

Out of Place: Examining Black Males' Experiences with Racial Microaggressions at a Predominantly White Institution



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Abstract

Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color (Sue et al. 2007:27). This study attempts to bring into focus the unique ways in which Black males perceive, interpret, and react to experiences with racial microaggressions and the role that these microaggressions play on Black males' views of campus climate and sense of belonging at PWIs. The Black male focus group data that I analyzed for the study was part of 11 focus group interviews that were conducted at the University of Illinois. My research questions included: How do Black males view campus climate? Do they have a sense of belonging? Do they report experiences with racial microaggressions? If so, how are these experiences unique because the participants are both Black and male? My research has found that with the help of Black male double consciousness, these men are able to perceive the automatic assumptions that Whites hold of them based on stereotypes. They are aware of the different dynamic that being a Black male creates in their experiences both in and out of the classroom. They react to these experiences of racial microaggressions by using this "knowing" to avoid confirming stereotypes and to carefully present themselves as bicultural on a predominantly White campus.