coding was then used to identify any relationships between or among categories. (4) A constant comparative method of analysis was utilized (Charmaz, 2000; Fassinger, 2005) in which coded units of meaning were compared to other coded units of meaning and concepts

gradually be grouped together into categories that encompass those concepts. As additional data gathered through participant interview, coded concepts continued to be compared to existing data and (re) categorized accordingly. In order to allow for this process, each individual interview was transcribed and coded initially using open coding prior to the proceeding interview data to allow for comparison with new data, recursive analysis, and ongoing and concurrent coding/ analysis throughout the research procedure until a level of saturation appeared satisfied (Creswell; Fassinger; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). (5) Emerging codes and/or themes were presented at group interview meetings as a form of member-checking as this allowed inclusion of participants as fully as possible in the research process, verification of the accuracy of the individual interview data provided, as well as reduction researcher bias (Creswell; Fassinger). (6) Theoretical sampling after a minimum of 10 participants resumed until saturation of data was reached- that is additional codes or themes did not emerge. The decision to continue sampling was based upon the return to contact sheets, reflexive journal, and audit trail in order to determine if (a) saturation was reached, and (b) further interviewing would lead to extrapolation of new or undiscovered information (Charmaz; Fassinger). More specifically, after the tenth individual interview, it was decided that further sampling, while helpful for verification or clarification of certain codes, might not be necessary or difficult to specifically recruit in order to answer particular questions. Additionally, few new codes emerged from the final interviews (ninth, tenth), and after returning to the primary interviews, they could be reinforced. Finally, it seemed unlikely that further sampling would answer questions tracked from contact sheets/reflexive journal, as they went beyond the scope of this study or may be

too specific. For example, the last participant, who identified herself as Iran-American may have added a different perspective to issues of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and how one copes with these experiences. While this raises several questions around how different women of color perceive and cope with race related stress, this particular interview did not lead to additional/new codes. Additionally, given that the majority of women who volunteered for this study were of African/African American descent, it may be unlikely that further sampling would answer such questions. (7) All transcripts were re-coded by the PI at completion of all individual interviews in order to verify internal consistency (Miles & Huberman, 1994). (8) A research team was utilized which included: (a) a primary coder (PI), a secondary coder, and a team of four transcriptionists. The primary and secondary coders were of similar educational backgrounds and expertise with respect to qualitative research. Transcriptionists were masters-level students from another department/institution. (b) Once a final codebook was constructed, the primary and secondary coder began the process of inter-rater coding in order to gain inter-rater reliability, clarification, and consistency among codes. Before beginning the process of inter-rater coding/reliability, both the primary and secondary coders went through the process of openly stating biases as well as documenting qualitative research experiences. The secondary coder began by coding three transcripts, after which an initial inter-rater reliability based on those three transcripts was calculated (.67). Next, the primary and secondary coder discussed each discrepant code identified within each transcript, and collapsed and clarified the meaning of various codes. After this process, these three transcripts were re-coded, resulting in an inter-rater reliability of .72. The secondary coder continued coding all transcripts, and the process of discussing codes and clarifying

them continued, resulting in a final inter-rater reliability of .82. (9) As grounded theory emphasizes researcher reflexivity, in that the biases and processes of the researcher are made explicit via monitoring the researcher's analytic decisions and theoretical ideas, a bracketed reflexive journal was maintained in order to track researcher biases, thoughts, and emergent reactions, after each interview as well as during the course of research procedure (Fassinger; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This record was reviewed and incorporated into the final analysis, although not incorporated as a data source. (10) An electronic audit trail was also kept for monitoring research procedures of members of the research team and consultative faculty during the research process (Fassinger; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). (11) Quantitative analysis was used to calculate frequency, means, and standard deviation scores for demographic data. (12) Lastly, triangulation (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest, 1965 in Miles & Huberman, 1994) of data into codes and themes was achieved by utilization of multiple data sources (Denizen, 1978 in Miles and Huberman, 1994): individual interviews, group interviews and member checking, and the current literature (Constantine, 2007; Sue, et. al., 2007).

Open and axial coding of individual and group interviews resulted in 24 themes and 39 subthemes across the following five research questions: (1) What types of experiences of perceived racial and ethnic discrimination in graduate education do women of color experience? (2) How do experiences of perceived ethnic and racial discrimination affect the personal and professional lives of women of color in graduate education? (3) How do women of color in graduate education cope with perceived racial and ethnic discrimination experiences? (4) What institutional and protective factors might be associated with better personal and professional outcomes in responding to racial and

ethnic discrimination in graduate education for women of color? (5) How does participation in this research study affect women of color in graduate education? Research question # 2, which asked what meaning is attributed to experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination, could not be answered based on interview questions and data gathered from the interviews and is discussed further in discussion. Inter-rater reliability across two separate coders was .82. Themes and subthemes will be discussed in more detail in the following Results Chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Results of this study outline the themes that emerged from data analysis of the individual and group interviews. First, themes regarding experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination are discussed. Next, the impact of these experiences is described. Thirdly, different methods of coping that women used in other to mitigate experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination are explained, in addition to how women of color negotiated which coping response to utilize (cognitive processes). The institutional and departmental modifications that could assist women in coping with such experiences are discussed, in addition to the research experiences of participants. Lastly, overarching mediators found to be important in terms of how women of color in this study might perceive and cope with instances of racial/ethnic discrimination are outlined and discussed further. The following 24 themes and 39 subthemes emerged from the data analysis.

Experiences of Ethnic and Racial Discrimination

Women across individual interviews were asked specifically if they "sensed, perceived, or experienced racial or ethnic discrimination during the course of their graduate training." Of the ten women interviewed, three women responded that they did not believe that they had, while seven women reported that they believed that they had and continued to describe experiences that they perceived as racist, discriminatory, or prejudicial. It should be noted that among these women, many found it difficult to decide

if they had perceived or experienced such experiences and appeared to question their own experience or judgment of events.

Six themes and ten subthemes emerged in terms of experiences of perceived racism, discrimination, and/or prejudice, which are summarized in Table 2. These include: (1*) Covert Racism/Discrimination (Null Educational Environment, Differential Negative Treatment, and Racial/Social Segregation*); (2) *Overt Racism/Discrimination (Othering, Treated as a Suspect)*; (3) *Microaggressions (Lack of Visibility, Minimization of Racial/Cultural Issues, Stereotyped Assumptions, Being a Cultural Voice, Insensitive Racial/Cultural Humor, and Colorblindness*); (4) *Cultural Racism*; (5) *Vicarious Racism/Discrimination*; and (6) *Reverse Racism/Discrimination*

Covert Racism/Discrimination

Covert racism or discrimination refers to racially discriminatory acts or attitudes that occur far more often than overt experiences of racism however are hidden, denied, or discounted. This may include acts such as hostility or social isolation (Jones, 1997; Sue, 2003). With respect to perceived experiences of racism and/ or discrimination, *Covert Racism/Discrimination* includes subthemes such as *Null Educational Environment*, *Differential Negative Treatment*, and *Racial/Social Segregation*, which are discussed further.

Null Educational Environment. The *Null Educational Environment* (Betz, 1989; Freeman, 1979; Hacket et.al, 1992) discusses the idea that there is a lack of responsiveness perceived on behalf of women and students of color. Among participants, a lack of responsiveness or encouragement was also perceived as a form of racism/discrimination. As Grace explains, “I try very hard. And to be the caliber that I

am, Given that I work full time, I'm raising two children…I mean everyone does what they do, you know, with their experiences, but I don't seem to get, other than from my advisor, any acknowledgement or appreciation for my thoughts and my ability to contribute to the class." Echoed by Desaree, is the idea that because there is a lack of responsiveness, her own emotional perception of the event is somewhat questioned, "I don't think it was what she said, I think it was what she didn't say…Well, nothing really happened, like, nothing…I guess it was more of her response to me. Just when I gave responses, there wasn't much comment. Like, oh, that was a good answer, or it was more like…I got the feeling –like whatever."

Differential Negative Treatment. Another form of covert discrimination that emerged included *Differential Negative Treatment*, which includes acts or attitudes that occur in the academic environment that are perceived as hostility or negativity specifically towards students of color. For example, Grace discussed her experience:

> Tests were graded for me subjectively…There was only one answer, so you get yes or no correct. But then, she wanted an explanation as to why that's the answer or maybe some additional language about the answer that she graded as she felt appropriate. So my paper compared to my friends…they would get a 9 out of 10 or 10 out of 10 and I would get a 4 out of 10. (Grace)

Similarly, she reported,

> A paper that I wrote um, she called into question um, how well it was written and I know I'm a good writer. Um, informally, the papers that we handed into umm, she always commented, 'excellent, excellent, excellent, great writer, great thoughts, great organization.' But at the final paper due at the end of the class,

> which was a huge portion of the grade for the class…Umm, I failed it, which was almost unheard of in grad school…And it had all these comments on it about not really sure you have the ability to write at this level…(Grace)

Additionally, she noted,

> Um, I just always have a sneaky suspicion that they're not really pleased with me…I am very active in terms of asking questions…So, um, I'm not sure if I'm rubbing them the wrong way because I'm asking questions they are not used to having to answer or if that does have something to do with a racial or ethnic bias? I'm not sure. (Grace)

Racial/Social Segregation. Lastly, *Racial/Social Segregation* refers to racial/ethnic biases that are perceived and exhibited via segregation or inclusion within social relationships with peers, ultimately creating an environment of isolation or exclusion. For example, "I do see announcements that certain people are going to a bar to celebrate something or to do something but it doesn't really seem like an atmosphere that I'd be comfortable in, so I don't even, I have not ever, um, attended those functions" When asked further about this, she explained, "The bars that they're going to, it's just not my social scene. It's not the music I'm accustomed to. Um, [there] isn't really anybody at the locations they're attending that look[s] like me. I don't know (Grace)."

Overt Racism/Discrimination

Overt Racism/Discrimination, as defined previously, includes racially discriminatory acts or attitudes that are easily detectable and may take the form of direct behavior or verbally racially discriminatory acts such as saying a racial slur to another

(Jones, 1997; Sue, 2003). This theme included experiences (subthemes) of *Othering* and being *Treated as a Suspect/Foreigner* outlined further below.

Othering, Othering is the idea that by one's direct and overt behavior or verbal statements regarding one's racial/ethnic background it sets up a dichotomy of "us against them" mentality and may create feelings of hostility or defensiveness. Nina described a situation within her graduate training program, "I would um, and some of the post-docs were from Pakistan, and they really had to deal with a lot of, you know, 'So how do you people deal with…' It was very, it was blatantly horrible, you know. 'So what do you people do?'" What do you people think?' …It was a day to day thing."

Treated as a Suspect/Foreigner. Another subtheme that emerged included being *Treated as a Suspect/Foreigner*. This specifically referred to overt behaviors or statements in which one is treated in a manner or put in a position to defend their credentials, work, or personhood, as if guilty of something. Maya described her experience:

> … [I] had applied to the program, and then in the interview, the person in charge of the interview, the program director at the time, uh, who since retired, he was stating, you know, something's happened with my references. My principle, who has uh, didn't sign the inside of the recommendation form. But it's like I wouldn't have known that…And they were asking me question after question. And so I asked a question –why are you calling me if my file is not complete? Why am I here?…Are you questioning me because it's so well written or you don't believe who I say I am? So we just went back and forth like that…I had to defend myself. (Maya)

Fuji described a similar experience in reference to being asked to clean a professor's office, "Am I supposed to be doing this, you know, right? So the one professor walked by and said, 'I hope you're not in there stealing anything.' And I know he was joking, but it was like you know…"

Microaggressions

Many women questioned their experiences of covert and/overt racism or discrimination, feeling the need to prove their experiences in order to legitimize the experience itself. However, most women readily and overwhelmingly identified experiences of *Microaggressions*, which often were perceived as experiences causing feelings of discomfort, hurt, or frustration, but not necessarily feeling that there may be something unfair or unjust in the situation itself. As defined, microaggressions are slights that often denigrate or may be perceived in such a way as to indicate that something racist might happen (Guthrie, 1995; Sue, 2007). Articles that have explored specific types of microaggressions (Constantine, 2007; Sue et. al, 2007), in addition to the women's individual and group interviews were examined in order to define the following emergent subthemes of microaggressions:

Lack of Visibility, Minimization of Racial/Cultural Issues, Stereotyped Assumptions, Being a Cultural Voice, Insensitive Racial/Cultural Humor, and Colorblindness.

Lack of Visibility. The most evident for students was the *Lack of Visibility.* This is the idea that the program environment (faculty and students) lacks diversity with respect to race/ethnicity. Students may feel that there are few people like them in the environment, feel unwelcome, or feel that it may have some impact upon their learning. With respect to student diversity, Marie remarked, "I am one of two African American

women that started in the program, um, so not as diverse as I would, as I would think that it could be." Grace echoed, “I am the only African American female, there’s one’s Black man, but I don’t even know if he’s still in the program anymore. I don’t know if he dropped out or if he’s finished.” Kim described her view of the program environment, “As far as racial diversity there are mostly White women, but there are also a number of African American women and other ethnic minorities. Not a lot of Latinos or Hispanic women, which was a little interesting to me. In that way maybe it doesn’t reflect the majority culture.” Nina brought to light some of the issues surrounding representation within the student body, “I feel like we are tokens, a couple, you know, a sprinkling of Black people, a sprinkling of others, like two Middle Eastern girls, and two Asian girls. So, I think there is diversity for us and I think that helps raise awareness, but without that diversity, people are kind of clueless about the racial issues that might be present.”

Grace explains, “Not only are the students not very diverse, but the faculty are not very diverse either.” Similarly, “I can count on one had people that are faculty that are diverse –there are three people of color (Nina).” Tia also remarked, “When I read about it in my books, keeps talking about multicultural diversity and staff issues, um, and that kind of makes me think well, where is the multicultural diversity?" Desaree commented on the lack of diversity, however also elaborated:

> I mean it’s hard for me, um…For a faculty of mostly Caucasian males and females to, um, to really, I guess understand issues from other cultures. Because, even for me, I can say I’ve been around a lot of Caucasian people, so I can say I’ve seen people like this, but I’ve never been Caucasian myself, so I can never really teach someone else adequately about the issues they face. I think it’s

> something, another piece that you bring when you represent a different group. (Desaree)

Fuji describes her experience as she was evaluating her program,

> I saw it on the website so; I clicked on each one of their profiles and read their main entries and their seating or whatever. And I was kind of surprised that there weren't any African American women faculty and there were quite a bit of African American female students. Right there, I was kind of you know, oh, this will be an interesting experience. (Fuji)

Nina also reflected on her experience of a lack of visibility, "There are no faculty of color. And it's really bizarre; I always feel a sense of relief when I am around faculty of color." Ultimately, each woman acknowledged a lack of diversity within their academic programs, and most indicated this having some type of impact upon them personally or professionally which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Minimization of Racial/Cultural Issues. The second most prevalent experience of microaggressions included a *Minimization of Racial-Cultural Issues* (Constantine, 2007). This can occur in which there is a lack of attention, ignoring, or dismissing the importance of multicultural issues. Many women expressed similar views to Nina,

> I remember the first day of class, like when um, hearing comments of some people like 'why is this important?' I heard some things that made me like totally not want to talk in class aloud. Um, you know, some people saying like, 'Why do we have to talk about the bad things?' Like, 'Why can't we talk about the good things that have happened for people of color? Like the good things that have been put in place to help people of color?' (Nina)

Similarly, Marie enjoyed the multicultural classes and discussion; however, “most of my friends in the class did not and they didn’t understand, they felt like they shouldn’t have to take a class like that. They didn’t want to take a class like that.” Grace described her classmates’ reactions to a speaker who discussed multiculturalism in the classroom, “It shocked and dismayed some of the White students in the class. They had never heard of it; they disagreed with it." She elaborated, "It was a shock to them to have that discussion, and it was a shock to me to have to see graduate students that were that ignorant to these issues and they’re in graduate school…I was shocked to hear how some of those White women in the one class didn’t know what the word multicultural was, [and] didn’t understand why it should be in the classroom. It was just amazing to me that you could be in an academic setting at this level and to be so unknowledgeable.” Finally, Nina and Grace offered commentary regarding their programs/institutions role in this experience. Grace discussed the lack of attention to multicultural issues, “I really can’t think specifically of any speakers or programs that dealt with multiculturalism…in some of my classes it’s been touched upon, but that’s all that I could remember” Nina explained her program’s view of multicultural issues, “This class (multicultural coursework) has been seen as kind of a controversial class. You know, like students start, you know, piping up about things that they notice, like things that they didn’t know before, and it’s like ‘it’s that damn diversity class.’”

Stereotyped Assumptions. Some women (three) described feeling that others made *Stereotyped Assumptions* (Constantine, 2007), which assumed a behavior, norm or characteristic based on race/ethnicity. Fuji described her experiences in discussing her work with a professor, “I told her that I was a teacher…and it was [an] all Black high

school and the kids were just, and had so many issues just particular to being Black…And she made a reference to she knows a kick-ass, Black, woman teacher." While Fuji acknowledged that her professor likely meant this as a compliment, she reflected, "I don't know. That made me uncomfortable because Black women are always seen as like…It's always that you know, Black women have this persona of being strong or kick-ass, or whatever. I am totally not like that…It just seemed like she made a relation between me and this woman that is not easy to make, but was more based on…color." Nina also discussed her experience in graduate training; "There's a lot of rude people. I felt like people make assumptions about me, about my ethnic identity and my religious identity, and almost 100% of the time they are wrong. But, that means [that] I am also having to defend people of another religion, like Muslim people, because there are a lot of misconceptions."

Being a Cultural Voice. Given the lack of visibility, some women noted a feeling that they are *Being the Cultural Voice* or feeling that they are seen only as a representation of their racial/ethnic background as opposed to a more complex, multifaceted individual. For example, this may be experienced as a pressure to be the multicultural voice in the classroom/academic environment.

> I interviewed with a Black professor, and one of the first questions I asked him was what is the atmosphere like being a professor of color? Because it was important to me to see how a person of color is treated and viewed…I think he had some mixed feelings…He did feel, like if anything, if there were any racial issues that came about, basically it's him and like one other person of color faculty member, and they become these representatives for any group raising

> cultural or racial issue[s], even though that's not necessarily their specialty. (Nina)

Nina further explain her classroom experiences,

> I feel like I kind of [have] been in a place, that, I like was forced to share my experiences as being one of the true people of color in the class. So it's kind of like if I don't say something than people won't learn as much as they could about what they are doing, what they are being a part of, the experiences of others…Sometimes I don't want to talk about it. Sometimes I just want to sit back and, you know, um, you feel more vulnerable that way –when you have to talk about very personal experiences. (Nina)

Kim and Marie explained their own class experience, but note this as not necessarily a negative experience, "I do find myself being the voice of educated Black women in a different way than in an environment where everyone is African American." Marie echoes, "One of the classes that I took this summer was multicultural education, um, multiculturalism in counseling, and I felt like I, or I perceived that my professor was always looking to me being the only African American woman in the class as sort of, to explain, or defend a certain piece of information."

Insensitive Racial/Cultural Humor. Women interviewed also discussed the use *Insensitive Racial/Cultural Humor* in which jokes or slights are made that may make for an uncomfortable environment for people of color. "I do feel really kind of um, strongly that the instructors here are sensitive to ethnic differences, in most cases. But people think that jokes don't count, like if you say it humorously, it won't matter. No, it does matter," explained Kim. She further discussed a professor, who made jokes,

> She will make comments and we're like, 'wow, she should not have said that.' And she'll say something like 'Is anybody offended by that?' And I'm thinking well, yeah, probably somebody is, but you being the professor and the doctor…I do see instances where people may not be as sensitive to the fact that they are in a position of power and if they say certain things, people may not challenge them, but that doesn't mean it's okay to do that. (Kim)

Desaree discusses the uncertainty she feels when she hears certain racial/ cultural jokes, "Maybe she's not comfortable with this…but even when she jokes with us, she's never said…you know how 50% [of something] is truth and 50% is joking, she's never said anything like, uh, oh, maybe she really does think this about this group of people…" Nina also experienced insensitive humor during her graduate training among her colleagues,

> I felt like I was always teaching him. I'm not Pakistani; I'm not Muslim. You know, he would make a lot of jokes. Oh, you're fasting right now; you can't do this kind of work. And I was like no, that's not my religion. There were a lot of jokes being made about, about the Pakistani co-workers who were Muslim who had to go to prayer at certain times, they would go and pray every day. (Nina)

Colorblindness. Lastly, a microaggression experienced included *Colorblindness* (Constantine, 2007), which is the idea that people do not see racial/cultural differences. "I'm in a diversity class right now, and I think in the beginning I was very disinterested in sharing my personal experiences with other people in the class because I felt like they came from a place of colorblindness, you know, I just see everybody the same and race isn't an issue (Nina)." Nina raises the point that views of colorblindness, although

unconscious and seemingly innocuous, denies a person of color their own racial/ethnic reality and may make it more difficult to speak about such matters.

Cultural Racism

Cultural Racism refers to individual or institutional beliefs and expression of the superiority of one group's history, way of life, traditions, language, religion, arts, and values, over another group (Sue, 2003) and may interact with other forms of racism/discrimination (Jones, 1997). In many ways, the cultural values espoused in academia and counseling/mental health systems may be perceived as contradictory to many people of color and vice-versa, perhaps creating a cultural-disconnect and discouraging learning environment. Maya describes how she experiences her program environment, "It's not an enriching environment to thrive…One can survive, and still grow and learn…I know I experience coming to school perhaps then to just get an education, just to get what I came for. But somehow in my culture, my background, I'm used to being affirmed." She continues, "I am used to being, uh, you know, encouraged and then even identified culturally in a way, you know, from writing style to just style of living. And that's not addressed at all." Fuji describes, "there are times, depending on the issue where I feel upset or angry when I'm feeling marginalized, like if we read something in a text that I don't think reflects my experience and we're not discussing it in that light." Maya also added,

> I thought that by looking at me, as an African American woman that I'm not going to be on the fast track to career, and so egocentric about that. I'm not going to be competitive, not as driven. And I thought they understood that. But it was evident by the, you know, the push, which I understand from their perspective…I

> resisted that because that's not who I am. I look at the community. I look at what's good for my community…So what one is, uh, encouraged to seek is really contradictory to who I am as an African American woman. (Maya)

Vicarious Racism/Discrimination

Instances of *Vicarious Racism/Discrimination* include indirect experiences of racism/discrimination in which women had heard about such instances via stories through their friends, family, etc. These experiences, although indirect, may have an impact upon one's perceptions regarding racism/discrimination as well as how one navigates their academic environment. For example, vicarious experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination may relay messages regarding what types of expectations to have within the academic environment and respect to their own personal or professional experience. Fuji discussed how she feels as she hears about friends' experiences:

> My close friend is enrolled in a program here…She's running into quite a bit of racial bias and she discusses it with me. Listening to her, she says the White students, you know, are able to copy and paste like right off the internet, you know. Like regurgitate almost exactly, what they are to read and turn it in and get a good grade and she says that she doesn't do that. She quotes and paraphrases and, you know, how you are supposed to, you not supposed to copy. That's plagiarism, right? But she said a couple of her teachers have been giving her a really hard time…she's become very upset when she talks about it. And, um, and that bothers me and like I said, I don't know if that just that department. (Fuji)

Fuji describes another vicarious experience:

> My friend…she went to Northwestern and University of Pennsylvania and got her masters…she experienced horrible racism…She had never experienced it before…These kids are coming from all these different, you know, middle and upper middle class backgrounds and she just didn't expect for them to have the attitudes that they did. But she was totally surprised. So yeah, but I've heard things that's all. That's [what] makes me anticipate a problem too, you know, the stories. (Fuji)

Similarly, positive vicarious experiences (or lack of vicarious racism/discriminatory experiences) may help women of color remain hopeful about their experiences in their academic studies.

Reverse Racism/Discrimination

Finally, other instances of racism and discrimination were also discussed that appeared to have an impact upon women of color. First, *Reverse Racism* (Sue, 2003) may occur when individuals of the dominant racial/ethnic group feel that they are at a disadvantage due to special privileges a person of color receives. For example,

> I think from my peers in the class, um, I sort of felt like they, maybe thought that I was at an unfair advantage because a lot of things we were learning I already knew or had already experienced in my life. So um, I think they sort of felt like they were at an unfair disadvantage in the class…and I felt like they sort of treated me differently because of that. (Marie)

Table 2.

Experiences of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination

Themes/ Subthemes	Defining Features
(1) Covert Racism/Discrimination	
Null Educational Environment	Perceived acts or attitudes that occur in the academic environment between faculty and students such that there is no responsiveness towards the student of color, creating a null educational environment.
Differential Negative Treatment	Perceived acts or attitudes that occur in the academic environment between faculty and students such that hostility, negativity, or differential treatment towards students of color is perceived.
Social/Racial Segregation	Racial/ethnic biases that are perceived and exhibited via social relationships or racial/ethnic segregation, creating a social environment of exclusion or isolation.
(2) Overt Racism/Discrimination	
Othering	Behavior towards racial/ethnic group (may be stereotyped assumptions) that separates them from the dominant culture. For example, the usage of terms like “you

Table 2 (Continued).

Themes/ Subthemes	Defining Features
	people," "those people," can set up an "us against them," mentality with respect to mainstream society versus the target racial/ethnic group, which may create feelings of hostility or defensiveness.
Treated as a Suspect/Foreigner	Treated in a manner in which a student is put in a position to defend their credentials, work, or personhood as if guilty of something.
(3) Microaggressions	
Lack of Visibility	The program environment lacks diversity with respect to race/ethnicity among students and faculty. "There are few people like me here, and this may hold implications for my learning."
Minimization of Race/Culture	Minimizing, ignoring, or dismissing the important of multicultural issues –can be on an individual or institutional level. "Why do we need to talk about this?"
Stereotyped Assumptions	Assuming that a behavior, norm, or

Table 2 (Continued).

Themes/ Subthemes	Defining Features
	characteristic exists based on a person's race or ethnicity.
Being a Cultural Voice	Seen as *only* representative of their minority status, interested in multicultural issues, as opposed to as a complex individual and being pressured to raise multicultural issues in the academic environment.
Insensitive Racial/Cultural Humor	Jokes or slights that are made which may not be intentionally offensive but present an environment that can feel uncomfortable for people of color.
Colorblindness	Not seeing racial/ethnic differences, thus denying one's multicultural reality/experience. "We're all the same."
(4) Cultural Racism/Discrimination	Individual or institutional belief and expression of the superiority of one group's history, way of life, traditions, language, religion, arts, and values, over another group.
(5) Vicarious Racism/Discrimination	Experiences of racism, discrimination, prejudice, or microaggressions that are

Table 2 (Continued).

Themes/ Subthemes	Defining Features
	experienced by others or are overheard.
(6) Reverse Racism/Discrimination	Experiences of racism/discrimination in which individuals of the dominant group may have felt that they are at a disadvantage due to special privileges a person of color may have received in any given instance.

Impact of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination

Many women (seven) discussed experiences of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination. These women also discussed the perceived impact that these experiences had upon their personal or professional lives within the academic environment. The seriousness of the perceived impact, whether emotionally, personally and professionally varied among the women and may be an indication of the efficacy of their coping responses and resources.

With respect to how perceived instances of racial/ethnic discrimination impacted women of color within a graduate environment, three major themes and nine subthemes that emerged. These included, (1) *Personal* (*Emotional Impact* and *Sense of Self*); (2) *Professional/ Academic* (*Denied Privileges/Opportunities, Limited Resources/Learning Obstacles*, or again feeling pressured in *Being a Cultural Voice*); and within the (3) *Program Environment* (*Adversarial*, *Alienating*, and *Collaborative*) (Wile, 2002) See Table 3 for defining features of each of the above themes and subthemes.

Personal

The impact of racial/ethnic discrimination may be felt in terms of the emotional, psychological, or other aspects of harm that are felt to one's personhood. *Personal* aspects of how such experiences may affect women of color are discussed more specifically in terms of emergent subthemes, *Emotional Impact* and *Denigration to Sense of Self*.

Emotional Impact. Most women discussed the *Emotional Impact* the experiences they described earlier had upon them both immediately as well as later, and this included a variety of both externalizing and internalizing emotions –discomfort, feeling overwhelmed, sadness, depression, hurt, shame, shock and disgust, and anger. For some women, it was difficult to verbalize the feeling or impact, and they simply felt uncomfortable. Often, this also seemed related to more questioning of the experience itself (I don't know the appropriate reaction to have because I'm not sure what this exchange is). Women who tended to appraise the situation as more clearly unjust, unfair, or racially motivated seemed to have a stronger emotional reaction. For example, when asked about her experiences of perceived biases, Desaree discussed her own questioning of her experience, "I don't know, [be]cause I'm usually slow to pick up, but um in my interview, I felt uncomfortable." She continued, "It kind of makes me feel, I don't know, uneasy. Or I don't know what word accurately describes it, but it's kind of uncomfortable, I guess…"I don't know if I could verbalize it. It was just an uncomfortable feeling like why isn't she responding. (Desaree)." Alternatively, it seemed that women of color who appeared to perceive events as more clearly racially motivated, seemed to have stronger reactions of externalizing emotions such as anger, disgust, or

frustration. For example, “It made me feel I guess, I feel upset sometimes, or I wonder why there isn’t more representation (Fuji).” Additionally, Maya discussed how she felt, “You’re so suspect of me? And I’m having to defend myself. I felt like I was on the defense…I felt angry, uh, frustrated, as well as, you know, like I’m not who I say I am. And just at me with like question after question after question (Maya).” Nina added,

> Well, I have a lot of physical reactions when I talk about this. Um, it’s hard when it turns into more of an emotional reaction. It’s hard to get organized with your thoughts. It’s about my feelings in certain situations and sometimes I just feel anger and resentment, like what’s wrong with you people? Like, you’re just now waking up to other people’s perspectives, like where have you been living. (Nina)

Sense of Self (Denigrated/ Strengthened). How women managed their emotions may have some link to their *Sense of Self*. For example, some women who tended to internalize their emotions, feeling a sense of shame, hurt, and/or sadness and depression, tended to feel a *Denigrated Sense of Self*. In contrast, women who externalized their emotions –anger, frustration, or as will be later seen, via methods of coping, tended to have a more strengthened sense of self. For example, Fuji discussed her feelings:

> I’m here like everyone else, you know. I got a certain GPA, you know, a certain GRE score, and I did all this stuff, you know. Why am I not being treated, you know?…You feel, like shame associated with all that. Like why is it always something based on, you know, race or something like, you know…That’s how I feel –shame, frustration, and of course hurt. You know you feel really hurt [be]cause you don’t want anyone to dislike you of course, you know. I mean nobody wants to feel disliked. (Fuji)

Similarly, Desaree discussed, “I think it will depress me if I recognize it as much as everyone says there is. I would feel depressed…I think it would be depressing for me and I don’t know if I could handle it.” As she discussed her feelings of sadness regarding her perceived experience of racial/ethnic discrimination, which occurred during an academic interview, she also explained that, “ After the interview, I felt, I felt pretty bad…I don’t know, it actually made me feel like…bad. I was definitely unsure (of myself) after that.” Alternatively, Maya, who initially was more frustrated and angered by her experience and had also spent a great deal of time creating more meaning from her experience (discussed later in Coping with Racial/Ethnic Discrimination section), and seemed to establish a more *Strengthened Sense of Self*, “I do feel like, I don’t know, having gone through that now, I feel strong from it.”

Program Environment

Women discussed that the overall impact that such experiences may have upon their *Program Environment*, which influences the ways in which they feel they are viewed within their academic program as well as how they view their programs. Essentially, these experiences have influenced the relationship between themselves and their programs of study in a number of ways –positively and negatively. These relationships may be conceptualized by the following subthemes: *Adversarial*, *Alienating*, and *Collaborative*, which are discussed further.

Adversarial. Women who may have perceived instances of racism/discrimination may not trust their program, and reciprocally, their program may be distrustful and negative towards them. This creates an *Adversarial* relationship, in which a student of

color and program feel that they are working at odds. Grace described her relationship with her program as more adversarial, feeling like a hazing:

> You bring your mind to the table and what you can learn and what you can do, but there's a separate part totally separate from the academe where you have to maneuver and not manipulate, but maneuver you advisor, maneuver your system. Are you taking the right classes? You know, all the programmatic, behind the scenes things. Um, you have to get something signed by this dean and then that dean tells you to go do…I mean it's like, why? Are you here to help me or are you trying to put emotional damage on me to prove to me that I'm worthy to get through this? It feels like a hazing. (Grace)

Similarly, Maya discussed her relationship with her program as a result of her experiences:

> I've been very cautious and very resistant and very reluctant to even try to befriend or have a relationship that is more than just professional. And I don't operate as well like that…I do better when I'm comfortable, people believe in me, trust in me…I can create and grow in that environment…I'm matriculating through a system that didn't believe in me in the first place. So that is very hard. (Maya)

Alienating. Others may find the reciprocal relationship between themselves and their program more of an *Alienating* relationship. Due to a lack of understanding or cultural or general student-faculty disconnect, students may feel that they are essentially, "on their own" (Marie) within the program.

Collaborative. Alternatively, women may view their environments as open and non-oppressive, trust that their program will help them succeed towards their goals and vice-versa –it is a *Collaborative* relationship. Kim, despite noting experiences of microaggressions, experiences her program as collaborative, as it is non-oppressive and an open environment for learning. "I am excited because it is an environment where this kind of discussion can take place." She continued to explain,

> Initially I had some trepidation because I am used to an environment where there are strong African American females in leadership roles and that's not the case here. So I kind of came in thinking, ok, how is this going to work for me? I have been pleasantly surprised that the instructors I have encountered have made me feel very comfortable and have encroached on me and made me push myself. They see me as someone who is capable of doing that. (Kim)

Professional/Academic Impact

The impact of experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination upon *Professional/ Academic* aspects of women of color in the graduate environment was also explored and discussed in terms the following subthemes: *Limited Resources/Learning Obstacles*, *Denied Privileges/Opportunities*, or feeling pressured to raise cultural issues (*Being a Cultural Voice*).

Limited Resources/ Learning Obstacles. Most women discussed (six), the feeling that due to a lack of visibility, particularly, that there may be *Limited Resources/Learning obstacles*, which refers to the idea that faculty may not understand or support issues or interests related to people of color, and this will present challenges to what one may want to learn. Similarly, due to experiences of racism/discrimination, women of color may not

feel comfortable in certain learning/ academic situations, ultimately affecting their professional advancement. As Fuji explains:

> I'm thinking if I want to do research or if I'm interested in something that particularly I think affects women of color…I think that White women have another set of, I mean we all as women got issues in common, but then women of color have different types of issues…I don't know how much support I would get with that, or I'm sure I would get support, but I don't know if it would be as supportive as if it was a Black female professor. (Fuji)

She further stated, "I'm not anticipating negative things, I'm anticipating some obstacles that I could see, so far because there's no variation…or any African American professors." Marie, as a result of her experiences explained, "The struggle I have is that I still have to take classes from this person, so, that's why I haven't wanted to bring it up." She seemed to feel that because of her experience, getting through the program as well as receiving support from certain faculty members, became an obstacle. Similarly, Grace discussed how she felt in this regard as well:

> My minor is research methods and statistics and I may need one of these professors to be on my committee or to help me and they really do not make me feel comfortable. To want to go to them and say, you know, I really would like you to be on my committee and help me understand my research…I have all these questions on how do I set up the table, how do I do this, how would I in any way feel efficacious to go to someone and ask for your help, which is their job, when I feel like I have been treated unfairly?…So that just makes getting through the program…much harder. Much harder. (Grace)

Denied Privileges/Opportunities. This subtheme refers to either covert or overt instances of racism or microaggressions, which raised questions in their minds regarding if they were being *Denied Privileges/Opportunities*, for example participants may have felt that certain aspects of communication, contact, ways of dealing with faculty, and ultimately academic privileges were denied them. For example, Grace wondered after her experience of negative differential treatment with a professor,

> I don't know, you know, if I weren't Black, if that would have happened or I don't know if maybe a White student?…Maybe they would communicate differently and she would have been able to go to her and say this isn't fair, change [it], and she would have been fine and changed it. I don't know the communication that go on and I don't know if I'm supposed to do that as well? I asked her and told her, uh, in a kind way, I don't think this is fair, and she shut me down. So is that normal?…I don't know? (Grace)

Being a Cultural Voice. Finally, as discussed earlier, the feeling of *Being a Cultural Voice* was also experienced as a perceived microaggression in the sense the women of color may be seen as a token or representative of their minority in many ways. However, the lack of visibility among departments also affects students of color in their learning environment, putting pressure upon students of color to raise issues and be responsible for multicultural learning, which may be unreasonable or unfair. For example, Nina described:

> Everyday, all the time, I'm dealing with both research subjects and therapy clients that are people of color…And having a supervisor who is aware to help me deal with it…In my supervision group right now, I think my supervisor cares a lot, but

doesn't have a lot of awareness of the cultural factors that are going on in therapy…I have to bring them up because maybe she hasn't realized what is going on with clients or subjects. (Nina)

Table 3.

Impact of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination

Themes/ Subthemes	Defining Features
Personal	
Emotional	Referring to the emotional impact of racial/ethnic discrimination.
Denigration to Sense of Self	Impact upon one's self-esteem or personal integrity.
Strengthened Sense of Self	One feels strengthened or empowered with respect to their sense of self. Can also be a protective factor.
Professional/Academic	
Denied Privileges/ Opportunities	Wondering if one's racial/ethnic background has denied them certain contact with faculty, academic opportunities or other privileges.
Limited Resources/ Learning Obstacles	There are limited resources as faculty cannot understand or support issues related to people of color due to perceived instances of racial/ethnic bias or a lack of visibility,

Table 3 (Continued).

Themes/ Subthemes	Defining Features
	which may be perceived as an obstacle to one's learning.
Being a Cultural Voice	Also an impact of racial/ethnic discrimination and particularly a lack f visibility, in which one feels pressured to raise multicultural issues in the academic environment.
Program Environment	
Adversarial	Perception of the program environment in which one may feel that the program is testing them, or feel distrustful of their program, and vice-versa.
Alienating	Perception of the program environment in which the relationship is characterized as feeling lonely and isolating.
Collaborative	Program environment is experienced by individuals collaborative, reciprocally trusting an open learning environment, and generally non-oppressive.

Coping Factors Associated with Racial and Ethnic Discrimination

Those women of color who indicated experiencing perceived instances of racism, discrimination, or bias (seven women), indicated a number of ways in which they coped with the resulting emotional and academic stress. The following five themes and fourteen subthemes emerged: (1) *Emotion-Focused Coping* (*Belief in a Just World*, *Non-verbalization of Experience*, *Repression*, *Detachment/Disconnection*, and *Emotional Release*). (2) *Problem-Focused Coping* (*Reality Testing, Reprocessing, and Reconstructing, Maneuvering the System, Proactive Education, Self-Invalidation, Acceptance*, and *Mentor to Others*); (3) *Social Coping*; (4) *Religious/ Spiritual Coping*; and (5) *Cognitive (Appraisal) Processes* (*Confrontation vs. being Constructive*, and *Flight, Fight, or Freeze*) which discusses the ways women regulated and appraised different variables in order to decide how to handle or how to cope in a particular situation (See Table 4).

Emotion-Focused Coping

Emotion-Focused Coping refers to behavioral, cognitive, or emotional coping responses, which act in order to moderate the emotional impact of a stressful experience (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). Women discussed the following ways in which they utilized emotion-focused coping: *Belief in a Just World* (Lerner, 1978), *Nonverbalization of Experience*, *Repression*, *Detachment/Disconnection*, and *Emotional Release*, in order to help ameliorate the emotional impact of their experiences.

Belief in a Just World. A *Belief is a Just World* refers to a concept that was originally introduced in the social psychology literature (Lerner, 1978) which theorizes that individuals have a need to believe that the world is just and we get what we deserve.

The trauma literature (Herman, 1992, 1997) purports that traumatic events (abuse, war terror, etc.) shatter assumptions that we have regarding people and the world being safe, just, and good. When applied to issues of racism and discrimination, this subtheme refers to the idea that racial/ethnic biases, discrimination, and racist acts equate to a very dark part of the human psyche and violate the very need to believe that the world is good and/or just. Consciously acknowledging that human beings are capable of this is too distressing emotionally. One copes by either focusing on the positive aspects of human nature or denying the existence of such acts to avoid negative emotions. As Desaree explains, “I think that part of I guess human beings is too dark to me. I don’t like to see it. So I kind of don’t see it or hope that it’s something else. That it’s not prejudice or discrimination." She goes on, “I think it will depress me if I recognize it as much as everyone says there is.” Grace adds that she also wants to deny instances of racial/ethnic discrimination because of a fear of her own reaction, “I don’t want to get to that point. So even if there are situations where I want to get mad and feel that it, that it has to be racially motivated, I really don’t let my mind go there. [Be]cause I don’t want to get mad. I don’t want to have to react in a way that’s going to get me kicked out of the program.”

Nonverbalization of Experience. Many women found it difficult to verbalize their experiences due to feelings of uncertainty regarding the experience itself or a lack of validation in the environment (*Nonverbalization of Experience*). Marie described her non-responsiveness to the situation she encountered, “I didn’t respond to it. Um, yeah, I didn’t. I didn’t even discuss it with anybody. I still feel really uncomfortable even bringing up the subject…I didn’t talk about it with any of my friends here that are in the program. I guess, because uh, kind of the negativity I encountered around this specific

class I was talking about." Desaree speaks to her lack of expressiveness, "I usually don't. If I feel like someone is, I usually don't talk about it unless maybe someone else brings it up." She expressed that despite having feelings in her mind that an experience may be racially biased, she is reluctant to discuss it as such, "I never said that to anyone, even though I might have though it in my head, I never said it." Grace, too, felt similarly, "I didn't say it was because of my skin color, I just said this is what is happening…we never talked about it being a racial thing, but I really had no earthly idea where all of that would come from."

Repression. Repression was initially recognized in the psychoanalytic literature as a higher order or secondary form of defense, which can be regarded as a "motivated forgetting or ignoring (McWilliams, 1994, p. 118). Similar to the belief in a just world, some women repressed (*Repression*) memories, emotions, and situations surrounding experiences of racial/ethnic bias and pushed these out of their consciousness or memories. Desaree felt that, "I think I kind of, sort of don't like to think about that part…because umm, I hate the whole discrimination thing against anyone. So I think I kind of like to repress that kind of stuff."

Detachment/Disconnection. Other women (two) discussed how they used emotional *Detachment/Disconnection.* This subtheme refers to avoiding an emotional connection with others or becoming emotionally detached in order to avoid harm or hurt associated with racial/ethnic discriminatory behavior or slights. One may feel, "You can't hurt me if I don't allow you to be close to me." As Fuji described:

> How I cope with it, I just become somewhat detached. And that's terrible to say because I mean, you know…I have to say, I am sometimes a lot more open with

> people that I feel have a similar background to me, and that doesn't necessarily have to be a Black person, per se, but if it [is] somebody that I feel is White, and doesn't know much about Black people or something, I just…I kind of put up, set up, a personal wall in my head. And I don't know, I'm not as open so that when they do say something hurtful, it doesn't bother me as much. (Fuji)

She further describes, "It can go in small forms, like not saying good morning, or I see somebody coming, I will divert my eyes to kind of not connect. [Be]cause I don't even want any trouble type [of] thing. That's, you know, not a very positive thing to do, but that's what I do."

Emotional Release. Maya discussed *Emotional Release*, in which there is a cathartic effect through the release of emotions via expression, crying, or perhaps an action that allows one to express emotionality (punching a wall, etc.). When asked how she coped, in the moment, she initially described, "I just threw my arms around my husband and started crying." Nina discussed her use of writing and journaling in order to assist her with expressing, releasing, and managing emotions surround her experiences. "For the most part I used to write. I don't write much anymore. That was a good outlet for me."

Problem-Focused Coping

Most women utilized both active and *Problem-Focused Coping* strategies in conjunction with emotion-focused responses. In addition, due to factors within one's program environment, negotiating what type of coping may be appropriate resulted in the emergence of more complex cognitive processes. Problem-focused coping refers to behavioral, cognitive, or emotional coping strategies that act in order to change how one

thinks about the stressful experience or factors in the environment contributing to the stress itself (Foster, 2000; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Women discussed the following problem-focused coping responses that they utilized to help moderate the impact of their experiences: *Reality Testing, Reprocessing, and Reconstructing*, *Maneuvering the System*, *Proactive Education*, *Self-Invalidation*, and *Being a Mentor* to others.

Reality Testing, Reprocessing, and Reconstructing. This first means of problem-focused coping emerged as a complex cognitive process in which one goes over the experience in their mind repeatedly (and at several times in their lives), questioning it, re-processing it, and reframing it, ultimately in order to construct a different or more helpful meaning of the negative experience. For example, women of color may question, "Did that really just happen?" "Was that what I think it was?" or "Why did this happen?" While most women did not necessarily construct meaning surrounding their experiences, this coping or cognitive process may help in terms of negotiating how one not only appraises the situation and constructs meaning around the situation, but may also have impact upon one's personal or professional life. The following quotes help to illustrate this theme further.

> I don't know. It could have been anything. But I guess, after my other interview, I really felt like something's not right here. I don't know what else it could be. But that's the only time and it was only perceived. There was nothing ever said directly that made me know… (Desaree)
>
> But I know that she didn't mean it like that. And you're constantly doing that as a woman of color. You kind of like…People, you know, give you things, and you have to process it and say, you have to look beyond behavior, you know,

> and after a while you know you sometimes don't feel like [it's] that (referring to instances of racial/ethnic bias or discrimination). (Fuji)
>
> And in this program as throughout life, you know, I encounter lots of situations where it causes you to pause, and think –was that because I'm female? Was that because I'm Black? Um, was that because of both? (Grace)

Grace, after talking with friends, and family, recreates meaning of her experiences. Being a non-traditional student who comes with a great deal of experiences, she wonders:

> I'm not saying they are intimidated, but I'm coming from a different perspective than they are and sometimes the other students as well as professors…want to stay in a comfort zone, you know. You want the questions to be something that you can easily answer. I like being challenged or to have a question where we all have to think about it, but that's my personality.

Being able to align her experiences within a framework that helps her understand the process of what might be occurring as well one that is consistent with who she is may be helpful for her. Similarly, Maya expressed "I think this experience helped fortify my racial identity." She further discussed that had this experience not occurred, she wondered:

> Would I have become just another scholar? Or would I have evolved into an African scholar? Had I not had that experience and not had to question my very being, who am I? We don't want you here…I would have been just another graduate student, going through the motions. But now every class I take, I ask a question. I make sure my research is culturally relevant…I feel like I might have

> been writing against my people. I would have. Because I would have totally bought into this indoctrination of what a Ph.D., a scholar is, and I would have produced the same work…(Maya)

Maneuvering the System. This subtheme refers is a complex means of active or problem-focused coping which encompasses a number of behaviors and skills, in which one has learned how to maneuver through their program, made observations of faculty, students, found allies, and learning skills themselves in order to remain emotionally safe and survive/thrive academically and professionally. This may also include intentionally or proactively avoiding professors or classes that might have a biased attitude towards you. For example, “I don’t want to have to ever meet her again, because I just, I mean, I just kind of felt really uncomfortable…I don’t know, but, umm, I don’t ever want to take her class now"(Desaree). Similarly, Maya discussed, “So the whole while I’ve been here, I’ve been sort of avoiding…being very intentional about my approach-avoid about this person.” In many ways, utilizing this form of coping may have an indirect impact upon one’s learning, as Grace also delineated previously in her discomfort to approach professors due to her experiences, and how this ultimately is an obstacle in her having her learning needs met (*Lack of Support/ Learning Obstacles*). Previously, Grace discussed her views of how this was done, and seemed to be a separate and distinct learned skill, “totally separate from the academe where you have to maneuver and not manipulate, but maneuver your advisor, maneuver the system. Are you taking the right classes at the right time…You know, all your programmatic, behind the scenes kind of things…” Maya echoed this sentiment:

> So I'm navigating. I'm matriculating through a system that didn't believe in me in the first place…and I haven't had a class with this person. It helped me to orchestrate my path while I was here. So I, I knew that person's area of expertise, and just to see his core quality, his core character…I knew [what] I had to do. I knew I didn't want to work with a person like that. So I didn't entangle. So, I thought, what a privilege to have known this. (Maya)

Proactive Education. Another form of problem-focused coping involved *Proactive Education*, which is the utilization of education or being more vocal/expressive about one's racial/ethnic background in order to preempt hurtful or ignorant reactions as well as build awareness. Fuji described, "I try to maybe educate, and I used to just totally look beyond behavior and say they don't know any better." Kim addresses slights proactively and preemptively:

> I have a tendency to be proactive. So if we are discussing a topic that is pretty close to me, I am the first person to put my hand out there, and I think in that way maybe you cut off the opportunity for someone else to say something that might be really offensive to you. I feel that I kind of have to put my voice out there and make sure that I am not invisible in any kind of way. (Kim).

Acceptance. Another subtheme, *Acceptance* is a cognitive form of problem-focused coping in which one accepts racial/ethnic inequalities, oppression, privileges as they exist in the "real world" and thus may not have the expectation of minority representation or of another to be empathetic or understanding. Kim explains how she considers this, "I have kind of felt that people didn't necessarily understand my, my experience as an African American woman. On the other hand, not being African

American women, I don't know how they ever would." She continues, "You want them to kind of have walked in your shoes and [in] some ways be totally in sync with you, and that's how we would all like to feel. That's not realistic. I haven't been able to do it in the reverse either." She elaborates further to described how this could be expected considering her perception of the world we live in, "…mainstream America doesn't have that tolerance. So it's got to be hard, to be kind of difficult, to have that sort of privilege and that sort of mobility in the world and to come in and check yourself…and to say, ok, I recognize that, that is on the backs of some people and recognize that here."

Self-Invalidation. Women discussed this form of coping as ways of behaving that invalidated one's own experiences as a person of color in order to fit into mainstream culture or continue towards academic progress, despite acknowledgement of racial/ethnic biases. For example, Marie discussed her response to her class's minimization and lack of interest in multicultural issues, "I felt like I sort of had to, when I was with them, I had to hide the fact that I was enjoying what we were learning or talking about because they were really negative about it." Nina describes feeling similarly; however, she acknowledges that for her, the idea of fitting into mainstream society may hold professional gains and thus, copes or behaves accordingly. She discussed:

> I had to sort of try to be part of the mainstream, to not be that way as much as possible so that people would take me seriously…I had to sort of find ways to, not think like that and not talk like that…But that was the culture I was in. It was like, you know, the culture of that school and it wasn't nurturing or caring or anything of that fashion, so it wasn't a surprise to me. (Nina)

She further described, “People who are doing what I want to do in the future are White men. So, um, you’re not taken seriously if you don’t have that mentality. But I don’t have that mentality, but I have to play the game if I want to get somewhere.” Her words also seemed to imply an accepted sense that one does not belong or is alien within the professional/academic environment. Women also described ways in which they coped which were more self-depreciating. For example, Desaree discussed how she might respond if she were to encounter the professor who she felt was non-responsive to her, “I’d probably, I’d probably suck up around her and just show her how, what a wonderful person that I can be…if I had to be around her.” Grace explained her coping response of self-depreciation although she struggled with extreme feelings of anger:

> I wanted to light her office on fire or you know push her out the window. I just didn’t appreciate how she was acting, but I wouldn’t still be in the program if I do that. So I had to sit and smile and ask ‘Well, what can I do to pass the class?’ and listen to her condescending answer. Do that and beg her, ‘Please maam, can I pass now?’ and then move on…So that's what I did and just moved on, and I’m still the program. So I kind of had to make those self-depreciating sacrifices in some instances. (Grace)

Mentor to Others. Lastly, Kim discussed her method of becoming a *Mentor to Others*, which represented another action-oriented approach to coping in which one resolves to place into a system of education what may be missing through their own racial/cultural experiences. She explained, “As I was saying, before I am kind of feeling that void…Like wanting to be a strong African American women who is focused and has an opinion, and wants to articulate that opinion so maybe the twenty-something's in the

class can use me in a different way…like I used African American women in my experiences." This allowed her to reason, "…like it's okay for me to step out there and voice my opinion and still be accepted and still excel at what I'm doing" as her hope was that others could identify or use her as she has utilized her mentors in the past.

Social Coping

Social Coping is a means of coping that enables one to discuss feelings, situations, and experiences surrounding instances of racial/ethnic bias openly and in order to gain a sense of validation or a shared experience. This may occur with peers, family, or with a counselor. Most women, even those who initially discussed finding it difficult to share or verbalize their experienced utilized some form of social coping, or expressed an explicit desire to. While there are numerous quotations (24) representing some form of social coping, the following are representations of how social coping was used and particularly beneficial:

> When I'm home with my husband, you know, we talk about it in terms of racial aspects of it. (Grace).
>
> I talk about it with my friends, my mom, um, people who can resonate. (Nina)
>
> Maybe she doesn't have to totally get it to help me, but it would be nice to know that someone, if I went to one of my girlfriends, and said, 'Guess what happened to me at work today!' and they said, or at school, and they said, 'Oh girl, I know, that same thing happened to me! (Grace)
>
> When I talked to her (a friend), she kind of make[s] me feel, I kind of feel better about everything. (Desaree)

> I did talk about it with friends of mine who aren't in this program and didn't go to school here, and kind of, sort of dealt with it that way…I talked with, I work at a counseling center, and I have some friends who were going through the doctoral program, and I talked with them. I have a counselor; it's something ongoing, that I am talking with her about [it]. (Marie)
>
> I have good friends who are in the program…and we can talk all the time about getting through a certain class or our ideas…We work together to get through the program… (Grace)
>
> And since we know that or that's what we believe, we talk each other through it. So if someone encounters a situation that is disconcerting or feels to be racially motivated, um [if] we acted out in our emotional way, we might get booted from the program…We talk about how we deal or dealt with it or what to do and it makes me feel better than just telling someone, 'Oh well, I hope that doesn't happen again.' (Grace)

Other ways of social coping may involve involving immersing yourself in social roles outside of the academic environment. "I have a life outside of this, and I don't have to deal with these people that much. I tried to see it that way…I took care of myself outside with friends, my family, to some degree my partner…and mostly people of color." (Nina)

Religious/Spiritual Coping

Religious/Spiritual Coping is the use of religious or spiritual references, beliefs, values, or practices to cope with instances of racial/ethnic discrimination. Maya specifically discussed how a spiritual presence was comforting to her and her usage of

religious metaphors to help her understand her experience of racial/ethnic discrimination, which occurred during a program interview:

> I had been in prayer…and not just church, but met with these sisters…And she just said 'Maya let go.' And she just rocked me…After the meeting, after the first interview, and everything…I felt her. I felt her rock. The lady who had rocked me about another issue. I felt the comfort…Not only spiritually feeling the presence of this physical rock, but feeling like it's a divine moment. (Maya)

She further explained, "I did by use of metaphor…just called him a devil, and thought that, that was the greatest test before I got here."

Cognitive (Appraisal) Processes

Cognitive (Appraisal) Processes were utilized by women of color in graduate education to appraise their internal state (emotions arising from the experience) and situational experience (power differentials, potential consequences of the experience) in order to negotiate the experience or emotions arising from the experience, and decide the best way to react or cope in a particular instance. These include *Confrontation vs. Being Constructive*; and *Flight, Fight, or Freeze*. In many ways the above are similar, however the below examples help to clarify the different ways in which they may manifest in an academic environment.

Confrontation vs. Being Constructive. Another more complex cognitive process includes that of *Confrontation vs. Being Constructive*, which involves the appraisal and negotiation of emotional and other reactions, such as the fear of consequences, in order to decide *when* to express personal opinions or specifically be educative. This was illustrated by Kim, "I am learning that it is important to speak your mind, but it is also

important to make it a learning experience and hot a challenge to someone else's reality." She goes on to explain the struggle she feels in doing this during instances when she has been racially/culturally offended and how she negotiates this:

> I think that might be a coping mechanism and thinking ok, we're in an area of sensitivity and this is where I stand so kind of be careful how you proceed…I find myself getting more upset or emotionally charged in the exchange around the classroom with other students. And it's kind of like, that's when I find myself either being defensive or really having to kind of say okay, we talked about that earlier. Is this really about the learning experience or are these just knee jerk reactions that I want to put out here and I'm not really helping anybody or myself. (Kim)

She continues to explain,

> Sometimes confrontation is just about you getting your stuff out and that's not always beneficial to you even…I'm going to be in the program with these people for another two years, so for me to kind of go off on somebody…I would rather be able to deal with it more intellectually, and I wasn't able to do that, I was just so close to it. (Kim)

For Kim, her desire is to be educative, constructive and to contribute to the learning environment as a means of coping; however, she acknowledges the difficulty in this when her emotional reaction may be too strong to do this.

Flight, Fight, or Freeze. Similarly, Flight, Fight, or Freeze refers to a cognitive process in which one is attempting to negotiate *if* to fight or speak up regarding their experience racial/ethnic discrimination, stay quiet, or feeling stuck in uncertainty

regarding the experience. For example, Fuji explained, “You have to pick and choose your battles. You know, you can’t get so huffy about everything. But then I wonder, you know, I do a comparative thing, see I wonder how many times a White person is racially offended, and how many times, they have to just let it go.” Desaree, who previously discussed her non-verbalization of her experience, now echoed, “Sometimes that’s an easy thing to do and sometimes that’s good, but sometimes you do have to speak up and say something…” However Grace, reflected, “It’s not so appreciated…Um, you feel just kind of stuck. You just don’t know how to effectively deal with it and move on.” She elaborated, “My girlfriend and myself kind of balance to what extent are we not doing what we should be doing as an African American to stand up for ourselves versus just deal with it and get through the program, and then you can say something about it and do something about it…So that’s a constant struggle.” Nina also reflected this internal struggle:

> There have been times in class where I felt like I should have sat there and, because I worry about what people think. And there are times where I felt I should have talked about these things. But like, the bottom line is, I have to struggle with feeling like, you know, I don’t want people to think I’m a complainer or an angry person. I just don’t want to be perceived as that. (Nina)

Nina continues to elaborate on this internal conflict:

> You know, I am pretty new to the program and I feel like my success, politically, could be more dependent on how much people like you. And if you are always speaking up about things…Sometimes, they just want you to sit down, and do you work, and not say anything. I don’t want to ruin, or just like, it’s hard to be

mindful. It's hard to express your feelings when it could really backfire, not be advantageous for you in the end. Most White people [are] in positions of power. Probably best not to say things. They are allies; I have always believed in the power of that. (Nina)

Table 4.

Coping with Racial and Ethnic Discrimination

Themes/ Subthemes	Defining Features
(1) Emotion Focused Coping	
Belief in a Just World	The idea that racism/discrimination equates to a dark park of human nature. Consciously acknowledging that human beings are capable of this is too distressing and thus, one copes by focusing on positive aspects of human behavior or denying the existence of racial/ethnic discrimination to avoid these negative emotions.
Non-verbalization of Experience	It is difficult to verbalize one's experience due to uncertain feelings regarding the experience itself or lack of support in the environment.
Repression	Memories, emotions, and situations of the experience are pushed away from one's consciousness/memory.

Table 4 (Continued).

Themes/ Subthemes	Defining Features
Detachment/Disconnection	Avoiding connection with others/becoming detached to avoid harm or emotional hurt associated with racial/ethnic biases or slights.
Emotional Release	Releasing/expressing emotions as a means of coping with experience.
(2) Problem-Focused Coping	
Reality Testing, Reprocessing, Reconstruction	Reprocessing, reframing, questioning, and reconstructing experiences in your mind, so as to construct a different or more helpful meaning of the experience.
Maneuvering the System	One knows how to maneuver through the program, make observations of faculty, students, find allies, etc. in order to remain emotionally safe and survive/thrive academically. This may also include intentional or proactive avoidance of professors/classes that might have biased attitudes.
Proactive Education	Education is used to help others become more aware, or by being more

Table 4 (Continued).

Themes/ Subthemes	Defining Features
	vocal/expressive about one's racial/cultural perspective and experiences, you may preempt other hurtful reactions or expressions as well as bring about awareness.
Self-Invalidation	Acting in ways that are self-depreciating or self-invalidating to one's identity in order to continue towards academic/professional progress, despite acknowledgement of racial/ethnic bias.
Acceptance	Accepting racial/ethnic inequalities, oppression, privileges as they exist in the "real world" and thus may not have expectations of another to be multiculturally empathetic, understanding, or tolerant.
Mentor to Others	by expressing one's experiences as a person of color to other students of color, can create an environment of growth and comfort for others.
(3) Social Coping	Being able to vocalize and discuss experiences and feelings surrounding

Table 4 (Continued).

Themes/ Subthemes	Defining Features
	racial/ethnic discrimination allowing a shared experience or validation. This can occur through peers, family, educators, or counselors.
(4) Religious Coping	Use of religious/spiritual references, beliefs, values, or practices to cope with instances of racial/ethnic discrimination.
(5) Cognitive (Appraisal) Processes	
Confrontation/ Being Constructive	Appraisal and negotiation of emotional and other reactions such as a fear of program consequences, in order to decide when to express personal opinions or be educative.
Flight, Fight, or Freeze	Negotiating *if* to fight or speak up, stay quiet based on appraisal of a number of variables.

Protective and Institutional Factors

Within the scope of this paper, protective factors refer to internal resources or resiliency factors an individual may intrinsically hold that have been particularly effective in mediating the impact of racial and ethnic discrimination. The idea of resiliency and internal strengths stems from the notion of positive psychology, which

refers to the idea of examining one's human strengths, virtues, and potentials, a sense of hope, optimism, perseverance, etc. (Adams & Jackson, 2000; Fredrickson, 2001; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Sheldon & King, 2001), and is conceptualized as being important for people of color in terms of optimal human functioning and dealing with adversity (Sue & Constantine, 2006).The term institutional factors is utilized in this study to refer to external resources or structures in place within one's educational institution or program that have been demonstrated to be particularly effective in mediating the impact of racial and ethnic discrimination. Although 7 of the participants experienced instances of racial/ethnic discrimination, all women were asked regarding their views of ways in which their institutions or programs may contribute towards improving situations regarding racial/ethnic discrimination or biases as well as other internal protective factors. The following six themes and ten subthemes of protective and institutional factors emerged: (1) *Sense of Self*; (2) *Dialogue/Disclosure* (*Anonymous Disclosure, Confrontation of Stereotypes*); (3) *Creating Community*; (4) *Mentors/Support/Advocates*; (5) *Institutional Support of Multicultural Issues* (*Gatekeepers, Increased Visibility*); (6) *Consciousness Raising* (*Increasing Knowledge*, *Mindfulness to Action*; and *Multicultural Teaching Practices –Humanization of Multicultural Issues*, *Decentralization*, and *Inclusivity and Cultural Connectedness*). Several of the above themes acted to directly counter perceived experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination and/or microaggressions (see Table 5).

Sense of Self

Sense of Self refers to a protective or resiliency factor in which one's sense of self (which for women of color may be rooted particularly in gender or racial/cultural

identity) can help to buffer the impact of racial/ethnic slights and move or navigate through their academic programs. For example, one may be able to combat disempowering messages received via those from other aspects of their identity (racial, gender, etc.) and thus, be able to deny disempowerment. Grace explains, “I think internally, I think I just have a strong sense of what it is I want to do, um, and I always have, so, um…My eye, this is an African American expression, but, to keep your ‘eye on the prize.’ My eye is on the prize of obtaining my doctorate.” Similarly, Kim further explains, “I went to an African American women’s college. I’ve kind of infused myself in my own sense of culture. And by doing that, taking yourself away from the majority culture and infusing yourself with your own kind of understanding, has been beneficial because now I can come back out into the larger culture and not kind of second guess myself.” This view and her sense of self with respect to racial/ethnic identity has also shifted her view of the African American community, and additionally changed how she maneuvers herself in the program, and may have some implication for how she perceives and copes with experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination:

> I feel like we look at African Americans being victims and I hate, I really hate the kind of psychology around victimization. I don’t look at African Americans as victims, I look at African Americans as resilient, and powerful, and amazing to still even be here, and proliferating and kind of overcoming what most insurmountable obstacles and achieving really fabulous kinds of things. I cannot look at a culture and be a part of a culture when I see us kind of being, in terms of, ‘what did other people do to you?’ That’s only a small part of it to me. So, yeah, I have to be that voice. I’m okay with that. (Kim)

Dialogue/Disclosure

The majority of women suggested some form of *Dialogue/Disclosure* as being an important institutional factor. Specifically, dialogue and/or disclosure may allow for a means of social coping. Given the extensive use and efficacy of social coping, institutions may want to consider how forms of dialogue/disclosure can be put into place as means of (social) coping and support within their departments. Open dialogue or disclosure may occur either with another individual or through a group in order to allow for validation as well as build awareness, understanding, or empathy. The following are quotes that illustrate this: "I think it would be really nice to have a group that met, a small group, where people could volunteer, especially when you look at the numbers of students in the program that are 'ethnically diverse,' I think it would be a good thing (Marie)." Similarly, Fuji expressed, "Just to have an open dialogue about it and to talk about it so that people become more sensitive and maybe people don't know what they do or whatever. No one wants to be walking around on eggshells…it would be really nice if it was an open dialogue." "If there was someone or a place to go to in the department or college where I could [go to] talk [it] through or even maybe some counseling sessions…" (Grace).

Anonymous Disclosure. As women discussed the benefits of open discussion, they also specifically suggested *Anonymous Disclosure* as a way in which such experiences may be reported anonymously in order to create a consciousness that such events occur and avoid direct repercussions. As Grace suggested:

> Maybe for them to know that these situations are out there, maybe, um, a secret box, where we could write down situations and put them in a box so that someone else can see what's happening. Not that they could necessarily do anything,

> [be]cause it would be anonymous. But I think they would be shocked…It doesn't have to be students of color, it could be anybody. Whoever feels marginalized could write down when and why they felt that way, where it pertained to the college…just to understand that these things happen…You know just to give empathy to people where they wouldn't necessarily have it. (Grace)

Fuji also discussed anonymous disclosure, however raises the point that this makes it easier for those like herself, who are non-confrontational, and perhaps may fear program consequences, "Like I said, I'm not a very confrontational person, I, that probably wouldn't be my route. To say, I want to sit down and have a talk with this person about how they addressed me."

Confrontation of Stereotypes. Another subtheme of *Dialogue/Disclosure*, women suggested that there be groups or forums in which open dialogue can occur in order to specifically allow for *Confronting of Stereotypes* and build awareness. "Um, multicultural, um student organizations is something good…because you meet people and you, and you talk with them, then you kind of, you see things differently. You, I mean, your stereotypes are confronted (Tia)."

Creating Community

The concept of creating community extends from the perception or the impact of an alienating or adversarial program environment and relationship with one's department. One way of feeling more connected with their department may be to in terms of creating community. A sense of "connectedness," was found to be an important resource in responding to racial/ethnic discrimination (Harrison, 2001). As women discussed elements of their program environment, those that elicited a sense of comfort and

connectedness included increasing student-student and student-faculty contact, thereby creating a sense of community and potentially increasing collaborative forms of relationships. For example, “And even when I’ve talked with other students and they talk about their professors, even one of my friends, she said, she’s already met with one of her professors, to just kind of talk about, is this program right for her, and she thought that it was a great session and he really helped her (Tia).” Similarly, Tia described how she feels in her classes, as she is new to her academic program, “I have the opportunity to meet with students, I mean learn their names, which is something that I like and it makes me feel comfortable in the class.” Alternatively, when this does not exist, Marie relates her experience, “It’s kind of a tough one for me because I think starting in the summer…everything felt so rushed. I don’t feel like there was, um, maybe time for us to develop a relationship between students and the faculty…so it was kind of challenging.”

Mentors/Supports/Advocates

Overwhelmingly, the *Lack of Visibility* among departments suggested a deficit of *Mentors/Support/Advocates*. Such people may include those who are not necessarily people of color, but those who you can confide in, can validate your experiences, and can act as an ally or advocate within the academic environment. This may be professors, chairs, senior students, or may also be family or historical figures that provide a source of strength. Women discussed the roles that mentors and advocates play in their lives and personal and professional success.

> I would hope that I could have a mentor that I could go and talk to and um kind be able to, I guess everyone wants to feel validated when they feel like they’ve been

wronged. You know it's always…I guess it's good to have a mentor, an advisor that, um, kind of says, it's okay, I understand how you feel. (Sandy).

As an African American who's trying to move through the program it really would be helpful and nice to have someone who, um, I can go and talk to if need be about certain experiences or feelings. I'm very happy that my advisor has taken on that role. Not necessarily do we talk about racial issues or anything like that, but she's very supportive and I feel like she's there if I ever need to go and talk to her about something. So that's been helpful. (Grace)

It's always nice to have someone who is similar to your background and your life experiences to talk to, so it would be nice to have, not necessarily in my department, but maybe in the College of Ed. A somebody, or a place to go, where I can talk and say, this is what happened to me, and I'm not appreciative of it. And that person doesn't have to be a Black person…(Grace)

And I just thought about Maya Angelou and her work and her being a phenomenal woman. And being so strong and being sure of yourself, and having gone through some things and some trials and still standing. (Maya)

He was advocating for me. He actually ended up calling me. And he put it in the frame of, sometimes they do this, Maya. You don't deserve that. And it was wrong…It helped me get through it. (Maya).

I felt a connection with my professor, and that makes me feel a lot more comfortable. I feel like she understands. She's a woman of color, and she's also a seasoned therapist. I really, she makes me feel more comfortable…I feel like here's a woman who has been through some of these same experiences and been

> able to, first of all, she's in a position of power, you know, which is important. And that she is outspoken about these things and she's not afraid, like when controversy rises, she's okay and she can deal with it. She's a strong woman, and I admire her, and I'm glad that she's here. I like the fact that she is here. She helps me deal with things. Even if I don't have to talk about it. (Nina)

Institutional Support for Multicultural Issues

Given both individual and institutional *Minimization of Racial/Cultural Issues*, *Institutional Support for Multicultural Issues* refers to departmental policies and missions that are specifically geared towards multiculturalism and inclusivity. How departments may do this was raised in the form of the following subthemes: Acting as *Gatekeepers* of the field, and *Increasing Visibility*.

Gatekeepers. Acting as Gatekeepers of the field denotes a commitment and ethical responsibility to multiculturalism in terms of potentially "weeding out" or educating those from the profession who may not be as committed to multicultural issues and practice. As Kim notes regarding multicultural sensitivity, "before initiatives were in place, people understood [it] in a different way than they may have before. This is not an option -asking you to consider it. This is an ethical part of your professional responsibility." In terms of acting upon professional responsibility as an institution, she adds,

> I'm having more trouble with students, which is always going to be the case. People are always going to come into a program with whatever understanding they have. So, I don't think you could effectively screen people to see, who are the multicultural people?…Even with a, the process, is such a, you do an

> interview with two people for like fifteen minutes, you get a resume, and you get a GRE type score, and I don't know if that process in some way could…Or if anybody would even want to, screen people out...I think, maybe, you do a better job of bringing people in and educating them rather than screen people out. (Kim)

Increasing Visibility. Secondly, *Increasing Visibility* was also specifically discussed as programmatic policies that can be instituted to make multiculturalism a priority, in which there is attention placed on hiring faculty to increase representation of various racial/ethnic backgrounds. The impact of a lack of visibility as already been discussed, however Nina notes,

> If I experienced more people being present in the department, that would be great, um, faculty. There is no faculty of color. And it is really bizarre. I always feel a sense of relief when I'm around faculty of color…Just having it be more presented like, you know different racial groups. If there were different racial groups, that would make me feel more integrated, more diverse. (Nina)

Kim also added, "I would like to se more racial diversity in the faculty. I think that would be huge step in not only kind of looking at these issues but also actually proactively demonstrating diversity among the faculty."

Consciousness Raising

Raising Consciousness refers to the idea that programs need to increase multicultural knowledge, awareness and practice more specifically on an individual level as well as institutionally. Women discussed different ways in which their departments may be able to do this that may be particularly helpful in preventing racial/ethnic discrimination as well as responding to it. This includes (subthemes) *Increasing*

Knowledge, moving from *Mindfulness to Action*, as well as specific *Multicultural Teaching Practices*.

Increasing Knowledge. This subtheme refers specifically to increasing multicultural initiatives that are educative in order to increase overall knowledge of racial/cultural issues. As Sandy suggested, “I think it would be helpful for them to require more like, more lectures related to cultural issues, more workshops, more student involvement.” Similarly, Nina described the effectiveness of her multicultural class, thus wanting more education, “Some of the films she showed has had a great impact on the people. I guess, like listening to people become aware, I feel like people are making a change in the way they deal with and talk about things, not 100%, but I do feel like this class has helped raise awareness.” Grace expressed, “Maybe just increasing the knowledge within the college or within the department that there are, um, students of color, who feel kind of ostracized or on the exterior of what everyone else is doing, and there’s really no one else we could go and talk to. Maybe just knowing and understanding that could help in some way.”

Mindfulness to Action. Moving from *Mindfulness to Action* refers to the idea that one is actually quite knowledgeable regarding racial/ethnic differences, however multicultural efforts –whether educational or more experiential and practice-orientated- may need to shift towards assisting those in acting upon these insights. Kim explains her positive experience when she does encounter this:

> People will say things and then they’ll catch themselves, or they’ll almost say something, but because they are aware and thinking about ethnic differences, they will often stop in their tracks before they will actually say something as being

> perceived as racially offensive or unevolved. So you see people actually kind of processing as they are speaking or stopping before they say something, or making a comment and qualifying it in a context of their own experience and not try to push it on everybody. So that has been interesting for me. I don't know if I can ask more of people than that. (Kim)

Multicultural Teaching Practices. One impact of microaggressions such as the minimization of racial/cultural issues and a lack of visibility was the pressure that students of color felt to raise multicultural issues in the classroom. Shifting teaching techniques in order to be more multiculturally responsive may be helpful in relieving this concern. As Nina discussed, "It would be nice if the professors just brought up the cultural issues instead of other people bringing them up." *Multicultural Teaching Practices* refer to a number of teaching practices that may be designed to reflect concepts of multiculturalism, and thereby reduce practices or an environment that may make microaggressions more likely to occur. These include, as emergent from interviews, but are not limited to *Humanization of Multicultural Issues*, *Decentralization*, and practicing *Inclusivity and Cultural Connectedness*

The *Humanization of Multicultural Issues* helps students recognize that theories that are learned in multicultural courses are derived from very real human experiences of people of color, and treating this material as "theoretical" may be somewhat insulting. Several women discussed feeling that their experience of multicultural classes was somewhat dehumanized in this respect:

> Beyond the feeling that it was a class that they shouldn't have had to take, you start, it really makes you think about what kind of counselors these people are going to be. It makes me a little nervous to think about that. I mean I have no idea how you would begin to approach that subject, but I mean if there was a way to help people understand that this stuff that they are learning is not just a theory. It's not just something in a book. It's real people (Marie).

Similarly, Nina adds, "I get what life is like for me, you know…Like I think it's kind of insulting that it's a concept to people." One suggestion to remedy this, Marie considers:

> …to humanize the class more, actually. I had a really positive experience, which I did indicate on my evaluation of the course, not of the professor per se, but of the course. It would have been really nice to have more panels in the class…I think that people responded really positively to that and it just made it more human.

Panels refer to people who represent groups of different aspects of multicultural identities –race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, class, and/or gender that present perspectives regarding their own personal lives, but may be able to illuminate their experiences within a multicultural framework. This may be a helpful way to humanize multicultural course material and simultaneously take pressure away from students in the classes to be a representation or a cultural voice.

Another teaching practice may be that of *Decentralization*, a concept taken from narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990), which is the notion that power imbalances should be neutralized in order to create optimal comfort and connection, which may be particularly important in classes where more sensitive issues of race, power, class, etc., are being discussed. Tia discussed her early experiences in a class; "It feels more like a

friend is teaching the class as opposed to a supervisor." She qualifies that this does not impair her learning but in fact, helps, "She's making sure that we are learning…She's very knowledgeable with the material and I guess when she doesn't know something, she lets us know she doesn't know, and then she'll find out, which I think is important…So I think that helps us feel more comfortable." Similarly, Desaree describes, "She asks for our input and tries to kind of give us what we need without compromising what, I guess, what she's supposed to give us, or is required to teach, and um, actually, it feels like a friend is teaching the class."

Lastly, is the idea of practicing *Inclusivity and Cultural Connectedness* in the classroom. Multiculturalism implies a concept of inclusivity. Inherent in this is speaking to and ensuring that educational materials speak to and include all racial/ethnic groups, thereby being culturally connected and open to all students. For example, Maya offered her own experiences of teaching:

> I'm teaching now…I try to make sure I'm connected to all cultures. And I try to remain open. I think our professors, they are who they are. Theoretically, they talk about multiculturalism, but I don't think, I don't feel that it's practiced…When I have my White, men in the classroom, how comfortable do I make them feel? You know. I think that's only fair that I put the same measurement that I put on them onto myself as an instructor…It's just a cultural disconnect, not even on the radar of being intentional about it…When I'm teaching…I try to use examples that are culturally relevant. I'm conscious of that, you know. (Maya)

Table 5.

Institutional and Protective Factors

Themes/ Subthemes	Defining Features
(1) Sense of Self	A protective or resiliency factor in which one's sense of self (which for women of color may be rooted particularly in gender or racial/cultural identity) can help to buffer the impact of racial/ethnic slights and move successfully through academic program.
(2) Dialogue/Disclosure	Through open dialogue or disclosure with another individual or in a group, greater awareness, understanding, and feelings of empathy may be reached regarding experiences and impact of racial/ethnic bias.
Anonymous Disclosure	Students can anonymously disclose difficulties related to racial/ethnic bias without fear of consequences in order to raise consciousness that such issues exist.
Confrontation of Stereotypes	Confrontation of stereotypes are necessary to raise awareness and understanding. regarding racial/cultural issues. This is done both directly and experientially in a multicultural environment.

Table 5 (Continued).

Themes/ Subthemes	Defining Features
(3) Creating Community	Increased faculty-student/student-student contact creates feelings of comfort and community, thus, warding off feelings of isolation. Increased feelings of comfort and community create for a collaborative program environment/relationship.
(4) Mentors/Supports/ Advocates	Having someone (not necessarily a person of color) who you can confide in, can validate your experiences, and can act as an ally, support, or advocate within the academic environment (professors, chairs, senior students or historical figures, writers).
(5) Institutional Support of Multicultural Issues	Need for programs to support multicultural initiatives via established policy and programming.
Gatekeepers	As a commitment to multiculturalism, programs should act as gatekeepers to the profession by “weeding out” those who do not have a certain level of commitment to multicultural awareness.

Table 5 (Continued).

Themes/ Subthemes	Defining Features
Increased Visibility	The need for programs to be committed to increasing visibility of diverse faculty and staff.
(6) Consciousness Raising	Need for programs to increase multicultural knowledge, awareness, and practice
Increasing Knowledge	Increasing multicultural initiatives that are educative to increase overall knowledge regarding racial/cultural issues.
Mindfulness to Action	Awareness that people have regarding racial/ethnic differences does not translate into their behavior in terms of how they treat people.
Multicultural Teaching Practices	
(a) Humanization of Multicultural Issues	Helping students understand that multicultural issues are not just theoretical concepts. For people of color, racial/cultural issues are about their lives, experiences, and emotions. Treating it as a theoretical class without recognition of human aspects is not only insulting, but lacks awareness.

Table 5 (Continued).

Themes/ Subthemes	Defining Features
(b) Decentralization	Negotiation of the classroom environment so as to balance the power differential.
(c) Inclusivity/Cultural Connectedness	Multiculturalism implies a concept of inclusivity. Inherent in this is speaking to and ensuring that educational materials include all racial/ethnic groups. Teachers need to be culturally connected and open to their students in order to do this.

Research Experience of Women Participants

The qualitative (individual and group interviews) nature of this exploration was meant to serve as an intervention given women's usage of and importance given to social coping. Therefore, the experiences of women as a result of participation of this research were explored, revealing the following four themes: (1) *Dialogue/Disclosure*; (2) *Fear of Invalidation*; (3) *Strengthened Sense of Self*; and (4) *Support/Advocacy*.

Overall, the above themes represent some of the very factors that women identified as being useful in terms of implementing within their academic departments or primary ways of coping with racial/ethnic discrimination (and thus, have already been defined earlier) such as *Dialogue/Disclosure*, which incorporates a means of social

coping and gaining validation as well as support and advocacy. For a number of women, whether they had experienced instances of perceived racism/discrimination, this was the first time they had been asked about such experiences or had ever discussed such experiences within the academic environment, which they found validating itself. “This is interesting in the one time I don’t feel necessarily oppressed, I’m being asked about feeling oppressed (Kim).” Additionally, she adds, “I was excited about participating, because it is an environment where this kind of discussion can take place (Kim).” “I don’t think I told anyone that I felt, maybe any kind of discrimination or prejudice. I never said that to anyone, even though I might have thought it in my head (Desaree).” Later reflecting upon her experience, Desaree notes, “…actually, it feels kind of good to talk about it now.” Because many women were discussing their experiences for the first time, they seemed to be undergoing aspects of coping such as *Reality Testing, Reprocessing, and Reconstructing*.

Additionally, for some women, through dialogue and disclosure they went through the process of *Reality Resting, Reprocessing, and Reconstructing* again (although not a recognized experience of research process by participants), ultimately leading to a *Strengthened Sense of Self*, although not fully realizing it until this experience. For example, although she had initially processed this experience, discussing it again, brought to light new meaning:

> I think this experience helped fortify my racial identity. Had I not had that experience, I could have been a chameleon. My bias –this is something about me- my prejudice, is that, that an African American person could go into a Western environment, and to become them. I don’t like that at all. And that just…So to

> have a Black girl come to this program, and she becomes White, her thinking…I don't know, having gone through that now, I feel strong from it. I haven't had an opportunity to really look at it on that level. (Maya)

As discussed previously, this may also serve as a protective factor for Maya in terms of how she navigates in the program. Furthermore, several women expressed that they found it particularly supportive that a different woman of color was conducting this study. For many, their previous expectations have been that only African American or marginalized women would be interested in conducting such a study. Thus, women interviewed during the groups felt it an act of *Support/Advocacy* for a different woman of color, who may not be traditionally marginalized or oppressed, in the same historical fashion in the United States to conduct this study. Alternatively, for some women, discussion of these issues, particularly in a group format with other women of color raised a *Fear of Invalidation*, "I know I kinda feel nervous about it [be]cause of the different. I feel like my opinions are so different (Tia)," particularly if they had not had experiences which they had perceived as being racially/ethnically biased or discriminatory.

Overarching Mediators: Cultural Conditioning, Development, and Power

Although not explicitly discussed or asked about, *Cultural Conditioning* and one's *Development*, which refers to one's beliefs and ideology regarding racial/ethnic groups based on education, media, society, family, and peer influences that creates one's framework for understanding their own race/ethnicity and identity in relationship to others (Sue, 2003) appeared to play a significant role in how one perceived experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination or if they did at all. For example, Desaree describes thoughts:

> I feel like, I kind of always had this, umm, this kind of weird feeling where I don't want to only talk with or be friends with the other African Americans. I want to, to get to know other people but then sometimes I kind of feel awkward being the only African American person not in the African American click, like 'Why is she always talking to the White people? Does she want to be White?' Or something like that. I kind of feel that. (Desaree)

She goes on to explain her childhood experiences

> Like elementary school they thought that I wanted to be White because I was very friendly with the White kids and it was more of a, I'm not getting in trouble, I'm in advanced classes, and unfortunately, I was the only one African American for the most part in the advanced classes, so we had, I mean…We were about education. We didn't get in trouble, but it was more like I was excluded…And people looked at me like, 'Why aren't you hanging out with us?' (Desaree)

Desaree, compared to other participants, seemed to question her own experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination or microaggressions and had never discussed it previously. She also used means of coping such as repression and belief in a just world, as opposed to more problem-focused coping. Given her current and previous cultural experiences and her early development both within the program as well as personally, she may identify differently than her racial/ethnic group and thus perceive instances of racial/ethnic discrimination differently. Alternatively, women such as Kim and Maya, had previous cultural conditioning experiences that affirmed their racial/ethnic background. Additionally, being at a different educational and development level, perhaps contributed to them feeling stronger within their sense of self and racial identity, as they did not

appear to question their experiences and appeared to develop proactive methods of coping. Lastly, the concept of *Power*, and the fear of programmatic consequences is a very real factor with respect to mediating coping. For example, women not only appraise their internal states (emotions), but external factors such as program consequences or how they might be perceived by others, as they appraised experiences of racial/ethnic bias, and particularly how to respond and best cope with these situations. The below quotes provide examples:

> I wish I would have gone to the specific professor who is the director of the program, and told him what I felt, I think I would have done that, but I just felt like I didn't want to make waves. (Marie)
>
> I just keep on moving on, I know I've learned that, um, I have come to learn and come to understand that that's their problem and my goal is to get through the program. So I don't want to raise any, make any waves that would stop me… (Grace)
>
> It's hard to express your feelings when it could really backfire, not be advantageous for you in the end. Mostly White people in positions of power, probably best not to say things. (Nina)

Conclusion

Overwhelmingly, women of color interviewed reported experiencing perceived instances of microaggressions within their academic department, the most prevalent being that of a lack of visibility and minimization of racial/cultural issues. Although microaggressions are an aversive form of racism, and considered racial/ethnic "slights", (Constantine, 2007; Essed, 1991; Griffin, 1991; Franklin, 1993; Pierce, 1995, Sue,

Bucceri, Line, Nadal, & Torino, 2007), the impact emotionally as well as how one navigates within their program environment demonstrated a significant need for inclusion of further multicultural awareness regarding the impact of both overt, covert, and certainly more aversive forms of racism and discrimination as they impact the lives of women of color within graduate education as well as in terms of training more multiculturally responsive counselors as the United States becomes increasingly more diverse. Women of color in graduate education must negotiate a complex web of factors in deciding how to handle such instances of perceived racial/ethnic racism or discrimination; however, few women discussed such issues in an open format, which may lend validation, and insight and support regarding ways of coping. Given the impact of a lack of visibility, social coping, mentor support, and minimization of racial/cultural issues, these results had significant implications for how programs may incorporate into their policies, practices, and curriculum ways of fostering support such as professionalization or dialogue groups that are representative of their student bodies.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

There has been scant research in the area of how women of color cope with experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination. Given the impact of such experiences and findings that women of color face additional race-related stressors during the course of their graduate educational experiences, it is important to understand how women of color cope with such experiences, and arming graduate training programs with this information. In this chapter, major findings and theoretical, practice, training, and future research implications are discussed. A few terms need clarification in this discussion before proceeding. The focus of this study was centered upon "visible racial/ethnic minorities," in order to limit the scope of the study to racial/ethnic forms of discrimination. However, the term multicultural does not only refer to race, ethnicity, and culture, but also to gender, sex, class, affectional and sexual orientation, religion, and other special populations (Sue, Arredondo, McDavis, 1992). Multiculturalism refers to the idea of *inclusion* of all aspects of the above.

There is a growing awareness of globalization, internationalization of psychology, and an increasingly diverse population. In the year 2010, Caucasian Americans are projected to comprise 48% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Unfortunately, increased *diversification* has not necessarily lead to an increased commitment to *multiculturalism* among graduate training paradigms. Graduate training programs among helping professions vary tremendously in their focus of multicultural

education. Some are steeped in addressing cultural conditioning and raising multicultural awareness, while others, in accordance with licensure requirements, offer the requisite one or two courses. What message does this send to students when departmental policy and day-to-day unconscious practices and interactions seem to contradict the very theories learned in multiculturally oriented classes? How does it feel to learn about stereotypes and oppression, and then leave class only to perceive an experience of racial/ethnic discrimination within your graduate department? Why does this disconnect occur? Many theorists would contend that this is understandable as educational institutions, faculty, curriculums, etc. are embedded in the very oppressive realities that exist outside of the ivory tower (Friere, 1993; Margolis & Romero, 1988; Sue, 2003). How does this affect both students of color and those of the dominant racial/ethnic culture in terms of personal and professional development among helping professions? What does it mean in terms of how women of color can cope with such experiences in graduate education? Moreover, where do we go from here? These are some of the questions that are discussed based on the results of the present study in addition the theoretical, practice, educational/training, and future research implications of this study.

Major Research Findings and Theoretical Implications

Ten women of color in various graduate programs of helping professions were interviewed in individual and group interviews, which revealed that seven of the women identified perceived instances of racial/ethnic discrimination. Racism and racial/ ethnic discrimination may manifest itself in many forms and expressions (Harrell, 2000; Jones, 1997; Sue, 2003), as seen among women of color in this study who described experiences of covert, overt, cultural, vicarious, reverse, and various types of microaggressions.

Interestingly, more overt forms of institutional racism/discrimination were not discussed as such; however, this may also be a result of confusion in definitions. As Farley (1988) discusses, there is little consensus regarding definitions of racism/discrimination among the field, and there are many overlapping features regarding differing forms of racism (Harrell; Sue). While there were many institutional policies and acts that were regarded as somewhat unfair or diminishing to racial/ethnic minority groups, these were defined (and in some instances acknowledged) as Microaggression of *Minimization of Racial/Cultural Issues* at an institutional level (not individual level). For example, having few multicultural speakers or a diminishing attitude towards a multicultural course may be seen as *Minimization of Racial/Cultural Issues* (institutional level). Similarly, a *Lack of Visibility* was also seen as a microaggression. The above were both defined as microaggressions and aversive forms of racism due to the possible unintentional, unconscious, and even well-meaning nature behind such acts in contrast to the excluding nature of institutional racism or more overt acts of racism. However, others may easily regard this as another form of racism if using another defining feature. Additionally, as Jones (1997) discusses expressions of racism operate on different realms (individual, institutional, cultural, and socio-political), and appear to be more fluid. In an educational environment, where students are consistently operating across these levels, it may be difficult to extricate and dissect a specific expression of racism/discrimination from another. For example, some women identified experiencing *Cultural Racism*, which is the valuing and expression of the dominant culture to the exclusion of others (Sue), while other women expressed feeling a sense of covert racism in the form of a *Null Educational Environment* (Betz, 1989, p.136; Freeman, 1979; Hackett, et. al., 1992). There is a great

degree of overlap here; for example, environments where forms of cultural racism (and institutional racism) exist likely create experiences of a *Null Educational Environment* for people of color. While such fluidity and overlap appears natural and understandable, some confusion in definition may also suggest that greater clarity is necessary among the field. Given that women of color often question their own experiences, such clarity may be useful in order to help them frame and understand their own experiences.

Additionally, regarding the *Null Educational Environment* with respect to the professionalization or socialization of women of color is the idea that there is a lack of responsiveness, support, or encouragement of women of color within certain educational environments that are dominated by men, and thus has been primarily studied in scientific or engineering fields (Betz, 1989). However, this reported experience also has great implications within the context of this study for helping professions. A primary microaggression experienced among women of color was a *Lack of Visibility*, and this influenced women in terms of feeling a lack of support within their learning environment. Additionally, having limited opportunities for learning and lack of mentors in their academic environment calls into question if there are enough people of color within the field. While most helping professions are saturated with women, only a small percentage of these comprise current academic departments, and even a smaller percentage of these are people of color. Therefore, a null educational environment may also contribute to maintaining academic environments that lack visibility and vice versa.

Racial microaggressions are often commonplace and even automatic exchanges that may convey something insulting or demeaning to people of color (Franklin, 1999; Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Willis, 1978 in Constantine, 2007; Sue et al, 2003).

Guthrie (1995) defines this as daily small attacks on one's race/ethnicity that are unintentional slights and can create an atmosphere of invisibility, hostility, or present the idea that something racist might happen for people or color. Overwhelmingly, various microaggressions were identified as occurring most frequently. Most acknowledged were a *Lack of Visibility* among students and faculty and a *Minimization of Racial/Cultural Issues*, both on an individual and institutional level. A number of others were also acknowledged (*Colorblindness, Insensitive Racial/Cultural Humor, Stereotyped Assumptions, and Being a Cultural Voice*). Although little studied, most of the above specific microaggressions have been previously identified in the literature among a broad range of women of color (Constantine; Sue, 2007). Findings from this study validate and support previous findings that women of color have had in terms of perceived experiences of racial/ethnic slights. As discussed previously (Constantine, Sue), it may be that due to multicultural education and perhaps increasing minority presence that more overt and obvious forms of racism have transformed into unconscious and unintentional slights. However, over time this can continue to have the same, if not more severe impact, upon people of color. In graduate and academic environments, this may be particularly true given the education level of both faculty and students and that multicultural education is required in many helping professions.

Racial/ethnic microaggressions regarding the *Lack of Visibility* and *Minimization of Racial/Cultural Issues* deserve particular attention as participants readily acknowledged the specific influence of these microaggressions on their learning and professional development. Additionally, a lack of visibility may give a discouraging message regarding one's academic potential, as women of color do not see any others -

faculty or students -who look like them, visually in a higher education environment. Such a lack of visibility may also send a message that one is not welcome in this environment. Additionally, a lack of visibility also raised concerns for many women regarding whether their learning needs would be met and how they might navigate the program without allies or mentors. A perceived minimization of racial/cultural issues may serve to reinforce this concern at some level.

Conceptual Frameworks for Understanding the Impact of Racial/Ethnic Discrimination and Ambiguity Theory of Racial/Ethnic Microaggressions

Many theories have been proposed to help understand the impact of racial/ethnic discrimination (Bartky, 1977; Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Foster, 2000; Harrell, 2000; Gamson, 1992). If one uses an application of a transactional stress model (Cox, 1978; Coyne & Lazarus, 1980; Hobfoll, 1988; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lazarus, 1966; Mason, 1975; McGrath, 1970 in Matheny, Aycock, Curlette, & Junker, 2003), then race-related stress (Harrell) may be understood as a function of how one perceives the experience of racial/ethnic discrimination in contrast to one's perceived resources to cope with it. In terms of attributing the experience of racial/ethnic discrimination, some women, such as Desaree, denied or questioned their experiences in order to ward off negative feelings; thus allowing their belief in a just world to remain unchallenged. This was consistent with Crosby’s proposed theory of the denial of personal discrimination hypothesis, which suggests that the experience of perceiving yourself as a victim may incite feelings of anxiety to the extent that an individual might deny or minimize the experience of discrimination. However, as Harrell suggests, that this may lead to short-term benefits and lack of development of coping resources for potential future similar

experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination. Harell also discusses the impact of race-related life events that are episodic as well as vicarious. Both of these experiences have particular relevance in an academic environment. The results of this study suggest that while certain perceived racial/ethnic discriminatory events may in fact be episodic, the fact that women are within their academic environments consistently implies that the impact may be more ongoing or chronic. Many women utilized coping strategies such as avoidance and maneuvering the system, which suggests that women may be attempting to protect themselves from both emotional repercussions and real consequences as a result of an initial encounter. Additionally, vicarious acts of racism as well as how one copes with such experiences in an academic environment, while distressing, also seemed to provide women with a great deal of information in terms what to expect, how to navigate, and perhaps leading to more well-developed ways of coping.

Most women had difficulty attributing meaning to their experiences and questioned their experiences. Given that the majority of experiences reported were microaggressions, the very ambiguous, unintentional, and unconscious nature of microaggressions may make the experience difficult to attribute, understand, and verbalize, leading to much questioning and uncertainty. Their ambiguous and unconscious nature does not obviate their impact, however. There has been scant research regarding the impact of microaggressions or how this might be mediated. However, the impact of microaggressions has been likened to that of carbon monoxide –invisible yet lethal (Sue & Sue, 2003; Sue et al., 2007; Tinsley-Jones, 2003). It is suggested that while a person may encounter over a thousand experiences of microaggressions over a lifetime, they may not perceive them as “serious,” or even recalls them unless asked. However

ultimately this accumulates to one's overall stress load (Pierce, 1995). Results showed that although many women questioned their experiences, they had a wide range of certain emotions. Interestingly, however, women who tended to appraise the situation as more clearly unjust, unfair, or more overtly racially motivated also seemed to have stronger reactions of externalizing emotions such as anger, frustration, or disgust. It may be particularly difficult and confusing to have varying emotions, without understanding the context or nature of the situation. The process of reality testing, reprocessing, and reconstructing of meaning may be very helpful in assigning some meaning to the event in order to make more clear what appears to be ambiguous.

Additionally, group consciousness and social movement theories (Bartky, 1977; Dreifus, 1973 in Foster, 2000; Gamson, 1992) suggest that when a woman appraises an act of discrimination as due to her group status (as opposed to herself personally), she may in fact feel less isolated and even empowered. As this study demonstrated, it may be that through social coping one may gain this recognition and a sense of a shared experience, validation, and normalization, which can be empowering. Alternatively, for some, recognition of these aspects of human interaction may be difficult and elicit negative emotions. For example, because of previous cultural conditioning, Desaree often saw herself outside of her racial/ethnic group and felt a fear of invalidation from her racial/ethnic group. This may also have much to do one own racial identity development. Results especially highlighted the idea that social coping may be a particularly important means of allowing for the process of reality testing, reprocessing, and reconstruction of meaning. For example, Grace discussed that she and her friend often talked together about their experiences, and she offered the idea that these experiences may occur as

others may feel more threatened or challenged by her. This process, in which one is replaying what occurs, framing it in a context in which they can understand, and potentially creating meaning, may be particularly important in situations that are ambiguous, such as microaggressions, but seem to have an insidious impact. However, women who used religious/spiritual means of coping, in addition to social coping, also seemed to be able to construct some meaning around their experience. Maya seemed to frame her experience within a spiritual context in which such experiences were "a test."

Women used a variety of emotion-focused and problem focused coping strategies to assist them with dealing with experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination. Overwhelmingly, women also used means of social coping (in combination with other coping responses) as a way to verbalize their experiences, emotions, and gain validation from peers, family, as well a counselors. Participants utilized complex cognitive processes to help them negotiate how best to respond within their academic environments. This involved negotiating a number of variables -their own emotional reactions, the situation itself, how they might be perceived by others, their ability to be educative, represent their perspective, or feel in control, and the power differential between themselves and faculty/program. In the stress literature (e.g. Cannon, 1914; Matheny & McCarthy, 2000; Sapolsky, 1998; Seyle, 1973, 1974; 1976; Smith, 1993), the idea of "fight, flight, or freeze" symbolizes the complex stress response that our body has in order to negotiate how to physically react to an environmental stressor. For example, a tiger appears -we might freeze, fight, or run (flight). The environmental stressors in the academic world may be that of a culturally insensitive remark made in class which has raised emotions -does a student fight (speak up), flight (say nothing), or freeze (struggle)

in the conflict of what to do? Understanding that these might be the pressures of an individual of color, especially in light of many expressed views regarding feeling pressured to be a cultural voice versus a fear of academic consequences, may be helpful for educators as well as students of color to understand in terms of normalizing their experiences and hearing how other students have opted to handle this struggle. For example, while Kim chooses to be proactive (fight), she uses her level of emotions as a guide to assess if she can be constructive or whether is more likely to be confrontational, in which case she may wait to address the issue.

Research Findings and Practice Implications

As discussed previously, many of the women interviewed reported experiences of microaggressions. Additionally, of the women interviewed, many continued to question their own experiences, feeling the need to provide verification, despite being asked about their perceived experiences. One implication of the increased experience of microaggressions and the very ambiguous nature of their experience may be that it causes people of color to experience a variety of confusing emotional and personal reactions, without being able to attach it specifically to a circumstance (Ambiguity Theory of Racial/Ethnic Discrimination and Microaggressions). Practitioners who understand the nature of microaggressions and specific microaggressions may be able to normalize and frame such experiences for their clients as well as potential emotional reactions that a person of color may have.

Counselors who work with a woman of color may also need to understand that verbalization of such experiences, similar to a traumatic event, are difficult, particularly if ambiguous, and accompanied with a wide range of emotions depending on their

attribution of the event itself. Knowledge of how women may cope with such experiences may also be useful in helping women of color deal with such experiences and feel validated and empowered. Results of this study seemed to validate previous findings (Foster, 2000) regarding the efficacy of social coping for women of color in buffering the impact of racism/discrimination. Social coping also seemed to allow for further questioning and reprocessing of the experience, which may allow for some resolution or reconstruction of meaning in terms of how the experience is perceived. Given this, it may be useful to consider group work in terms of understanding and coping with issues such as hate crimes, experiencing racism, discrimination, etc., particularly on college and/or academic campuses where such issues may be difficult to discuss, or where microaggressions may be more persistent, but have a clear impact and presence.

Lastly, it may be very useful for therapists to have an understanding of how racial/ethnic microaggressions may affect their clients of color in terms of facilitating a therapeutic alliance (Constantine, 2007). As all therapy is cross-cultural to some extent, any expression of racial/ethnic tension, hostility, bias, no matter how unconscious or unintentional may have a significant impact and seen as degrading. In a recent study, (Constantine) perceptions of racial/ethnic microaggressions by African American clients were negatively associated with the strength of their therapeutic alliance and multicultural training/competency. It may be particularly difficult for clients to address or deal with racial/ethnic microaggressions in the context of a therapeutic relationship (Constantine, 2007; Franklin, 1999) given potential power imbalance between the client and therapist and the presumption that counseling is designed to help, making it more imperative that counselors be aware of such experiences.

Creating Change and Consciousness Raising: Educational and Training Implications

This adventure began as I sat with others and we shared disempowering experiences that we have had. It was an unexpectedly emotional experience. Afterwards, we began to note the relief and lightness we felt. I wondered why we had not shared that before. Why had we felt so silenced? Why had we all felt so silenced? In addition, in a program that is already so diverse, why are we having such experiences? What could be different? What may never change? My own experiences throughout this process have been tracked in a reflexive journal, in order to track and understand how my background, experiences, and cultural conditioning may influence these results. I identify myself as a South Asian American woman who is somewhat close to this experience in that I am in graduate education within a helping profession. This, of course, begs the question of whether I myself have experienced racial/ethnic discrimination or microaggressions during the course of my graduate education, and how that may affect my process in this research. As a South Asian American woman, I have felt marginalized, misunderstood, stereotyped, and at times limited in how to express myself better, or wondered if it is worth it, and especially, how my experience would be different if I was White? It has been difficult and confusing being told, "I am 'not typical of a South Asian woman," if I am being too vocal or expressive, or feeling misunderstood if I am "not being emotional enough." I have certainly sat in classrooms and felt excluded or invisible because I did not feel that the theories (developmental, psychological, or other) have spoken to me. Additionally, I have also had the experience of feeling spoken to the classroom when teachers/professors have used a cultural context that has included or acknowledged that I am in the room, and felt that has made all the difference in the world. Throughout this

project, it was difficult not to be emotionally impacted by these women's stories, particularly those regarding a minimization of multicultural issues, as well as overt instances of racism. The following are some of my own reactions to women's experiences of this. "When I hear such comments such as 'not another multicultural course' or 'why do we have to learn this' I interpret this to mean, I don't care to know about others who are different than me, which essentially means, I don't care to know about you. I feel so disheartened in these moments -defensive, shut down, and closed of and think, I would never want to share anything about myself…I wonder if everyone *truly* feels this way…It's hard for me not feel somewhat ashamed of the very profession that I have worked so hard to become a part of.” To me this highlights the very nature of microaggressions -seemingly small, unconscious, unthinking, yet the meaning that is attached to it for people of color can be so much greater than that. Ultimately, I thought,”What would it mean for someone to know that this is…What I am thinking at that moment?” As Kim points out, "When you're in a department of nurturers and counselors, you do get the benefit of [it] in some ways." Is this how we begin to institute change?

At one point among helping professions, multicultural practice may have been considered a “specialty area.” However, when one considers that half the population will be of a certain racial/ethnic background and that all counseling is to some degree cross-cultural (culture also referring to class, sex, gender, affectional or sexual orientation, religion/spirituality); everyone sitting across from you in a therapy room or within the classroom will be different in some aspect. To some degree, this raises the stakes in terms of the responsibility, ethically and professionally, of training multiculturally competent

and responsive educators and counselors. As it currently stands, programs and training among helping professions are primarily “monocultural” (Sue, et al., 1992). By not training them in a multicultural manner, in essence, it seems like a disservice, as students are not prepared for the reality of the diverse world of clients.

Participants identified several ways in which their institutions or programs may be more multiculturally sensitive. In addition, they discussed ways in which their program could improve situations regarding racial/ethnic discrimination or biases based on their experiences and how they coped. In many ways, these two issues are integrally tied. With respect to graduate training and programming, most women directly identified a means of dialoguing, increasing visibility, and various ways in which programs can increase multicultural knowledge, training, and awareness within their programs. Given the prevalence and impact of microaggressions, graduate programs may want to consider more specific programming around this topic area as well as other aversive forms of racism/discrimination for students, faculty, and staff. Furthermore, given the unintentional and unconscious nature of microaggressions, and that those communicating microaggressions are often unaware of their impact on others (Sue et al., 2006 in Constantine, 2007) education specifically geared towards microaggressions and racism and discrimination in its various forms may be helpful. Additionally, graduate students may often present a diverse range of previous experiences, attitudes, in essence, their cultural conditioning. Graduate programs may also need to specifically incorporate education that addresses one's previous cultural conditioning in order to address both more overt forms of racism and specifically microaggressions as they occur both in and out of the graduate environment. Ideally, this will require more coursework and practice

in areas of multiculturalism, as well as faculty nuanced in such topic areas. Humanization of multicultural issues may also be another way of helping students raise awareness. There may be several ways of doing this, in addition to inviting the voices of students of color into the room (without pressure to represent or defend). It may be useful to incorporate stories, have students watch movies/novels that represent different cultural contexts, anonymously sharing of disempowering experiences that can be shared and discussed in a classroom, or allow for smaller group discussions that may be less threatening. Third, professionalization, support, or specific advocacy groups within graduate departments may also be particularly important in order to help build community, allow for open dialogue, build support, and allow students to serve as peer mentors, and/or raise awareness among department that may lack visibility. Additionally, given the efficacy of social coping that women expressed, such groups among departments may not only emphasize an institutional support for such initiatives, but also allow women a place and a process for sharing disempowering experiences.

Other educational and training implications based on this study include bridging the disconnect between the diversification of the United States, graduate programs, and the field of psychology, and multiculturalism (or lack there of) across institutional and individual levels of practice. Adopting policies that actually infuse multicultural and inclusive practice may be an important aspect of creating change, particularly for programs that do not have a history of such practices already. Infusing the concept of multiculturalism into teaching practices and coursework may in many respects realign the field. However, this may mean introducing various worldviews of psychology and mental health into a conceptualization class. Ensuring that case studies are diverse and well-

represented to illustrate practice across different multicultural backgrounds, and/or requiring practicums that expose students to different multicultural backgrounds, would be beneficial in terms of understanding one's cultural conditioning, how it plays a role in therapy, addressing issues around racism/discrimination or microaggressions should they arise, and help student's have dialogue with clients across culture.

Lastly, these are difficult topics to acknowledge and address and may result in many emotional reactions among students of all backgrounds. However, one must also ask, in the field of psychology and in the quest to be well prepared to help others explore themselves, throughout graduate school, we are often requested if not required, to explore our own backgrounds. Why is plunging into issues concerning oppression and privilege and our race, ethnicity, gender, sex, class, affectional and sexual orientation, religion/spirituality, or any other aspect of our identity any different? Some would argue that the field of psychology is an institution, and thus directly reflects the “isms” that exist in greater society. As society changes, so will the aspects of the field. I also wonder, however, if such changes may not be reciprocal. For example, psychologists and all helping professions are in the field of essentially creating change –in the therapy room, classroom, or within policy. Does it matter where it begins?

Trustworthiness, Characteristics of Study, and Future Research Implications

Characteristics of this study include several strengths and limitations, which have several implications for how this study may be considered and interpreted. Strengths of this study include rigorous methodology, which included recursive analysis, use of multiple data formats (individual interviews, group interviews, and literature) in order to arrive at themes/subthemes and achieve triangulation of data. Additionally, contact sheets

in order to track initial hypotheses regarding themes of each interview, notes, questions, etc., and member-checking at group interviews in order to check the validity of initial/raw codes was utilized. An electronic audit trail and a reflexive journal were kept in order to track research protocol and researcher biases. In addition, both coders discussed their frame and backgrounds in order to understand how their own cultural conditioning may influence their coding process being of two different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Inter-rater reliability was also calculated to further ensure consistency and trustworthiness of data. Other strengths of the study include that it served as in intervention, and allowed for debriefing after each interview if necessary.

There are also several limitations of this study, which should be considered with respect to the interpretation of the results. One limitation is with respect to the saturation of codes. While saturation was reached within the pre-set criteria of the methodology, it should be noted that this was an exploratory study, and there were several questions and themes that could be further verified and clarified with increased exploration. Furthermore, due to the nature of the research protocol and structured interview guide, individuals (3) who did not experience perceived instances of racial/ethnic discrimination were asked few questions and had limited input with respect to impact and how one copes with racial/ethnic discrimination. This raises some limitations in terms of saturation of (all) themes being based upon a limited sample of 7 women, again, calling for further verification and clarification of emergent themes. Another limitation included that the sample was limited to a majority of African American students. While the study was open to all visible racial/ethnic minorities, participants who volunteered tended to be of primarily African American descent. While this precludes generalizability to other

racial/ethnic minorities, it also allowed for greater and more in depth examination of the experiences of African American women in graduate education. Another characteristic included that both the primary and secondary coder were women of color, although different women of color, which represented two different lenses in which to understand women's experiences. On the one hand, this provided understanding and validation across two very different racial/ethnic backgrounds, but representative of their backgrounds. However, it can also be argued, that the voice or viewpoint of a non-oppressed racial/ethnic background may be have been valuable in terms of understanding these women's experiences from a more separate and objective viewpoint. Another limitation in terms of inter-rater coding and reliability of codes may be that the achieved inter-rater reliability of .82 may be considered somewhat low, implying that greater exploration and clarification of emergent themes/codes may have been helpful. However, given the number of emergent codes, the achieved inter-rater reliability may also imply that the majority of codes are clear and consistent between coders, while some are in need of further distinction. Another limitation included that although interview questions were field tested from a previous pilot study, research question #2 did not seem to capture the experiences of the women interviewed, although this also may have been due to the fact that so many of the experiences were less overt, and more ambiguous, and thus many women were still in the process of understanding the experience itself. Lastly, although this seemed like a very positive experience for most women, given the questioning and reprocessing that many women did throughout the interview, it may have been useful to follow up with women additionally after the group interview process in a formal debriefing regarding their experiences. A written follow up of interaction may been seen

by some as somewhat more Western, impersonal, and therefore was not utilized given the personal nature of the interviews, however some form of verbal communication/ follow up may have been useful to understand the full impact of the research experience.

In terms of research implications, this study validated previous investigations into specific microaggressions (Constantine, 2007; Sue, 2007), however there has been little research regarding how one copes with racism/ discrimination in the academic environment (Foster, 2000; Gardner, 2005; Kaul, 2002). Further research is needed in this area and given the more insidious nature of microaggressions –across various multicultural identities (religion, class, affectional/sexual orientation, gender, etc.), as well further research regarding the nature, impact, and how one copes with more subtle forms of racism/discrimination may be helpful. Additionally, it may be useful to understand how Caucasian/European Americans understand or perceive the nature of microaggressions. While the impact of such experiences is clearly difficult, it may be very powerful and empowering to have allies who understand the nature of such experiences.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Demographic Survey

Coping with Perceived Racial and Ethnic Discrimination in Graduate Education

Demographic Questionnaire

Directions: Please read and answer the following questions.

1. What is your sex?
   1. Male
   2. Female

2. What is your age? _____

3. What Racial /Ethnic group do you affiliate / identify with? Please indicate country of origin/ nationality?
   1. African / Black African _____
   2. African American/ Black _____
   3. Asian _____
   4. Asian American or Pacific Islander _____
   5. Caucasian/ Caucasian American/ European American _____
   6. Latino/ Hispanic _____
   7. Latino American/ Hispanic American _____
   8. Middle Eastern _____
   9. Native American _____
   10. Biracial and / or Bicultural _____
   11. Other (Please describe) _____

4. Are you currently a citizen of the United States?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. Other (Please describe) _____

5. Are you currently:
   1. Divorced
   2. Living with partner
   3. Single
   4. Partnered / Married
   5. Widowed
   6. Other (Please describe) _____

6. What is your sexual orientation?
   1. Bisexual
   2. Lesbian
   3. Gay
   4. Heterosexual
   5. Inter-sex
   6. Queer
   7. Questioning
   8. Transsexual
   9. Other (Please describe) _____

7. What is your religious/ spiritual orientation? (Please specify).
   1. Atheist _____
   2. Agnostic _____
   3. Buddhist/ Taoist _____
   3. Catholic _____
   4. Christian _____
   5. Hindu _____
   6. Jewish _____
   7. Muslim/ Islamic _____
   8. Shintoism _____
   9. Sikhism _____
   10. Other (Please describe) _____
   11. Spiritual but not religious
   12. I am not sure

8. What type of program are you currently in? (Please indicate degree and specialty/ program)
   1. M.A./ M.S., Masters _____
   2. Ph.D., Doctorate of Philosophy _____
   3. Ed.S., Education Specialist _____
   4. Ed.D., Doctorate of Education _____
   5. Other (Please describe) _____

9. What is your family's average annual income? Current household income:
If married/ partner = you and your partner's annual income
If single/ independent = your annual income
If a student/ dependent = you and your parent's annual income.
Please circle best estimate.

1. Less than $10,000
2. $10,000-$19,000
3. $20,000-$29,000
4. $30,000-$39,000
5. $40,000-$49,000
6. $50,000-$59,000
7. $60,000-$69,000
8. $70,000-$79,000
9. $80,000-$89,000
10 .$90,000-$99,000
11. $100,000-$149,999
12. $150,000-$249,999
13. $ Greater than $249,999

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Georgia State University
Department of Counseling and Psychological Services
Statement of Informed Consent

Title: Coping with perceived racial and ethnic discrimination in women of color in graduate education

Student Principle Investigator: Priti Shah, M.A.

I. Introduction
You are invited to participate in a research project that will be studying the coping strategies employed by women of color (cultural, ethnic, racial minorities) in response to experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination in graduate education and training. The purpose of this study is to better understand your experiences and the impact of perceived racial and ethnic discrimination, how you coped with these experiences, and any outcomes on your personal and professional lives. Through your participation you will have the opportunity to learn about other's experiences as well as coping strategies, thus the purpose of this study is also to inform and understand yours and others experience in taking part in this study. Your role in this study is very important to helping other women of color in graduate education as well as potentially educating graduate departments in becoming more multiculturally aware and sensitive.

II. Procedure
In order to understand your experiences better, I will need to meet with you in a series of interviews. Prior to meeting for an interview, we will discuss the study in more detail, confirm interest in participation, and arrange a mutually convenient individual interview date and time. In choosing to participate in this project, you will complete a research packet, which will include (1) a demographic questionnaire, and (2) consent forms (two copies, one for participant and one for PI). Surveys will take approximately 5 minutes to complete in all. You will complete and return the research packet on the day of their interview.

You will also be asked to participate in both:

1. Individual Interview: To discuss experiences of discrimination and coping. Each individual interview will last for approximately one hour and will be conducted within the graduate institution/ department of the PI in a confidential office.

2. Group Interview Meeting: All participants will meet together in a group. Experiences of discrimination and coping strategies will be presented and thoughts / reactions may be discussed. Experiences of participation in the study itself will be asked about. This group will last for approximately 1.5-2 hour and will be conducted within the graduate institution/ department of the PI in a confidential office.

III. Risks
Due to the sensitive nature of this topic, some parts of this study may be difficult or cause distress. If you experience a need to address any issues that might arise, referral numbers have been provided, in addition to the university counseling center. The researcher is also available in case of emergency. The participant is responsible for all expenses related to such services. If you do experience any feelings of anxiety or distress as a result of this questionnaire, and would like to share these feelings with someone, you may contact any of the following:

1. Georgia State University Counseling Center: (404)-651-2211
2. Fulton County Department of Mental Health: (404)-730-1600/ TDD (404)-730-1608
3. The researcher is also available if you would like to discuss your concerns. Please see contact information.

IV. Benefits
Your participation may also have indirect benefits (to be measured through the study itself) by participation in the study. These indirect benefits include: (1) voicing experiences of perceived discrimination, (2) feeling supported and validated through group participation, (3) gaining knowledge regarding others' use of coping strategies. Direct benefits are minimal. You will be provided with snacks and drinks during the group meeting. In addition, you will be given a $15.00 gift certificate to thank you for your time and involvement.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal
Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to be in this study. You may also end your involvement in this study at any time. You have the right to participate, as well as withdraw specific information at any point in time should you choose to, without any penalty.

VI. Confidentiality
All records are kept private to the extent allowed by law. The information you provide will not be part of your academic records or in any way effect your evaluations. Your name or any other identifying information will not appear in connection with ANY data, which you provide. Subsequently, if this study is published or presented, findings will be generalized and summarized to protect your identity and confidentiality. No personally identifying information will be used at ANY time during this study in relationship to the information provided by you. All questionnaires, consents, and data that you provide will be stored and kept in a locked cabinet. All computer files are kept under locked and password encoded files. Questionnaires will be marked with ID numbers, so as to protect your identity and information you provide. Although confidentiality will be discussed and strongly advised, and you are not required to disclose your name during the focus group, researcher cannot guarantee confidentiality of your statements made in a focus group.

VII. Contact Persons
The student project investigator, Priti Shah, is available to answer any questions about your involvement in this project and may be contacted at (404)-875-6705 / pritishah314@yahoo.com. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant, you may contact Ms. Susan Vogtner of the Office of Research Integrity at (404)-463-0674 / svogtner1@gsu.edu. This project is under the direction of Dr. Greg Brack, Ph.D., an Associate Professor in Georgia State University's Department of Counseling and Psychological Services. He may be contacted at (404)-651-3411/ gbrack@gsu.edu. There is no sponsorship or funding for this project.

VIII. Copy of Consent for Participant
You are entitled to a copy of this consent form and may retain one copy of the enclosed informed consent forms indicating your participation for your records. A statement of consent is required of all participants in this project. Signing below indicates that **YOU VOLUNTARILY AGREE** to the conditions of participation described above.

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

I have discussed this project and the items above with the participant.

_____ _____
Student Principle Investigator: Priti Shah, MA Date
(404)-875-6705 / pritishah314@yahoo.com

_____ _____
Supervised by Dr. Greg Brack, Ph.D. Date
(404)-651-3411/ gbrack@gsu.edu

PLEASE SIGN BOTH COPIES AND **TAKE ONE ONLY** FOR YOURSELF FOR YOUR RECORDS

Appendix C: Individual Interview Question Guide

Coping with Perceived Racial and Ethnic Discrimination in Graduate Education

In this study, I am most interested in understanding your experiences of perceived racial and ethnic discrimination in graduate training, what impact this had upon you, and how you responded to and coped with these experiences. In order to understand these experiences, it is necessary for me to conduct a series of interviews with you. In addition to interviews regarding your experiences in graduate training, I will also be asking you about your experiences of participating in these interviews. This study's aim is to gain knowledge on a very important topic and yet neglected area. Your role in this study is very important to helping other women of color (visible cultural, ethnic, racial minorities) in graduate education and educating graduate departments, and your responses here today are completely confidential.

The following definition is offered as a guide to ensure a general understanding of racial/ ethnic discrimination. However, it is important to note that I am asking about your *experience and perception* of racial and ethnic discrimination.

Racial and / or Ethnic Discrimination: Prejudiced outlook, action, and negative treatment of one racial / ethnic group toward another racial/ ethnic group.

Individual Interview Guide

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1. Can you please describe the type of graduate training program you are currently in?
Inquire about:

a) *Academic training: What is the program course, student-faculty ratio, and academic training like?*

b) *Program environment: What is the program environment like?*
- *How would you describe the academic or social environment?*
- *What are student-faculty relationships like?*

c) Program Diversity:
- *What is the diversity like among the department (faculty, students, staff)*
- *How does their department create an atmosphere of diversity/ multicultural awareness?*

2. Have you ever sensed, perceived, or experienced racial or ethnic discrimination during the course of your graduate training? Yes/ No (If No, go to # 7)

3. Can you please describe for me what happened?
If participant attempts to report more than one incident politely respond: "Before we move on let's focus on this incident."

4. In what ways did you respond to this experience?
(Did you tell anyone? Did you react? How? Prompt as necessary and probe for several coping strategies)

a) *What made you respond that way?*
b) *What did you do to take care of yourself?*
c) *How did that work for you?*
d) *In the future, would you do something different? (What? Why?)*

5. How did this experience affect you?

a) How did this experience make you feel?
b) What did this experience mean to you?

Once finished ask about other experiences, using complete line of questioning before moving on to another experiences.

6. Can you please tell me about any other experiences of racial/ ethnic discrimination during the course of your graduate training that you can think of?

7. What suggestions might you have as to what is needed in order to address multicultural awareness and racial/ ethnic discrimination issues within your department?

**Ask them if they have any questions
**Thank them coming today (depending on disclosure, debrief as necessary).
**Confirm their interest in focus group, date/ time card, and let them know you will be calling them as a reminder.

THE END

Appendix D: Group Interview Meeting Guide (For Groups A & B)

Coping with Perceived Racial and Ethnic Discrimination in Graduate Education

Group Interview Meeting Guide

1. Introductions
2. Overview of purpose of Group/ Rules regarding pseudonyms and confidentiality

Purpose: To clarify and expand upon the previous interviews in terms of what types of experiences have women of color faces in terms of ethnic/ racial discrimination or bias, how this impacts your personal and professional lives, and how you might cope with such situations. I also want to understand your experience of just participating in this research itself.

I'm going to be bringing up different things that we have all talked about in our individual interviews, and what I'm looking for is three things a.) do you feel like the ideas that I captured are representative of what you have said, and b.) how do you feel or what do you think when you see other perspectives, and c) if you see something that perhaps doesn't represent how you feel, think, I hope you'll feel comfortable sharing.

Confidentiality: This is a very closed environment, so you may see each other, you might run into me in different environments. I want you to know that I can protect your confidentiality, and I would hope that you will protect each other's confidentiality, but I cannot promise that someone will not go home and say…

Because of that, you do not have to use your real names if you do not want to. I remember all of your pseudonyms, and you are more than welcome to use them. Alternatively, when we introduce ourselves you can feel free to say as much or as little as you feel comfortable saying.

Group Rules:
We are all in graduate school, I am sure we have all experienced having different perspectives and hearing different perspectives. In addition, while we may not agree, and frankly, I hope you all do not, but I hope you will respect each other's perspectives. I also think there is something beautiful about intelligent people being able to come together and discuss ideas, differing ideas, and still walk away feeling like they have been heard.

Questions/ Concerns

3. Review of themes found discrimination experiences
4. Review of themes found in coping experiences

5. Experience of research participation
    - Positive/ Negative
    - Acknowledgement that the researcher is a different woman of color –impact if any?
    - Other

6. Discussion/ questions/ concerns
    - How do they feel their department does to create/ promote multicultural awareness/ sensitivity?
    - How can institution/ departments further do help create multicultural awareness/ sensitivity?

7. Summary of themes from group debriefing
8. Closing

Appendix E: Example of Initial Themes Presented at Group Interview Meetings A and B

Types of Ethnic/ Racial Discrimination/ Racism Experienced Group A

Covert Discrimination/ Racism (Faculty-Student): Racially discriminatory acts or attitudes that occur far more often however are hidden, denied, or discounted. This may include acts such as hostility or social isolation between a faculty and student, thus signifying an element of power overriding this relationship and influencing how the student may/ or may not react.

- **Perceived Academic Differential Treatment:** Perceived racially or discriminatory acts or attitudes that occur in the academic environment between faculty and student such as hostility or differential treatment towards student of color.

- **Null Educational Environment or Lack of Responsiveness:** Perceived racially or discriminatory acts or attitudes that occur in the academic environment between faculty and student such that there is no responsiveness towards the student of color creating a null educational environment.

Covert Discrimination/ Racism (Peer-Peer): Racially discriminatory acts or attitudes that occur far more often however are hidden, denied, or discounted. This may include acts such as hostility or social isolation between peers; thus, power may be equal in the relationship.

- **Social Exclusion:** Racial / ethnic biases that are exhibited via social relationships and/ or exclusion from social relationships

- **Racial/ Social Segregation:** Separation of racial ethnic groups based on race creating an atmosphere of exclusion and / or isolation and disconnection.

Overt Discrimination/ Racism: Racially discriminatory acts or attitudes that are easily detectable and may take the form of direct behavior –either verbally such as saying a racial slur or behaviorally.

- **Stereotyping Behavior:** Verbally or Behaviorally acting in a way as to ascribe to a racial/ ethnic stereotype denying personal identity.

Institutional Discrimination/ Racism: Institutional Discrimination/ racism refers to prejudiced or biased outlooks, action, or treatment by a system or the majority racial/ ethnic group towards someone or a system of a minority group. This can take the form of exclusion or lack of acknowledgement of certain groups from program, policies, or practices.

- **Programmatic/ Academic Inclusion/ Exclusion:** No discussion of differing groups/ cultures. Exclusion of groups or lack of attention to certain groups in classes, etc.

Microaggressions: Unintentional slights that can create an atmosphere of invisibility or present the idea that something racist/ discriminatory might happen for racial / ethnic minorities.

- **Lack of Visibility/ Students:** The idea that there are few people like me in this program, contributing to a sense of invisibility.

- **Lack of Visibility/ Faculty:** The idea that there are few people like me among the faculty and this will create problems for me and my learning.

Vicarious Racial/ Ethnic Discrimination/ Racism: Action or negative treatment of one racial/ ethnic group by another ethnic group that is witnessed in the academic environment

Ways that Women of Color Cope with Racial/ Ethnic Biases in Academia Group A

Emotion-Focused Coping: Coping responses that focus upon managing the emotional stress resultant from the stressor.

Repression: Memories, emotions, and situations surrounding situations concerning experiences of racial/ ethnic bias are pushed away from consciousness.

Denial: Racial / ethnic biases are not perceived, felt, or recognized as such as to avoid emotions surrounding situation.

Focus on Positive: Although such situations occur, there is a focus on positive interactions, which counterbalance racial/ ethnic biased situations.

Belief in Just World: The idea that racial / ethnic biases, discrimination, and racist acts equate to a very dark part of the human psyche. Consciously acknowledging that human beings are capable of this is too distressing.

Problem-Focused Coping: Coping response that focuses upon changing the stressor or the perception of the stressor.

Reality Testing/ Questioning: Did that really happen? Was that what I think it was? **(Comparative Analysis)**

Reframing/ Re-Processing: Translating or re-processing the event in order to create a separate or different meaning from it.

Self-Depreciation: Because of power imbalances, must act in ways that are self-depreciating despite acknowledging racial/ ethnic biases to continue academic progress/ excellence.

Detachment/ Disconnection: Avoiding connection with others / becoming detached –thus to avoid harm/ hurt that results from racially/ ethnic biased actions or slights

Fight or Flight: Negotiating when to fight/ speak up and when to stay quiet.

Social Coping: Being able to discuss feelings, situations, and experiences surrounding instances of racial/ ethnic bias or discrimination openly.

Peer-Academic: Social support extended from others with shared experiences in program.

Family-Extended: Social support extended from family support systems.

Need for Validation/ Social Support: Stemming from the need for social coping, is the need for others to validate my experience. I can only believe this happened if other's believe it too.

Resiliency: An internal strength, motivation, and or skills, which lead to successful outcomes despite numerous obstacles.

Learning to Maneuver the Program

Eyes on the Prize / Keep on Moving On…

Religious / Spiritual Coping: Use of a higher power to understand, make sense of, and reconstruct new meaning from discriminatory (as well as other difficult) events.

Types of Ethnic/ Racial Discrimination/ Racism Experienced

Covert Discrimination/ Racism (Faculty-Student): Racially discriminatory acts or attitudes that occur far more often however are hidden, denied, or discounted. This may include acts such as hostility or social isolation between a faculty and student, thus signifying an element of power overriding this relationship and influencing how the student may/ or may not react.

- **Perceived Academic Differential Treatment:** Perceived racially or discriminatory acts or attitudes that occur in the academic environment between faculty and student such as hostility or differential treatment towards student of color.

- **Null Educational Environment or Lack of Responsiveness:** Perceived racially or discriminatory acts or attitudes that occur in the academic environment between faculty and student such that there is no responsiveness towards the student of color creating a null educational environment.

    - **Lack of affirmation / encouragement culturally**

Covert Discrimination/ Racism (Peer-Peer): Racially discriminatory acts or attitudes that occur far more often however are hidden, denied, or discounted. This may include acts such as hostility or social isolation between peers; thus, power may be equal in the relationship.

- **Social Exclusion:** Racial / ethnic biases that are exhibited via social relationships and/ or exclusion from social relationships

- **Racial/ Social Segregation:** Separation of racial ethnic groups based on race creating an atmosphere of exclusion and / or isolation and disconnection.

Overt Discrimination/ Racism: Racially discriminatory acts or attitudes that are easily detectable and may take the form of direct behavior –either verbally such as saying a racial slur or behaviorally.

- **Stereotyping Behavior:** Verbally or Behaviorally acting in a way as to ascribe to a racial/ ethnic stereotype denying personal identity.

    - **Negative, Positive, Chronic**

    - **Othering:** Behavior or verbal comments as to group an entire racial/ ethnic group with certain characteristics, and simultaneously offset or separate them from the dominant culture ("you people," etc.)

- **Treated as a suspect/ foreigner:** Treated in a manner in which a student is put in a position to defend their credentials, work, or personhood.

Institutional Discrimination/ Racism: Institutional Discrimination/ racism refers to prejudiced or biased outlooks, action, or treatment by a system or the majority racial/ethnic group towards someone or a system of a minority group. This can take the form of exclusion or lack of acknowledgement of certain groups from program, policies, or practices.

- **Programmatic/ Academic Inclusion/ Exclusion:** No discussion of differing groups/ cultures. Exclusion of groups or lack of attention to certain groups in classes, etc.

- **Programmatic financial / other support**: faculty and financial support towards certain multicultural identity groups while excluding/ not attending to others.

Microaggressions: Unintentional slights that can create an atmosphere of invisibility or present the idea that something racist/ discriminatory might happen for racial / ethnic minorities.

- **Lack of Visibility/ Students:** The idea that there are few people like me in this program, contributing to a sense of invisibility.
    - **Visibility Increasing**: seen as a climate that is improving.
- **Lack of Visibility/ Faculty:** The idea that there are few people like me among the faculty and this will create problems for me and my learning.
- **Insensitive Racial/Cultural Humor**: Jokes/ slights made which may/ may not at times be offensive, however may present an environment that can feel chronically uncertain or uncomfortable for people of color.

Vicarious Racial/ Ethnic Discrimination/ Racism: Action or negative treatment of one racial/ ethnic group by another ethnic group that is witnessed in the academic environment

Ways that Women of Color Cope with Racial/ Ethnic Biases in Academia Group B

Emotion-Focused Coping: Coping responses that focus upon managing the emotional stress resultant from the stressor.

Denial: Racial / ethnic biases are not perceived, felt, or recognized as such as to avoid emotions surrounding situation.

Focus on Positive: Although such situations occur, there is a focus on positive interactions, which counterbalance racial/ ethnic biased situations.

Emotional Release: Release of catharsis of emotion (crying, yelling, etc.)

Letting Go: Being able to let go of the emotional energy.

Problem-Focused Coping: Coping response that focuses upon changing the stressor or the perception of the stressor.

Reality Testing/ Questioning: Did that really happen? Was that what I think it was? **(Comparative Analysis)**

Reframing/ Re-Processing: Translating or re-processing the event in order to create a separate or different meaning from it.

Self-Depreciation: Because of power imbalances, must act in ways that are self-depreciating despite acknowledging racial/ ethnic biases to continue academic progress/ excellence.

Detachment/ Disconnection: Avoiding connection with others / becoming detached –thus to avoid harm/ hurt that results from racially/ ethnic biased actions or slights

Fight or Flight: Negotiating when to fight/ speak up and when to stay quiet.

Reduced Expectations: Students reframe or reduce their expectations to be understood or be affirmed from their own cultural perspective, thereby preventing or reducing emotions that might result.

Superficial relationships: having only professional and superficial relationships with those of the dominant culture as to protect yourself.

Approach-Avoidance: Avoiding professors whom might have racist attitude or might take discriminatory action towards you.

Mentors: having someone (not necessarily people of color) who you can confide in that can support of validate your experiences within the academic environment (professors, chairs, etc.) or historically (figures, writers, etc.).

Being a Mentor: Being someone who other women of color can confide who validates experiences within the academic environment.

Being a Voice: Preventing marginalization, invisibility, or racial/ ethnic insensitivity by ensuring that your opinions, belief systems, and questions are heard within the academic environment.

Concealing one's culture/ Institutionalization: One's own racial/ ethnic beliefs or cultural background is concealed in order to be better accepted/ "fit in" into the academic/ work environment or the dominant culture. This may be seen as resulting in greater success.

Education: Educating others regarding own cultural beliefs /values as to offset negative stereotypes.

Social Coping: Being able to discuss feelings, situations, and experiences surrounding instances of racial/ ethnic bias or discrimination openly.

Peer-Academic: Social support extended from others with shared experiences in program.

Family-Extended: Social support extended from family support systems.

Need for Validation/ Social Support: Stemming from the need for social coping, is the need for others to validate my experience. I can only believe this happened if other's believe it too.

Resiliency: An internal strength, motivation, and or skills, which lead to successful outcomes despite numerous obstacles.

Learning to Maneuver the Program

Religious / Spiritual Coping: Use of a higher power to understand, make sense of, and reconstruct new meaning from discriminatory (as well as other difficult) events.

Appendix F: Contact Sheet

Coping with Perceived Racial and Ethnic Discrimination in Graduate Education

Contact Summary Sheet

Contact Type: _____
Date: _____
Contact Name: _____

Place: _____

Who is present: _____

1. Main issues or themes during this contact?

2. Summary of information given /(failed to get) from target questions?

3. Any other salient observations from this contact?

4. New (or remaining) target questions or thoughts to consider during next contact?

CONCERNS: