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Black Students Resisting And Coping With Racism At Predominately White Institutions

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BLACK STUDENTS RESISTING AND COPING

WITH RACISM AT PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

A Thesis Presented for the Masters of Arts Degree
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
The University of Mississippi

By

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ABSTRACT

Black students attending predominately white institutions (PWIs) have many obstacles to overcome while navigating their college career. Black students at PWIs experience micro-aggressions and different forms of racial discrimination. Various studies have focused on the experiences of black students and some focused on the responses to their experiences in terms of coping; however, literature is lacking when it comes to how students of color at PWIs are also effectively resisting racism through their coping mechanisms. My research question is "How do black students at PWIs cope with and resist the micro-aggressions found within the structure of new racism?" To answer the question, I first describe micro-aggressions. Then, I delve into the theory of new racism as outlined by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Patricia Hill-Collins as a theoretical framework that is needed in examining the black experience today. My research was done at a PWI located in the south. I conducted 12 in-depth qualitative interviews to determine how black students resisted and coped with micro-aggressions and different forms of racial discrimination when attending PWIs. I found that forms of resistance and coping vary from ostracizing oneself, to minimizing, ignoring, and excusing racism. I also found that some use humor while others engross themselves in campus activities and lifestyle. I conclude that the covert structure of new racism caused my participants to be most fearful of micro-insults. This resulted in the avoidance technique being the most common form used in resisting and coping with micro-aggressions. I end with a discussion and suggestions for future research.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Blacks have overcome great hurdles in the United States educational system. However, blacks seeking higher education still experience high levels of discrimination when attending historically white institutions. Research has concluded that black college students attending predominately white institutions experience racial micro-aggressions on a frequency of about once a week (Grier-Reed 2010). Three examples of micro-aggressions are micro-invalidations, micro-insults, and micro-assaults. Micro-invalidations exclude, negate, and nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of people of color. For instance, if a person of color is offended by a confederate flag because of its historical significance and someone tells them that they are being too "sensitive," this is a micro-invalidation. Micro-insults are subtle snubs in which the contributions of and or persons of color themselves are unacknowledged, invisible, or marginalized. An example of a micro-insult would be someone stating that a person of color only obtained a certain position or is attending a certain school because of affirmative action. Micro-assaults include explicitly racist and demeaning behavior such as name calling. This would include instances of black people being called the "n" word.

We are currently in the "color blind" age of racism, where a great deal of racism goes unaccounted for or unnoticed (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Du Bois (1906) predicted, over a hundred years ago, that the problem of the twentieth century would be the presence of the color line, since the policies of racial segregation and colonialism were crafted to divide, create, and rank the various races of man. In contrast, Patricia Hill-Collins (2004) believes that the problem of the

1

twenty-first century is the absence of a color line. "Formal legal discrimination has been outlawed, yet contemporary social practices produce virtually identical racial hierarchies as those observed by Du Bois" (Hill-Collins 2004:32). It appears that the effects of historical exclusions are still present today and can be seen within a new form of racism.

"The new racism virtually hinges on the insistence that discrimination is illegal; everyone has equal rights" (Rothenberg 2004:93). So, when micro-aggressions occur, minorities are then seen as having the problem. On many occasions, I've personally heard a sentence begin with "no offense, but…" and some form of racial comment follows that is in some way off-putting, quite racist, or definitely offensive. For example, one day my black roommate and I were having a discussion with our apartment manager, who was a white female. The manager struggled trying to find the words to describe the rims of her car and finally remembered as she states that her tires were just too "bling bling." She stated "no offense, I just didn't know the term." My roommate then stated, "I think the word you were looking for was gaudy." The woman was obviously trying to relate to us on a cultural level, when she really could have just related to us as fellow human beings. However, the person making the unfavorable statement would become confused if one were to take offense or simply disagree because "racism is a thing of the past."

"To make this answer believable and acceptable, a second tactic (perhaps the most important) is to completely ignore history as having valid implications and material legacies for the present" (Rothenberg 2004:93). Even though everyone legally has equal rights now, we can see implications of the past that affect minorities today, especially in education. Many of my black peers could relate to my situation, in which they were a part of the first or second generation in their families to gain a four-year degree from a university. In 1992, only six percent of black people had parents who obtained a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 83 percent

of whites (National Center for Education Statistics 1992). Those numbers have slowly increased over the years, but it meant that we, like many blacks, were a part of a generation that was not able to take advantage of certain opportunities, such as legacy scholarships.

With an education, comes empowerment. Thus, it is important to make sure that historically subjugated individuals, such as blacks, can get the best educational experience possible. However, discrimination has changed from overt, violent cross burnings to more subtle versions of discrimination (Feagin and Sikes 1994:93). Therefore, my research question is "How do black students at PWIs cope with and resist the micro-aggressions found within the structure of new racism?" The definition of resistance is "the ability to withstand the force or effect of," while coping is "to deal with and attempt to overcome problems and difficulties" (Merriam-Webster 2017). In the next section, I review literature that demonstrates how the new face of racism looks and the way in which people respond to it.

II. PRESENT FORMS OF RACISM, RESISTANCE, AND COPING

PWI AND BLACK STUDENTS

There is an array of literature dedicated to the hurdles that blacks face in higher education. One of the biggest problems arise when black students attend predominately white institutions (Feagin and Sikes 1994:78). They encounter prejudice not only from the students but also from their professors, which leads to them feeling miserable (Feagin and Sikes 1994:94). Some argue that although PWIs have become more diverse, they have done little to change campus culture. For example, Black students at PWIs, when compared with those at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), do not feel integrated into the campus. They feel alienated as they experience hostility and discrimination (Allen 1992). Campus activities increase feelings of alienation, since they are aimed at pleasing white students, and blacks find themselves having to learn the white culture while facing rejection of their own personal values and beliefs (Feagin and Sikes 1994). This occurs because the structure of college campuses was designed to cater to the white student population while black students were left to adjust to the environment (Jones and Williams 2006).

It has been reported that black students who attend PWIs have lower retention rates than white students (Jones and Williams 2006). They also experience more stress related to racial conflict when it comes to acceptance, pressure to conform to stereotypes, and unequal treatment by staff, faculty, and their white counterparts (Grier-Reed 2010). In addition, students of color have also been known to experience poorer health, lower energy levels, and lower satisfaction

with the university than white students (Grier-Reed 2010). Black students must be vigilant with their studies while dealing with micro-aggressions during their college career. Researchers (Harwood et al. 2012) demonstrated that students reported various experiences with racial micro-aggressions while living in university housing. Micro-aggressions ranged from racial slurs written in the residence hall elevators to racial jokes made by peers. Many students reported having encounters with university housing staff as well. Moreover, students found that staff responses to micro-aggressions were handled in a way that minimalized their experiences in the form of micro-invalidations.

PWI AND GENDER

While some literature focuses on micro-aggressions and the stress related to it, others outline the way in which micro-aggressions affect black male and female students differently. Chavous, Harris, Rivas, Helaire and Green's (2004) findings are consistent with past research, (Allen 1992; Davis 1995; Fleming, 1984) which states that African American men and women have different experiences at PWIs. The academic self-concept of women is less negatively affected by perceptions of discrimination (Fleming 1984).

While looking at gender differences in black male and female students at PWIs, I think it would be helpful to also look at literature that reflects the experiences of white male and female students in relation to their black peers. Researchers (Smith, Senter, and Strachan 2013) highlight how college experience affects levels of resentment among white students, in relation to gender. They found that white women had more support for racial equality and less racial resentment than white men. However, white female students were mainly in agreement with white males that administration was too committed to diversity. White female students were also significantly

more likely than males to be social and human services majors. Majorities of both student groups were unaware of racism

on campus and relatively small percentages of both had one or more African American friend (Smith et al. 2013). The study does not outline how white students felt about black faculty, but literature illustrates that they also have issues with micro-aggressions.

PWI AND MINORITY FACULTY

Black students are not alone in their struggles with micro-aggressions. A strong case can be made about how classroom dynamics between faculty of color and white students represent a microcosm of race relations in our society (Blanding 2007). There is increasing recognition that faculty at predominately white institutions are impacted by daily racial micro-aggressions. Researchers (Sue, Rivera, Watkins, Kim, and Williams 2011) emphasize how few studies have focused on the classroom experiences of faculty of color when difficult racial dialogues occur. They looked at faculty of color definitions of difficult racial dialogues, how they dealt with them, what they considered effective and ineffective strategies, and the role their races played in the classroom.

First, the study (Sue et al. 2011) found that faculty of color experience an internal struggle with balancing their own values and beliefs with the desire to remain objective. Faculty of color could not remain neutral when racial micro-aggressions occurred that were harmful to students of color. Second, all informants describe implicit and explicit micro-aggressions directed at them with negative behavior. There was also an issue of students challenging their competence, knowledge, and authority by questioning the relevance of racial topics or discussions to the primary course content along with interruptions of the professor's discussions. Third, they all felt trapped by the "expert syndrome" as they were expected to possess racial

expertise in handling racial topics and situations. Also, professors expressed having to manage powerful emotionally draining feelings of anger and frustration. These feelings were related to having to constantly prove their competency, feeling demeaned, and seeing other students become targets of racial micro-aggressions (Sue et al. 2011:335) The study revealed teaching strategies used by faculty of color that involved exposing their own prejudices and biases, when appropriate, in order to facilitate open discussions about race and racism and alleviate some of the anxiety of students who feared being judged for their own misconceptions (Sue et al. 2011:337).

RESISTANCE THROUGH SUPPORT NETWORKS

To address some of the issues involving faculty and students of color, some colleges have created support networks. For instance, A PWI located in the Midwest created the African American Student Network (AFAM), which is a weekly networking group consisting of black university faculty, staff, and graduate students. They provide a safe space for black undergraduates to engage. The discussion facilitators use reflective statements and open ended questions during these minimally structured meetings, allowing students to speak freely. The philosophy of AFAM is rooted in two fundamental principles which include attending to the whole person and creating relationships based on understanding of experiences and empathy (Grier-Reed 2010). Another campus, created the African American Student Center (AASC) to help black students with retention rates at a PWI in the Northwest (Jones and Williams 2006). Support networks can be vital in helping black students resist racism, attain their degree, and provide some helpful coping mechanisms to micro-aggressions along the way.

COPING STRATEGIES

     Support Networks help black students cope with their experiential realities when attending PWIs, and other studies have focused on ways black students cope with micro-aggressions. For instance, researchers (Szymanki and Lewis 2016; Hoggard, Byrd, and Sellers 2012) found that black students used internalization and detachment as well as avoidance techniques when it came to coping with racially stressful events. Blacks also utilized social networks such as family, friends, religious leaders and mental health professionals (Chiang, Hunter, and Yeh. 2004; Taylor, Chatters, and Levin 2004). It has also been noted that due to coping resources in the black community, and attitudes towards mental health services as well as racial bias found within those services (Breland-Noble, Bell and Nicolas 2006; Snowden 2003), African Americans seek treatment at lower rates than whites (Angold et al. 2002; Song Sands and Wong 2004; Kearney Draper and Baron 2005).

     The literature exemplifies that black students attending PWIs experience various forms of discrimination, and the structure of college campuses cater to their white counter-parts (Feagin and Sikes 1994; Allen 1992; Jones and Williams 2006). It has also been reported that black students as well as minority faculty (Sue et al. 2011) experience unique stressors related to micro-aggressions (Grier-Reed 2010; Harwood et al. 2012). Gender can also influence the experiences of black students (Chavous et al. 2004; Allen 1992; Davis 1995; Flemming 1984), and it plays a role in the way Caucasian male and female students perceive African American students (Smith et al. 2013). To combat micro-aggressions, students of color use various coping mechanisms such as support networks, internalization, detachment, avoidance techniques and social networks (Grier-Reed 2010; Szymanski and Lewis 2016; Hoggard et al. 2012; Taylor et al. 2004; Breland-Noble et al. 2006; Angold et al. 2002; Song et al. 2004; Kearney et al. 2005).

Although various studies have focused on the experiences of black students and their responses to their experiences in terms of coping, literature is lacking when it comes to how black students are also effectively simultaneously resisting racism through their coping mechanisms. Often, black students are portrayed as victims of their circumstances instead of active agents of resistance. My research places resistance in this light and therefore shows how black students are able to mentally process and reject micro-aggressions when attending PWIs.

The central question that this research focuses on is "How do black students at PWIs cope with and resist the micro-aggressions found within the structure of "new racism?" The focus of my study takes place at a predominately white institution, in the south, that I refer to as Rowan Oak University.

III. BACKGROUND

In November 2012, racial slurs were made during a protest at Rowan Oak University against the re-election of President Obama. The Chancellor stated "all of us are ashamed of the few students who have negatively affected the reputations of each of us and of our university" (Brown 2012). This micro-assault was enough to lead many African American parents, whose children were currently attending the university, into a panic over safety issues. I personally remember receiving many phone calls from family members. Their sentiments were similar to my Aunt's, who stated, "Things have not changed as much as people like to believe they have, be careful on that campus."

This particular incident gained media attention and was well documented. A candlelight vigil was held in response to these hateful actions. However, there were smaller incidents that occurred every day on campus to people of color that went completely unacknowledged. This was done not only by the offenders, but also by black students themselves, as outlined in my findings section. This is why my research on how black students cope with and resist racism while trying to obtain an education from predominately white institutions is an important study. African American students' experiences on PWI's are often under examined, and their voices are stifled (Feagin and Sikes 1994; Grier-Reed 2010; Harwood, Hunt, Mendenhall, and Lewis 2012). For instance, Rowan Oak University held a meeting after the election night incident for people to come and speak on how they viewed discrimination on this campus. This included all minorities (e.g. blacks. Muslims, homosexuals, women, etc.), but only a few people gathered around to

listen. Moreover, people continued to congregate and speak amongst themselves making it difficult to hear the speaker.

Not only do minorities have a problem being heard, but as subjugated individuals they do not have the privilege of forgetting about the past. This is due to evidence of past oppression and discrimination being displayed too often in their lives i.e. black students experience racial micro-aggressions about once a week (Grier-Reed 2010). Charles Mills coined the term "historical amnesia" which he describes as a blindness or forgetting of facts and the implications of those facts (1997). For Mills, whites can much more easily pretend racial injustice did not happen because they do not have to consistently deal with racial discrimination. Not only are people of color unable to completely forget past grievances, but they are also blamed for their lower status in life. Many people from the dominant group "are convinced that blacks use discrimination as an excuse to cover up for their own inadequacies" (Bonilla-Silva 2006:71).

Peggy McIntosh explains how the ability to not see privilege is learned, she states that the dominant group is taught not to see the embedded forms of oppression (1989). She goes on to state, "I did not see myself as a racist because I was taught to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my group, never in invisible systems conferring unsought racial dominance on my group from birth" (1989:127). So, we can see how the privilege of whiteness comes with the privilege to simply block out some aspects of our social world.

Hooks' also addresses the concept of invisibility. She describes how blacks had to maintain a certain level of invisibility in the past, for safety measures. Even though whites had control over the "black gaze,[1]" it did not stop blacks from observing and imitating whites. She states that "the habits that uphold white supremacy linger… [whites] can live as though black people are invisible, and they can imagine that they are also invisible to blacks" (1992:22). This concept of minority invisibility is considered a micro-insult.

Micro-aggressions leave many black students at PWIs with ill feelings. They feel that they have a lack of acceptance, a lack of resources, and a lack of social support; it also contributes to stigma and mistrust of the institution (Grier-Reed 2010). Communicating is an effective way of negotiating this social hierarchy; for example, Powell and Jacaob Arriola (2003) found that black students who simply spoke to others about unfair treatment tended to have higher grade point averages than those who did not speak to others. This research sheds some light on how blacks can continue to move forward in their education, even when they are faced with an unfavorable campus climate. As blacks continue to move forward, it is important to also look back and acknowledge the obstacles that have already been removed and those who have helped pave the way for African Americans in the educational system.

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[1] White slave owners (men, children, and women) punished black people for looking. The politics of slavery, of racialized power relations, were such that slaves were denied the right to gaze (Hooks 1992)

IV. HISTORICAL CLIMB TO SCHOOL INTEGRATION

Blacks climb to higher education has been riddled with restrictions and the need for government assistance. In the 1954 case of Brown v. Board of Education, the Supreme Court unanimously overturned the doctrine adopted in Plessy v. Ferguson and stated separate schools were "inherently unequal." Of course, this did not stop the intolerance that many black students experienced when attending institutions. For instance, Hamilton Holmes and Charlayne Hunter discovered crowds shouting racial slurs when they registered at the University of Georgia's Academic Building on January 9, 1961. A couple of days later a small riot broke out in front of Hunter's home, but the rioters quickly dispersed when police showed up with tear gas. The university suspended Holmes and Hunter for safety reasons. They were reinstated a few days later, following a court order (Nash 2005).

Despite backlash, small numbers of African Americans had begun to be admitted to universities in the South; however, in the case of James Meredith, military involvement was needed. In 1962 a federal appeals court ordered The University of Mississippi to admit African American student James Meredith, who was greeted by more than 2,000 white rioters. Meredith was a native Mississippian, born in Kosciusk in 1933, and had served nine years in the U.S. Air Force. James Meredith studied at the all-black Jackson State College from 1960 to 1962; during this time, he applied repeatedly to The University of Mississippi without success. In 1961, Meredith filed a law suit against the university alleging racial discrimination, with the aid of the

National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP). The case was settled on appeal by the U.S. Supreme Court which ruled in Meredith's favor in September 1962, but he still faced opposition.

A constitutional crisis between the state of Mississippi and the federal government occurred when state officials, including Governor Ross Barnett, attempted to defy the Supreme Court decision. Meredith arrived in Oxford Mississippi under the protection of federal forces, including U.S. marshals, to discover a mob of students and others had formed to block his way. During this riot, two people were killed and many were injured. This forced the hand of Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy to send federal marshals and later federalized national guardsmen. This eventually amounted to a military occupation of 31,000 federal troops. On October 1st, 1962, Meredith registered as the first African American at the University of Mississippi. He graduated the following year. This incident was significant, being situated between the Brown Case and the 1964 Civil Rights Act (US Marshals).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was America's benchmark civil rights legislation, and it continues to resonate in this nation (Civil Rights 2013). On November 27, 1963, President Lyndon Johnson asserted his commitment to President Kennedy's civil rights legislation. On February 10, 1964, the House of Representatives passed a final version of The Civil Rights Act. It prohibited discrimination based on race, color, sex, national origin, or religion. The 1964 Civil Rights Act terminated the application of "Jim Crow" laws, which had been upheld by the Supreme Court in the 1896 case of Plessy v. Ferguson. In an attempt to continue integration, the Supreme Court upheld busing programs in the 1971 case of Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education.

However, The Southern Education Foundation found that in the 19 states that were required to desegregate their colleges and universities, as a result of court required busing outside of student's residential neighborhoods to achieve racially balanced enrollment, only twelve percent of the African Americans entering public institutions enrolled in traditionally white schools. Most African Americans in these nineteen states attended historically black colleges, universities, and community colleges. By 1988, school integration had reached an all-time high with almost forty five percent of black students in the United States attending majority white schools. By 2011 approximately eighty five percent of black

students attended predominately white schools, but the overall graduation rate for blacks was fifteen percent lower than their white counterparts. At public colleges and universities, the black graduation rate was only thirty six percent. African American women had an average graduation rate that was almost nine percent higher than the rate for black men (Civil Rights 2013). Despite past legal avenues of integration, residential and school desegregation still exists today.

V. SEGREGATION IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY

We still live in a segregated world where discrimination perseveres. There are areas that are seen as being "white" or "black" in terms of housing and schools (Orefield and Lee 2007; Ryan 2010; Bonastia 2015; Ellen, Steil, and De la Roca 2016; United States Census Bureau 2013). Bonilla-Silva (2006), using both surveys and interviews found that respondents disagreed with government integration intervention. He states that they frequently use abstract liberalism and naturalization as a way of explaining disparities found within schools and neighborhoods. Abstract Liberalism "involves using ideas associated with political liberalism (e.g., "equal opportunity," the idea that force should not be used to achieve social policy) and economic liberalism (e.g., choice, individualism) in an abstract manner to explain racial matters" (Bonilla-Silva 2006:28). Naturalization "is a frame that allows whites to explain away racial phenomena by suggesting they are natural occurrences" (Bonilla-Silva 2006:28). However, the segregation that we see in neighborhoods is sometimes actively achieved. Black people may find obstacles strategically placed in their way to deter them from moving to certain areas or they may have to pay more than whites to do so.

For instance, when I attempted to find housing near Rowan Oak University I visited an apartment complex with my potential roommate, who was white. The white apartment manager showed us around and told us that the special of the month allowed the one hundred dollars move-in fee to be waived. Unfortunately, when I went back later that month without my roommate I was informed by the same manager that I would have to pay a move-in fee. To address this injustice, I left the complex and printed off a copy of their special from the

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website. I also called the manager, and received confirmation from her over the phone that there was indeed a special occurring. When I showed up again in person with the copy of the current special, her expression told me that she was very surprised to see that I had it. I would have been able to move in without my Caucasian friend, but I would have had to pay more money to do so. In hindsight, I wish I had not been desperate to find available housing, so I could find housing elsewhere. I also wish that I would have reported her. How many students have faced this type of discrimination in this area who also did nothing? I classify this experience as a micro-insult, since I was marginalized when I did not show up with my white roommate.

Many places are still feeling the effects of housing segregation. Black owned homes are valued at 35% less than whites (Bonilla-Silva 2006:2). Many neighborhoods remain segregated because blacks are effectively limited entrance by white relators and home owners. For example, the real estate corporation of Presidential-Elect Donald Trump had a suit filed against them by the Department of Justice for their refusal to negotiate rentals with blacks (ABC News 2016). Bonilla-Silva's research (2006) and data demonstrates housing segregation, as only four out of forty-one of the white students he interviewed claimed to have grown up where at least twenty percent of their neighborhood consisted of minorities (105). He also stated that two out of the four that lived around minorities did not associate with them and one even related to minorities in a racialized way.

In addition to housing segregation, there are small towns where school segregation is deemed the "norm." For instance, I compared black and white enrollment from three different schools located in one city, Indianola, in the Mississippi Delta. Restoration Ministries Christian Academy and Indianola Academy are two private schools located within this area that serve grades pre-kindergarten to high school. Restoration Ministries Academy has a black enrollment

of ninety eight percent, in contrast to Indianola Academy which has a white enrollment of

ninety-eight percent (Elementary Schools.org 2012). The local public schools are about ninety-

six percent black (Elementary Schools.org 2012). From this data, it is apparent that most of the

white students that live in this county attend the private school, Indianola Academy. Some

researchers demonstrate that there is a growing number of schools that are "resegregating." A

report done by Harvard's Civil Rights Project discusses this pattern of resegregation, stating:

> Resegregation which took hold in the early 1990s after three
> Supreme Court decisions from l991 to 1995 limiting desegregation
> orders, is continuing to grow in all parts of the country for both
> African Americans and Latinos and is accelerating the most
> rapidly in the only region that had been highly desegregated—the
> South. The children in United States schools are much poorer than
> they were decades ago and more separated in highly unequal
> schools. Black and Latino segregation is usually double
> segregation, both from whites and from middle class students. For
> blacks, more than a third of a century of progress in racial
> integration has been lost--though the seventeen states which had
> segregation laws are still far less segregated than in the l950s when
> state laws enforced apartheid in the schools and the massive
> resistance of Southern political leaders delayed the impact of
> Brown for a decade (Orefield and Lee 2007:5).

The lack of housing and school integration is undoubtedly a contributing factor to the

level of social segregation that we see in PWIs. Some black students I interviewed felt that

people who were not accustomed to dealing with others of a different racial background tended

to continue to avoid them in college or only associate with them privately. So, it is possible that

those who have not put much previous effort into interacting with minorities may find it hard or

awkward to do so.

Bonilla-Silva also stated that more than half of the white college students that he

interviewed acknowledged having friends or close relatives who were racist (2006:56). Some of

his interviewees even told racist jokes they were familiar with. Neutrality is a common theme in

the new color blind society in which people do not want to readily admit to being racist, but racism can be seen within their remarks (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Therefore, prior experiences such as housing, schools, relatives, and friends can have an impact on how blacks are perceived and treated when attending PWIs. My research focuses on how blacks navigate through the "color-blind" world of "new racism" on campus. Next, I discuss the formation of new racism, and why it is different from past forms of racism.

VI. THE FORMATION OF NEW RACISM

We know that racism has changed forms in recent decades, but what are some leading factors involving this transformation? Patricia Hill-Collins explains, in depth, the concepts relating to the construct of "new racism." Hill-Collins (2004) addresses the issue of the new racism of the early twenty-first century as incorporating elements of past racial formations. She expresses several factors that makes the new racism new. First, an increasingly global economy has been arising due to the new patterns of corporate organization. Capital has been concentrated within a few corporations, and this enables them to shape many aspects of the global economy. This has caused people of African descent, on a global scale, to be disproportionately poor, as poverty and wealth continue to be racialized.

Hill- Collins' (2004) second factor of the new racism is transnational. Racial policies are no longer being shaped like they once were by regional, local, and national governmental bodies. Racial inequality does not seem to be regulated by the state to the same degree. For example, the United States has discontinued legal support for racial segregation yet African Americans remain at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Third, the new racism more heavily relies on the manipulation of ideas within mass media. Hill-Collins uses the example of Montel Williams, Maury Povich, and the Jerry Springer Show, which all exhibit images of the jezebel black woman who does not know who fathered her child, as well as the stereotypical absentee black father who does not provide for the children he creates. These shows never depict middle class Americans, including black ones, or affluent white women as having any problems determining

the paternity of their children. Films, music, advertisements, magazines, television shows and news industries produce stars like Beyonce and Jennifer Lopez which aids the manufacturing of consent that makes the new racism appear to be normal, natural, and inevitable (Hill-Collins 2004:34).

In prior periods, one could be either for racism by believing that blacks were inferior biologically or one could reject these beliefs by realizing institutional discrimination and racial prejudice as more important factors for explaining black disadvantage (Hill Collins 2004). However, in the age of the new color blind racism the color line has seemingly disappeared, taking racism itself with it. Hill-Collins points out a quote by Michel Wieviorka stating, "This clear-cut polarity between racists and anti-racists no longer exists (2004:45)."

> A generation of young African American men and women who were born after the struggles for civil rights, Black power, and African nation-state independence has come of age under this new racism. Expecting a democratic, fair society with equal economic opportunities, instead, this group faced disappearing jobs, crumbling schools, drugs, crime, and the weakening of African American community institutions. The contradictions of the post-civil rights era affect all African Americans, yet they have been especially pronounced for Black youth (Hill-Collins 2004:45).

The new racism consisting of a color-blind ideology has allowed micro-aggressions to flourish. The belief that everyone has equal opportunities in the United States now places the blame on individuals for not being able to achieve a greater status in life. Now, blacks are seen as lazy for not having what they want. Many think "If (ethnic groups such as Japanese, Chinese, Jews and Irish) have made it, how come blacks have not" (Bonilla-Silva 2006:82)? People do not realize how loaded that question is and how much unpacking would have to go into answering it. Bonilla-Silva documented how these emotions left some respondents feeling angry when referring to affirmative action (2006:53). Some respondents felt as though they did not get into a

certain school or obtain a particular position due to affirmative action; however, when a black person did not get into school or obtain a certain position, it was simply because the more qualified candidate acquired it (Bonilla-Silva 2006:25). With Caucasian students bringing these ill feelings with them to college, it is not surprising that black students experience micro-aggressions on campus. Therefore, the new racism calls for different forms of resistance and coping mechanisms than those used in the past. In the next section, I highlight past forms of oppression and the resistance and coping mechanisms used to battle oppression.

VII. PAST FORMS OF RESISTANCE AND COPING

I have outlined how the new racism is different from that of the past. I argue that resistance and coping mechanisms have also had to evolve. To demonstrate this, I utilize research from Patricia Hill-Collins, W.E.B Du Bois, and Evelyn Nakano Glenn to highlight past forms of discrimination and the resistance methods and coping mechanisms used during that time.

Hill-Collins (2004) speaks of James C. Scott who uses the term "infrapolitics" to describe the inconspicuous behaviors of everyday resistance. Despite appearances of consent, inequalities of race, gender, sexuality, and class are challenged through jokes, conversations, theft, songs, folklore, foot-dragging, and other ways in everyday behavior. Hill-Collins states that people of African descent have always resisted oppression (2004). Most could not publicly rebel, so they hid behind a mask of seeming acceptance. "Did Mammy really love her White charges more than her own? Was the buck happy in the fields because he sang to pass the time? How did Black lovers really feel about one another in such harsh conditions that produced distorted pictures of Black people" (Hill-Collins 2004:59)?

Patricia Hill-Collins also touches on previous forms of coping mechanisms of blacks, as she states, "African American families were not irreparably damaged by slavery; rather, they were organized around African-derived conceptions of Black extended family networks that resemble those of other African-influenced groups (2004:59)." Thornton (1998) termed this self-recognition, which describes how people trapped together in common subordination form ties of mutual interest.

W.E.B Dubois highlights some of the previous forms of resistance cases, in which resistance is seen through silence as well as verbal encounters and employment. Sometimes the most powerful form of resistance can be found in silence. Du Bois states, "To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word" (2004:23). Blacks had to learn early on that life and death could depend on what you chose to say or not to say. So, even when laws were passed protecting blacks against such horrid actions, speaking out or in any way or going against the status quo could be detrimental to their overall well-being. For instance, Emmett Till was killed in Mississippi in 1955 for supposedly whistling at a white woman (New York Times 2016). Du Bois (1996) attended a class in which the instructor stated that Mulattoes were inferior. Although he felt very uncomfortable about this seemingly enraged man, he didn't dare speak up. In fact, he stated that even though the man probably didn't notice him, he felt his eyes boring into him. Not only did he not address this accusation, but it appears as if he wanted to fade into the background. Silence and blending in is a strategic form of survival, as one waits until the right moment to unveil his or her strength.

Of course, resistance was also seen through verbally fighting back. It is through the verbal actions of many blacks that they were able to rise above the hatred. It was not just men being bold with their tongues. Sojourner Truth spoke out at the 1852 National Woman Suffrage Convention. White women were placed on a pedestal, and it was stated that they should be treated with courtesy. Not even white women during this time were permitted to speak in public, as it went against lady like decorum, but Sojourner Truth would not be silenced. She gave an inspirational speech in which each statement ended with "and ai'n't I a woman" (Zuckerman 2004:158). She addressed the hypocritical ways that society treated black and white women.

Strong, opinionated black women like Sojourner Truth made a great impact during a time when resistance could mean death. The governor of Louisiana reported in 1875 that since 1868, twelve hundred people, mainly black men, were murdered or wounded for their political views (Glenn 2002).

> In this climate, black women sometimes played an important and dangerous protective role. In South Carolina women were observed guarding the guns stacked behind the speaker's platform at political rallies. On election day 1876, according to a witness, "Women had sticks; no mens were to go to the polls unless their wives were right alongside of them; some had hickory sticks; some had nails—four nails driven in the shape of a cross—and dare their husbands to vote any other than the Republican ticket." In Richmond, women as well as men took off from work on election day to show up en masse at polling sites, often arriving the night before and camping out. Early arrival and massive presence were intended to forestall attempts by whites to influence black voters by intimidation and to deter poll officials from turning them away (Glenn 2002:100).

In many ways, one could say that during this time black women were the backbone of the resistance against racism. Even though women were not allowed to vote, black women still made sure to go out with their husbands on election day to show that they had strength in numbers. In this way, the act of voting itself was not the only way in which black people resisted discrimination and continued to survive.

Survival is also illustrated through employment. "In the United States the problem is complicated by the fact that for years domestic service was performed by slaves, and afterward, up till to-day, largely by black freedmen- thus adding a despised race to a despised calling" (Du Bois 2004:113). On a global scale, people of color remain disproportionately bundled at the bottom of social hierarchy (Hill-Collins 2004:32). Du Bois realized that "If the United States wants intelligent Negro labourers, it must be prepared to treat them as intelligent men" (2004:55). As the black urban populations grew, so did their business e.g. boarding houses,

restaurants, saloons, theatres, insurance companies etc. (Glenn 2002). Therefore, through employment blacks were able to resist by furthering their knowledge, while silently demanding to be treated with the respect of an intelligent workingman.

Following this line of thinking, Du Bois states that "children must be trained in the technique of earning a living and doing their part of the world's work" (2004:197). During this time, it was not enough to just know how to make a living, one had to know how to keep it as well. This often entailed being trained to understand the world that blacks were living in at the time; for instance, a flourishing land owner in Mississippi stated that he contributed his success to "hard work, slow saving, and staying in [his] place, acting humble" (Glenn 2002:100). This was important because some independent black farm owners would have their crops, livestock, and barns destroyed by white nightriders who wanted to drive them away (Glenn 2002). This demonstrated that the survival of blacks depended on them receiving the best possible knowledge before they began their careers. Thereby, thriving in an environment where a great percentage of the population wants you to fail is a form of tremendous resistance.

The survival of blacks also depended on the freedom to learn. Du Bois stated that danger comes with freedom and to be completely free would never be a reality; however, he said that the freedom to learn is "the least dangerous and the one that should be curtailed last" (2004:206). The freedom to learn had different levels of danger, depending on the time period and one's social status. For instance, it was illegal for slaves to learn to read because of the fear that this type of communication could lead to mass rebellion (Archive.org 1944). However, this just furthers the notion that education can be a form of resistance and needed for survival.

The growth of blacks in higher education increased black dentists, lawyers and physicians, who were among the most prominent members of their communities (Glenn 2002). Glenn quotes Du Bois, as he states in 1935, "Had it not been for the Negro school and college, the Negro would, to all intents and purposes, have been driven back to slavery" (2002:142).

VIII. METHODOLOGY

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

To answer my initial research question, "How do black students at PWIs cope with and resist the micro-aggressions found within the structure of new racism," I conducted 12 qualitative, in-depth interviews with black students attending Rowan Oak University or who have recently attended the university in past two years. Rowan Oak University is a PWI in the south with black student enrollment at fifteen percent and white student enrollment at seventy five percent. Their ages range from twenty to thirty-five. Specifically, the interviews sought to unpack how these black students coped with and resisted racism while attending Rowan Oak University. I used purposive sampling methods to obtain participants, and the interviews were completed between February 2014 and April 2014. Each interview averaged an hour in length.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Inductive studies seek to understand how their respondents generate meaning out of their context (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). I asked questions that were intentionally open ended to allow participants to use their own language and concepts in their responses. I mentioned topics that participants found meaningful and relevant to everyday concerns while keeping track of how they spoke and how they reacted to the dialogue (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995). I sought to give black students, as a marginalized group at PWIs, a voice and a way to express their concerns in ways that they did not ordinarily get the opportunity to. They were able to describe

their social reality and experiences as a minority group on campus in their own words and from their own individual perspectives.

INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS

My main method of data collection consisted of individual in-depth interviews. This method fits into my study because it aims to gather information on what the research project is about and to explicate how knowledge concerning that topic is narratively constructed (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). Since this method views respondents as narrators, this made for a more interesting and rich research collection as it connects aspects of emotion, opinion, experience and expectation, into a meaningful whole (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). In addition, the interview method allowed me to note tone of voice, ask follow-up questions, and observe body language.

My primary method of inquiry was interviews. My goal was to use open-ended questions to gain insight into the everyday experiences of black students attending PWIs. Each respondent was asked the same set of questions (see Appendix A). Additional follow-up questions were added, each depending on the respondent's personal experiences to clearly understand how they viewed their experience and to build upon the conversation. I used an audio recorder during the interviews and took handwritten notes. I transcribed each of the recorded interviews. After each interview, I also detailed the environment, body language, and other insights. My guiding questions were:

1. Have you felt racially discriminated against on this campus? Can you tell me what happened?

2. How did you respond to the situation (let it go, said something back to the attacker, or reported them, etc.

3.	How did you feel after you experienced some kind of racial discrimination on campus?

4.	What do you do after you experience a racial prejudice on campus, after you have already responded to the immediate situation (do you go out for drink, talk to friends about it, etc.).

SAMPLE

I used purposive sampling techniques to find interviewees. In purposive sampling, the researcher concludes what information is needed and then endeavors to seek out people who are able and willing to provide information based on their own knowledge. I chose this method, because in many cases, African Americans share their racial experiences with one another, so I utilized this as an advantage to enlarge the pool of participants. I began with a key informant, which is a technique used in purposive sampling (Tongco 2007). Key informants are attentive, reflective members of the community of interest who know much about the culture and are both able and willing to share their knowledge (Tongco 2007).

CONTACTING PARTICIPANTS

After obtaining IRB approval for this project, I first interviewed a couple of students that I knew had previous problems with racism within this institution. I knew of them through key informants, who served as gatekeepers for my first interviewees. My participants consisted of 6 men and 6 women in which 9 self-identified as black, 1 as Samoan, 1 as biracial, and 1 as Latino. Participant majors were diverse, including exercise science, higher education, journalism, nursing, criminal justice, pre-pharmacy, biology, and accounting.

Initial contact took place through phone calls, text messages, and emails in order for me to schedule interviews with participants at their convenience. I conducted interviews at various

locations including parks, restaurants, homes, and coffee shops. At the beginning of each interview, I had the participants read and sign a consent statement which informed the participant of the research goals, the interview process, confidentiality, and that they could drop out of the study at any time. To ensure confidentiality, I did not use any of the participant's names, names of others that they may have used, or links to the campus educational departments in which interviewees may have had negative experiences. Instead, I opted to used pseudonyms for participants. I also replaced specific references to names of places on and around Rowan Oak University with a pseudonym to keep the identity of the school confidential. I gave each respondent a written statement for them to keep that clearly stated the purpose of the study. Since the nature of my study involved recording participants, I also had interviewees sign a release form.

OBSERVATION AND CODING

Data analysis for this research involved a grounded theory approach consisting of open, axial, and selective coding (Corbin and Strauss 1990). I prepared the data by transcribing the interviews and detailing observations notes. I then began to use open coding by documenting reoccurring themes in the data. I printed a hard copy of each transcript and manually wrote the themes in the margins. Then, I used axial coding as I identified relationships among the open codes and made connections.

I analyzed any recurring themes that occurred throughout this process and applied it to experiences of blacks at PWIs. I used this information to address any existing commonalties and differences in responses as I interpreted themes. For example, I would document if micro-aggressions were overt (OV), covert (CV), and if they were considered micro-insults (MI), micro-assaults (MA), or micro-invalidations (MIV). I then noted how each responded dealt with

the situations e.g. avoidance, minimization, etc. This allowed me to see the patterns of theory emerging from the data. I also obtained and noted information such as self-identification, gender, age, classification, and major.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this study include it being limited to one university and a relatively small sample size (n=12). Rowan Oak University is not the only university with a unique history that has ties to racial problems, but it does seem to be interpreted very negatively with race relations within the media. It also tends to conjure up classic "Ole South" images when mentioned to others, especially minorities. Sample size was also a limitation in this study. Since I only had twelve interviewees and used purposive sampling techniques, this study included students within small social networks that are dense in comparison to a larger, more random sample of students. Also, since I conducted twelve interviews, this research cannot be generalized to the population as a whole, but I believe that my respondents allowed me to gain diverse and rich insight into their everyday lives as black students attending PWIs.

IX. FINDINGS

AVOIDANCE

My first finding coincides with previous research (Gaylord-Harden and Cunningham 2009; Chavous et al. 2004) when it comes to black students using avoidance techniques. I found that avoidance was used seventy-two percent of the time in cases that involved a micro-insult, fourteen percent of the time during a micro-assault, and fourteen percent of the time during a micro-invalidation. My findings were based off the level of comfort dealing with the interaction of students of color with the majority population (white students) on campus. Students try to actively resist racism through literally not placing themselves in a situation in which it may occur. Therefore, they are also essentially resisting and coping with racism by ostracizing themselves from the dominant race as much as possible.

Valerie Lewis, in a case study done in 2012 states, "Social energy drains on minority students from discrimination and an unwelcoming campus culture reduce energy left for interracial interaction, making these racial groups more segregated" (270). Lewis utilized Mayhew's concept of social energy (1995), which is "the mental energy needed for social interactions" (273). Social energy, hinges on the theory that people are socialized into certain subcultures and just as it takes extra energy and effort to speak in a foreign language, the energy across social distance takes extra energy as well. The data determined "that these students spend large amounts of social energy coping with prejudice and discrimination as well as functioning in a student culture they find unwelcoming and foreign" (Lewis 2012:270). Jake, one of my male

subjects who is a junior at Rowan Oak University and an orientation leader, shares his thoughts and experiences related to the avoidance technique. He states, "There are certain situations you put yourself in that you kind of set yourself up for it. If there are a few guys in a fraternity that you know may not have the same understanding about race as your friends in that fraternity and you go to that fraternity party, you might expect to get a few different looks."

Mary is a current graduate student at Rowan Oak University and she also completed her undergraduate degree at the university. She states:

> I don't feel as comfortable going to certain things, especially in the
> [Orchard[2]] or the [Circle[3]], because it's majority white people, and
> I don't feel comfortable because there's not a lot of us. I feel like
> several people still are racist in this town and a lot of them may be
> out on the [Circle] or in the [Orchard]… so why would we want to
> go out there knowing they are there and they don't like us… I
> don't go to the [Orchard] because I don't feel like there is anything
> for me there. They only target one group, that's what it seems like.

These examples coincide with Feagin and Sikes work (1994) as they address how "Surveys at several predominately white universities suggest that the campus culture is alienating to students of color [since] at predominately white colleges most campus activities reflect white student and faculty interests and traditions" (95). What is interesting is that Mary and a couple of other respondents had similar sentiments to the Orchard, yet all three stated that they could not recall feeling personally discriminated against on campus or in the city. However, all three could recall hearing about discrimination or hate crime that took place. Therefore, even students who do not feel personally discriminated against are resisting and coping with racism by trying their hardest to avoid certain situations in which they feel that it could possibly happen to them. This discomfort level was seen multiple times in responses. For instance, Della is a female respondent

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[2] The Orchard is a place on campus where students frequently congregate to enjoy festive activities.
[3] The Circle is an area off campus where students can enjoy shopping, bars, night clubs etc.

working on her PHD and she states, "I do not like to go around town, which I feel encourages this same type of atmosphere as [Rowan Oak University], and my overall happiness does not elevate until I leave [the city]." Diana, a female participant who received her Master's degree from Rowan Oak University, relates to this statement as she says, "When I go shopping anywhere I go at night, because I don't like to be reminded that at any moment one of them could turn and call me [the "n" word], call me a [B], say whatever they want; they can touch me, grab my hair, and it just be OK."

There is genuine theme of discomfort. Many of my subjects stated that their discomfort with attending major events at Rowan Oak University, or even being around the city, came from feeling as though nothing would happen to their possible offenders. Female respondent, Eva a current graduate of Rowan Oak University, spoke of an incident in which her black male friend attended a party and was physically assaulted, "just because he was the only black person there and they [white students] were drunk." She states:

> What is crazy to me is that they had to have known that they were
> not going to get in trouble. Normally, you would be scared to do
> something like that because you don't want to get in trouble with
> whoever is over all of that stuff, but they felt comfortable kicking
> this man down the stairs. They didn't care that he was going to tell
> or anything, and he did tell. I believe the fraternity had to
> apologize, but I really don't think anything serious happened to
> them.

This feeling of unease is due to black students essentially experiencing, or being afraid of experiencing micro-invalidations, in which an authority figure would make their racial experiences seem invalid. Other respondents also spoke of their frustration with what they felt like was a lack of resolution within the school that pertained to acts against them by professors and administrators. David is a male participant that dropped out of graduate school because of racial tensions within his department. He feels that discrimination happens on this campus,

"Because it is tolerated by administrators. It is tolerated by teachers, it is promoted through some

of the teachers, and they still have the same hatred that they had as students. Now they are

teachers and administrators, promoting the school. Unfortunately, David dropping out of school

was his way of actively avoiding offenders, and it was the most extreme reaction in this study.

Some of my participants expressed sentiments similar to Della's as she states, "The

climate at the university, to me, seems to make discrimination a part of everyday life. [The

climate] seems to tell me, the person being discriminated against, to get over it… it is accepted

here." Most of my participants agreed with my interviewee Ben, who earned his undergraduate

degree at Rowan Oak University. Ben thinks that discrimination happens due to the history of

[Rowan Oak University] and some of the parents who still have racist ideologies that they pass

on to their children who attend here."

There are many instances of responses such as these. The racial incidents that occur on

campus leave many black students with a perception that most white students on campus are

racist. This in turn leads to avoidance techniques. Crystal expresses her frustration:

> When the KKK[4] came and the election night incident occurred
> those things kind of rolled off my back…but after the [statue[5]]
> incident I looked at every single fraternity as racist. You know in
> your mind and heart that it's not right, but that's just what you
> rationalize. I was to the point that I didn't even want my feet to
> touch the ground that this place existed on.

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[4] The KKK held a protest at Rowan Oak University against changing a certain song affiliated with the university that had been historically associated with racial meaning.

[5] The university had an incident in which a noose was placed around the neck of a statue of a black man by white fraternity members.

Therefore, many participants felt that the best way to avoid racial conflict was by avoiding the dominant race as much as possible and staying within their own racial group. Brian is a current graduate student at Rowan Oak University who completed his undergraduate degree at an HBCU, and he doesn't state any examples of discrimination. He says that he does not participate in any activities on campus or even in the city. This leads me to believe that he is practicing the method of avoidance, because he states, "the things that I heard from the outside looking in almost deterred my decision to come here." He almost did not attend the university altogether, in order to avoid the possibility of being discriminated against.

HUMOR AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

My second finding involved humor and support networks. Humor and support networks were used sixty-four percent of the time when respondents were faced with a micro-insult, eighteen percent of the time when faced with a micro-assault, and eighteen percent of the time when faced with a micro-invalidation. Some participants used support networks, such as administration, to file complaints on their aggressors. Many of the student participants expressed that humor was a way in which they coped with anger after experiencing racism on campus. They also used humor to resist racism. Instead of allowing the anger to build up and eventually seep into a violent act, they turned to friends and used humor to help diffuse their anger. One study suggests that humor could be used as an effective tool when counseling black students, especially those that may be entering PWIs for the first time. The authors (Linwood, Butler, Williams, Darg, and Downing 2006) argue that black college students' experiences vary, therefore so must the interventions used to aid them in matriculation and retention. They state, "Although the importance of using humor in the therapeutic setting has been well documented,

there is a growing need for research that clearly supports the practical application of this finding

for counselors and counselor educators alike" (Linwood et al. 2006:14).

It is the unwelcoming campus climate of Rowan Oak University that has students of color

troubled. Clearly, there is also a level of anger occurring here. Dianna stated that she once felt

discriminated by someone who worked in administration, and she "sometimes wanted to go back

and ["B"] slap her, but that would be useless." She used friends as a support network to let off

some steam in this situation and another incident involving a student on campus. She spoke of a

time when she was on the phone and experienced a micro-insult, as a white female student

walked up to her on campus, grabbed her hair and said, "What are you?"

> I yanked my hair and said first of all I'm on the phone and don't
> touch me. She didn't understand why I was offended. It took
> everything in me not to punch her in the face because that would
> make me the angry black woman. But in her mind, it was OK to
> come up to a stranger and touch my hair and not say oh you have
> pretty hair, no she said, what are you?

Participant, David, recalled an incident in which he saw his white male friend on campus

one night walking with his girlfriend. When he stopped to speak to his friend, his friend's

girlfriend stated that she was cold. David took off his sweater and gave it to her to wear. His

friend said thank you, but David watched the girl throw his sweater into the bushes when she did

not think he was looking. She made a comment about not wanting to wear a black guy's sweater.

He retrieved his sweater from the bushes, and his friend later apologized to him about the

incident. David also stated that before he dropped out of graduate school he filed a complaint on

one of his professors for the constant racial remarks he made in class. For example, the professor

would joke with the white male students by making statements to him like, "Boy what are doing

over there?" or "You about to come to class boy?" He said, "They laughed and thought it was all

a joke, but it's just wasn't funny to me." He stated that when he complained about this micro-

assault to administration he was told that he was not the only person reporting on certain individuals in that department, and he wondered "what is being done about it then?" He never discovered if anything was done about the professor, but stated he was still teaching at the university. His description of the way in which his complaint was handled could be classified as a micro-invalidation, since he felt as though it wasn't taken seriously.

David isn't the only one frustrated by the lack of the resolution. Crystal, a female participant currently earning her Master's degree at Rowan Oak University, also had an issue with jokes about race but in the form of micro-insults. She heard from black friends that one person in administration would constantly joke around with them by making statements such as, "These are my favorite black people." On one occasion, she was sitting with friends in the Union when this person walked by and stated, "You know I get nervous when a group of black people start congregating like this." She states:

> I had no clue what to say. How do you respond to something like that? So, I brought this issue to [other administrators] and [we went to the offending party] and told him why what he said was inappropriate. [His apology] felt like more of an apology for the sake that I hope you never say anything about it again and I'm doing it because I'm being called out, but I'm not really sorry for it. You don't joke about race, especially here. You can't have racist administration and expect your students to act civil.

Current graduate student Thomas, gave multiple examples in which he and his friends were personally discriminated against. One in particular involved him being restrained from becoming physical when he was called the "n" word during a football game. He kept jumping throughout the entire interview when he spoke of cases that made him angry, as if he were ready to fight someone on the spot. He spoke to his manager about the situation, and was fired from his job. Later, as more witnesses came to his aid, he was reinstated. Thomas expressed that his employer was very unsympathetic to his experience. His description resembles Thomas' in that

he felt disregarded. This incident is also classified as a micro-invalidation. When asked if he would depend on Rowan Oak University to handle the micro-assault he experienced, he responded:

> Absolutely not, absolutely not, I wouldn't dare, no. The [university] in my opinion is a joke when it comes to handling those issues. Their biggest concern is control and saving face, if they can control the situation to a certain extent, that's acceptable for them. They will say anything and do anything just to make their image look good. I'm aware of it, I know it's not going to be any type of depending on the university, because you will feel like a fool if you do that. You have to take personal action, period.

Many other students also felt like taking personal action. Participant Jake, as an orientation leader, stated that when the statue incident happened he had many young black men coming up to him saying "[Jake] what do we need to do?" He advised them to do nothing and quickly had his organization speak to the chancellor about voicing to the community that it was being handled. He states, "Like I said, it's easier for us to go to jail. So, what if our boys hit a random person on the square for no reason? Then his life is over because that guy is pressing charges." In all the incidents above, respondents depended on social networks to help vent their anger. Dianna spoke to friends about her incidents and Jake spoke to the young black men who were angry and ready to fight. David and Crystal took their complaints to administration, and Thomas spoke to his employer who worked for the university. Doing this helped alleviate some of the tension they were feeling. They effectively resisted racism through this coping method, by not allowing their anger to result in the type of physical violence that could have changed their lives. Crystal feels as though, "things will get worse if there isn't something blatantly done by administration." She coped and resisted with her anger in a way that was effective for her, by seeking counsel:

I sought counseling because I couldn't set foot on this campus
without being pissed off at anybody. I was at a place where I
realized that if I didn't seek help, I was going to burn this ["B"]
down. I just couldn't focus on school and I can't be angry 24/7,
it's just not healthy… the word hurt was used a lot with these
incidents, but no, your students are not hurt, they are pissed.

David has similar sentiments as he states, "We try to make a joke amongst us but deep down
inside we all see how messed up it really is, so we try to joke about it to not let it hurt or affect us
as much." Other respondents stated that they would just find racial incidents "funny" and
brushed them off. Support networks and humor allows respondents to keep attending school
without taking physical action and thereby actively resisting racism.

EXCUSING, IGNORING, AND MINIMIZING

Du Bois (1906) speaks of the "veil" that shut him out of the world of whites. He also
refers to "double consciousness" as it pertains to blacks having to be both black and American.
The "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others…[causes] two souls, two
thoughts, two warring ideas in one dark body…" (5). Even though the face of racism and
responses to it have changed, people of color still have to deal with double consciousness and the
existence of the veil. I conclude that participants tried to excuse, ignore, and minimize their
micro-aggressive experiences to continue resisting them. This method was used fifty-seven
percent of the time when respondents were dealing with a micro-insult, forty-three percent of the
time when dealing with a micro-invalidation, and zero percent when dealing with a micro-
assault.

Many of my subjects would find reasons for racial discriminations against them and use
those reasons to justify the behavior of the other party. For example, Jake spoke of an incident at
a fraternity party in which he was involved in a confrontation with the police. The policeman had
asked him to leave, but stated that his white friend could stay. He tried to tell the cop that his

friend was not Greek, so he did not belong there either. The cop argued with him that his friend was Greek, until Jake told him that he was his roommate. Jakes states:

> You know, I'm not dumb. It was because I was black and that organization has no African Americans in their chapter. It goes back to ignorance. They aren't comfortable around African Americans and don't know how to act around them, so they didn't really want that mix [of blacks and whites] you know, late at night.

Jake attempted to rationalize the other party's behavior by stating that the fraternity did not have any black members and therefore did not know how to respond to him. He effectively gave them an excuse for not knowing how to act around blacks or wanting to be associated with blacks.

Some participants would describe micro-aggressions they encountered, but when asked how many racial incidents they experienced since attending Rowan Oak University, they would state none. For example, Ben spoke of a teacher that made a comment about the majority of black people being in jail. She said, "So y'all black students in here should give yourselves a hand for being in college." At first, he stated that he didn't think anything of this comment, though something about it bothered him. After speaking about it some more he stated, "I think she took a shot at us." Ben spoke of this incident in class and kept coming back to it because something about it obviously bothered him. It was apparent to me that something was wrong with the comment as soon as I heard it, but I allowed him to make his own conclusions. It was interesting that he first tried to make excuses for the professor by stating that he did not think the comment was "intentional." He also discussed an incident in which two white females approached him and his friend as they were waiting for the bus on campus. The females asked them if they had any weed they could buy. He stated, "My friend and I don't spoke at all, so I figured they must have seen a couple of black guys and thought we probably did drugs." Ben went on to state four other racial micro-aggressions, but still claimed that he had not experienced

discrimination since attending Rowan Oak University. The "[m]inimization of racism is a frame that suggests discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities' life chances" (Bonilla-Silva 2006:29).

Most participants attributed racist attitudes of white students to their upbringing. However, many did so in a way that was excusing or minimizing the role that the students played in discrimination. Respondent, Tonya states that professors should be accountable and held to higher standards, yet excuses the students racialized attitudes as she states, "With students it's just the way they were brought up. They can't always be like "well I'm not going to act like that, because that's what is rooted in them." In this way, she is also using naturalization as a way of excusing their behavior; since, racism is "rooted" in some students it is just a natural occurrence for them to separate from the minority population. When I asked her opinion on the professor who may also have racial ideologies rooted in him, she responded, "You [professor] are grown, you have a job. I work in a pharmacy. I may not like certain people, but I can't say I'm not going to serve them." Tonya, like Ben claimed that she had zero instances of racial discrimination. Then, she goes on to relate an incident that she experienced while with her white female friend, she says:

> [My friend] told me herself that she couldn't bring a black guy
> home, even though she dated black guys. We hung out every day.
> Well one day we were walking around the track and I was listening
> to her talk on the phone and she's like yeah mom I'm with [Jane].
> Yeah, you're with [Jane], but you're also with [Tonya] [laughs].
> She left me out of it, so I know for a fact that your parents don't
> know that you hang out with a black person every day, more than
> you hang out with [Jane], you know?

Jake can relate to this incident as he states, "And I have so many friends who have went home and told their mom and dad about their black associates, and [their parents] are like, no [you should not have black associates]. [My white friends] get shunned [by their parents]." Even

though Tonya laughed while relating her story, her facial expression allowed me to see that she was visibly troubled by it. Afterwards, like Ben, she decided that there was something more to this situation. Innocently, she commented, "So, that is racism, isn't it?" She clearly experienced a micro- invalidation, since she as a person of color virtually went unnoticed by her white friend. Her friend obviously did not consider how her actions would make Tonya feel.

Eva and Tonya both expressed cases where they would converse with certain white people on the circle and later be ignored by them on campus when they were around their white friends. Eva states, "I had a lot of white guys try to hit on me [on the circle] but you will find that when they are not drunk they're going to act like they don't know you." She goes on to say, "White people that I may have been talking with [or] having fun with, [change] when they get in front of their little yacht club friends. When you speak to them they will almost look at you in disgust, like did that black person just speak to me?" Immediately after this statement she says, "But I guess no one ever did anything just racist to me." In this case Eva minimalized these micro-invalidations, to the point that she practically ignored them. She did not even recognize them as racial acts, even though she verbally stated that these incidents happened due to her race. However, I see these techniques as strategies used by black students so that they do not become overwhelmed by the sheer number of micro-aggressions they experience during their college career. If they had to process every single micro-aggression, it would inevitably take away from the time, energy, and focus needed to complete their studies.

One respondent, Jake is very skilled at the technique of ignoring, minimizing and excusing racism. He stated, "So yes, I have been racially discriminated against, but I wouldn't call it just purposely, you know people just don't understand. I'm also used to being discriminated against in my hometown, so this is nothing compared to back home." Since Jake

does not see these incidents as overtly racist as the experiences he encountered back home, he minimizes and excuses these situations. Sometimes participants expressed that people were just ignorant to race relations and they used this in a rationalizing manner to excuse or minimize it. For example, Jake throws out a hypothetical situation based off incidents that he heard while being an orientation leader. He states, "If a black guy is walking on the sidewalk and two white girls don't move and he has to step off the sidewalk, he might consider that racial discrimination. Really, they just don't know if they can say excuse me. You know, they are scared." First, the fact that he is stating that the two white girls would be afraid of the black male for simply being black is a form of racial discrimination. Secondly, it is more rational to state that they would hurry and move out of the black male's way, if they were so afraid, verses making him step off the sidewalk. Here, he is clearly excusing the behavior. Also, he spoke about the statue incident and he minimized it by stating, "Are you going to get mad because a bird poops on the statue?" His reasoning was a rational one, in which he states that the man is fine, and people do not need to retaliate because of something that was probably a dumb drunken joke. However, he minimized it nonetheless.

Participant Fredrick, a recent graduate of Rowan Oak University, also stated that he experienced no racial discrimination, yet he spoke of incidents in which white females would see him and "scoot over and grab their drinks or purses or something." He is effectively coping with and simultaneously resisting these racist practices by not classifying them as racist, even though he admits that they occurred due to his race. I also interviewed his friend, David. I found that David had multiple experiences in which he had racial micro-aggressions happen to him while he was with Fredrick. Yet, when asked, Fredrick said that he could not recall any incidents in which

friends' experienced racial discrimination on campus. Fredrick was another example of how participants would blatantly turn a blind eye or ignore racial discrimination to actively resist it.

OUTLOOK

The first part of my fourth finding was minimal, being based off only two respondents. I found that when faced with micro-invalidations, sixteen percent of respondents had a positive outlook while zero percent had this reaction to micro-assaults or micro-invalidations. Crystal and Jake, who both had instances of racism, were actively integrated into the university community. Although both participants had a diverse group of friends, Jake seemed to have a more positive outlook while attending the university. He states:

> It's all about involvement, if I wasn't in the organizations I was in now, I wouldn't have [white] friends because I'm not in a white fraternity. I'm not white, so a lot of things they go to I might not go to if I'm not involved and I don't know them… It's on both parts. If you stay in your little circle, you will feel uncomfortable because the majority of the campus is Caucasian. So, if you can't interact with them, you are probably going to hate it here.

Crystal, during the interview, actively stated her anger and need for counseling; however, she also spoke of being involved in multiple activities on campus and when it came to discrimination she states:

> Honestly, students don't bother me. I think I have gotten to a maturity level where it's like sticks and stones. If you're coming to college being discriminatory, you learn that at home. What am I going to do to combat those 18 years? Not only that, but you can separate yourself from students and decide who you will spend time with. You can decide what you are going to put up with and what you are not.

Crystal goes on to state that she had the support of many white friends when she was campaigning for different functions on campus. She had to let go of one friend, who is black, because she was not supportive of her. She told her that she did not stand a chance because she

was competing against white people; she proved her wrong. Crystal had some strong feelings associated with Rowan Oak University, and she was tired of racial incidents that occurred. However, she still had a diverse network of social friends compared to other interviewees. She expressed a need to take a break from the school, the area, and the south in general. Jake feels as though, "these incidents prepared [him] for the world. [He] doesn't regret coming here at all. [He feels as though] the additional pressure is stressful at times, but you deal with it."

Crystal and Jake are two examples of how positive outlook is also a way of resisting and coping with racism. By immersing themselves into the campus atmosphere they were able to get the most out of their college experience. However, almost half of the participants found solace in the fact that they would not be at Rowan Oak University forever. I classified this as a negative outlook. David is one of the students, as he states that he tries to brush it off and "go on and graduate and get off campus." Dianna says that she doesn't hold on to these negative feelings, "because at the end of the day [she doesn't] have to be here and won't be here for the rest of [her] life." Even Crystal says, "it's not like we want to be here, we are just going through the motions."

X. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Black students at PWIs experience micro-aggressions and discrimination within the structure of new racism. This study broke down the theory of new racism and focused on the resistance and coping mechanisms that black students implemented against micro-aggressions at Rowan Oak University. I had four major findings. First, I found that black students attending the PWI tried to resist and cope with racism by avoiding the dominant community. Second, they utilized humor and support networks. Third, black students minimized, excused and ignored racism. Fourth, students of color have different experiences depending on outlook.

I sought to explore how black students coped with and resisted micro-aggressions at PWIs within the structure of new racism. My first finding, the avoidance technique, demonstrated that blacks would rather not associate with the dominant race out of fear of experiencing micro-aggressions, particularly micro-invalidations. This technique coincides with previous research. Researchers (Hoggard et al. 2012) found that black students used avoidance coping more frequently when dealing with racially stressful events verses non-racially stressful events. The study (Hoggard et al. 2012) also reported that racially stressful events were more discreet than non-racial events. This claim corresponds with my study, since my theoretical framework, new racism, outlines how racism is now subtler than it was in the past. I conclude that the black students I interviewed were more worried about feeling insulted than experiencing more overt forms of racism, such as micro-assaults.

The avoidance technique may be effectively helping black students to resist racism, since it is used as a preventative method. It ensures black students do not place themselves in a situation where they may lose their temper, due to experiencing a micro-aggression, and then become the stereotypical "angry black person." However, it is not effectively helping to resolve racial conflict. For example, Bonilla-Silva (2006) stated that white students normalize segregation found on campuses by not interpreting it as an issue or labeling it as normal. They do not see how micro-aggressions play a role in why segregation still exists. Black and white students need to be able to find an effective means of communication that not only ignites mutual respect but friendships as well. This must begin with an honest discussion about race relations on PWIs.

My second finding was that black students used humor and support networks to resist and cope with micro-aggressions found within the structure of new racism. This also coincides well with previous literature (Chiang, et al. 2004; Grier Reed 2010; Linwood et al. 2006) as researchers found that black students used humor along with support from their social networks, such as family and friends to cope with racial incidents. In fact, researchers Chiang, Hunter, and Yeh found that black students used support networks more than any other coping method outlined in their study. Although my respondent pool was small, I found that only one student claimed to use the assistance of a professional counselor for support against micro-aggressions. This may be due to the negative stigma as well as the racial bias associated with seeking this type of help (Breland-Noble, Bell, and Nicolas 2006; Snowden 2003). Furthermore, McMiller and Weisz (1996) indicated that blacks, compared with whites and Latinos, engaged in a greater number of informal pathways, such as seeking advisement from family and friends. This informal coping method illustrates a heavy cultural emphasis on interdependence. Most of the

students of color that I interviewed did not appear to even consider professional help as an option. Black students using interdependence as a strategic form of coping allows them to vent their frustrations and seek help without the outward appearance of weakness that may be associated with seeking professional help.

About forty one percent of my participants excused, ignored, and minimized racism. Bonilla-Silva (2006) stated that "the minimization of racism frame has affected how some blacks think about discrimination" (163). He found that about thirty percent of his black respondents agreed to the ideas of blacks being violent, lazy, and welfare dependent. The same respondents also believed that discrimination is no longer important. I found that black students would actively resist and cope with racism by using the technique of excusing, ignoring, and minimizing the micro-aggressions they experienced. However, Bonilla-Silva (2006) demonstrated that some black students actually agreed with some of the ideologies of new racism. This concept may have played a role in the reason some of my respondents felt the need to explain away racial incidents they encountered. It may also be why they refused to label their encounters as discriminatory, even after stating that these incidents happened due to their race. This is a strategic way of dealing with micro-aggressions, because it allows black students to move forward with their daily lives instead of harboring anger or resentment from racial incidents.

My fourth finding dealt with outlook. I discovered that some black students coped with the micro-aggressions they experienced by focusing on the fact that someday they would graduate and leave the university. I labeled this outlook as negative, because these students were unhappy and ready to go. However, a claim can be made that these students were also resisting racism, in that they continued to take classes on this campus. They did not transfer or drop out of

school, with exception of one participant. I believe that in this way, their presence on campus is a form of resistance. Some felt that the dominant race did not appreciate their presence on campus, and these black students decided that they had a right to be there. This finding was minimal in terms of positive outlook. Due to my small pool of participants, I did not have the ability to explore this concept further. There are many studies that focus on how black students view PWIs in terms of campus climate (Feagin and Sikes 1994; Allen 1992; Grier-Reed 2010), but fewer are devoted to the idea of blacks who have a positive outlook on PWIs and immerse themselves into campus activities. I believe that this concept would be worth exploring as a strategy of resistance. I argued that avoidance was a form of resistance that did not help with black and white relations. Even though blacks are the minority on PWIs, their attendance at campus activities, especially in large numbers, would certainly make a good case of resistance.

Discrimination is still deeply embedded within institutions like Rowan Oak University, and it means that school policies still have a long way to go. More than half of the students I interviewed (eighty four percent) felt uneasy about attending public events held by the university and being around the majority of the student population. They felt as though being a part of campus culture would place them in a position in which they would be targeted as minorities. This belief is substantiated through the micro-aggressive examples given in their narratives. Even though the new racism is not as overt as racism of the past, it still has the same effects on people of color i.e. fear of persecution. Although minority students are actively resisting racism, it is unfair that they feel forsaken by their school as they venture through their college career. Some students (thirty six percent) filed a complaint about racist behavior they experienced and were not satisfied with the resolution, while others expressed they would not file a complaint due to fear of their experience being invalidated. Administration at PWIs should make themselves

more readily available to their minority students by finding ways to reach out to them and by focusing on making the campus climate feel inclusive to all students.

Although I believe that my findings were significant, my study was limited, in that it took place on one campus and I had a small sample size (n=12). This does not allow my study to be generalized to the population as a whole. This study also included students within small social networks and it would have been interesting to view the responses of different students from various locations. However, this research did allow me to receive rich insight from people of color at Rowan Oak University. Also, interviewing some students within the same social network allowed me to gain different perspectives on some shared experiences.

Although I concluded that my respondents were more afraid of experiencing micro-insults, this may not hold true since the results of the 2016 presidential election. People of color all over America panicked with the announcement of Donald Trump as the presidential-elect (Bradner 2016). Protests broke out around the country as people chanted slogans, such as "love trumps hate," in response to his hateful comments that targeted minority figures (CNN 2016). More overt forms of discrimination have been on the rise since the presidential-elect announcement; in fact, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center more than six hundred cases of intimidation and harassment of minorities have been reported since Election Day (Yan, Sgueglia, and Walker 2016).

These incidents include micro-aggressions such as racist's graffiti on cars, walls, and buildings with statements like "whites only" (Yan et al. 2016). In many cases, Trump's name is tagged alongside of these heinous remarks. Trump's name is being used as a symbol of white supremacy. This is understandably a major cause of concern to minority groups, being that he is considered the new leader of the free world. President-elect Donald Trump issued the statement

"stop it" in reference to those who were harassing minorities in his name (Bradner 2016); however, I doubt this has done much to assuage the fear of minorities in the United States, since these incidents are still taking place. For instance, a black doll was hanging from a dormitory curtain in a college located in New York (Yan et al. 2016). Also, a black female student was pushed off the sidewalk and called a racial slur, at a university in Florida. The white male who pushed her claimed that he wanted to "Make America Great Again" by not allowing blacks on the sidewalk (Yan et al. 2016).

Even though the post Trump era looks bleak to many, I believe that these incidents will continue to result in massive forms of resistance. Americans are protesting and reporting hate crimes on a large scale as they are demanding to be heard. There have been several reports of resistance. For example, Broadway actors addressed a speech to the Vice President-elect stating, "we truly hope this show has inspired you to uphold our American values and work on behalf of all of us" (Wang 2016); also, some fashion designers have refused to dress the next First Lady, Melania Trump, due to her husband's stated policies (Adams 2016). There has also been significant backlash in response to racial discrimination, not only by minorities, but by the dominant race as well. For example, the black female student who was pushed off the sidewalk was met by three hundred students outside of her classroom shortly after this incident. Her peers were waiting to escort her to her next class (Yan et al. 2016). This exemplifies the power of unity in resistance techniques. With Americans coming together in this way, it would be interesting for future research to focus on the power of unity as a form of resisting micro-aggressions.

Also, future research should focus on micro-aggressions experienced in the post Trump era and document if it still aligns with the concepts of new racism, as outlined by researchers such as Hill-Collins and Bonilla-Silva. Future research should also focus on how people of color

respond to these incidents i.e. resistance/coping, whether they take place in schools or places of employment. Studies could also compare and contrast the significance of race relations with the 2016 presidential election to the 2008 presidential election. The stark contrast between electing the nation's first black president and electing, what many consider to be, a well-known racist should make for a plethora of research opportunities. One could document the differences and or similarities of micro-aggressions that were occurring during these two elections. Researchers could even conduct a study on those who voted for President Obama and then voted for President-elect Trump. The analysis of the racial ideologies of such a person could make a rich and meaningful study.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Have you felt racially discriminated against on this campus? Can you tell me what happened?

2. How did you respond to the situation (let it go, said something back to the attacker, or reported them, etc.)

3. How did you feel after you experienced some kind of racial discrimination on campus?

4. What do you do after you experience a racial prejudice on campus, after you have already responded to the immediate situation (do you go out for drink, talk to friends about it, etc.).

5. Have you ever felt racially discriminated against on this campus? If so, can you tell me what happened?

6. How did you respond to the situation (let it go, said something back to the attacker, or reported them, etc.)?

7. How did you feel after you experienced some kind of racial discrimination on campus?

8. What did you do after you experienced a racial prejudice on campus, after you have already responded to the immediate situation (do you go out for drink, talk to friends about it, etc.).

9. Have you ever felt discriminated against by other members of campus that are not students? How do you feel differently if being discriminated against by a student verses some other member of campus?

10. How many racial incidents would you say you experienced since attending Rowan Oak University?

11. Have you heard if other students or friends have experienced racial incidents on this campus? Can you tell me about this?

12. How does these incidents make you view the climate of this campus?

13. How do these incidents affect your overall college experience in terms of grades, attendance, happiness, or how you view the school and yourself in relation to the school?

14. Why do you think racial discrimination occurs on this campus?

15. How would you describe race relations at Rowan Oak University?

16. How would you describe classroom race relations on this campus?

17. How does interaction occur in the class setting?

18. Can you tell me what it is like for you being a black student attending a PWI?

19. Why did you decide to enroll at a PWI? Did your family members or friends have anything to do with your decision?

20. Do you have support network (people you speak to about negative racial incidents)? Who is a part of your network? How do they help you?

21. Can you tell me about a time you have just felt uncomfortable in a certain situation on this campus due to your race?

22. How would you classify your relationship with black professors and staff workers on this campus?

23. What role do you think the university plays in making black students feel that they are in an inclusive, nurturing environment?

24. How do you think the university could be more inviting to racial subgroupso?

Table 1: Resistance and Coping Responses

	Micro-Insult	Micro-Assault	Micro-Invalidation
Avoidance	72%	14%	14%
Humor and Support Networks	64%	18%	18%
Excusing, Ignoring, Minimizing	57%	0%	43%

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