"Assume the Position . . . You Fit the Description"

Psychosocial Experiences and Racial Battle Fatigue Among African American Male College Students

William A. Smith
University of Utah
Walter R. Allen
University of California, Los Angeles
Lynette L. Danley
University of Utah

The present study examines the experiences of 36 Black male students, in focus group interviews, enrolled at Harvard University; Michigan State University; University of California, Berkeley; University of Illinois; and the University of Michigan. Two themes emerged: (a) anti-Black male stereotyping and marginality (or Black misandry), which caused (b) extreme hypersurveillance and control. Respondents experienced racial microaggressions in three domains: (a) campus–academic, (b) campus–social, and (c) campus–public spaces. Black males are stereotyped and placed under increased surveillance by community and local policing tactics on and off campus. Across these domains, Black males were defined as being "out of place" and "fitting the description" of illegitimate nonmembers of the campus community. Students reported psychological stress responses symptomatic of racial battle fatigue (e.g., frustration, shock, anger, disappointment, resentment, anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness, and fear). There was unanimous agreement in the subjective reports that the college environment was more hostile toward African American males than other groups.

Keywords: *Black/African American males; race-related stress; stereotypes; racism (gendered); college campus; racial microaggressions*

When I came from New York, I was driving by car. And, an officer stops me and . . . he comes over and asks me, "Do you have any guns or drugs in the car?" And so I go, "No, I don't." And, then I ask him, "Why are you stopping me?" And then he tells me, he says that "somebody's been ripped off and that my car matches the description." I haven't seen too many yellow Hondas with New York plates around Ann Arbor so I am pretty doubtful that that was the case.

University of Michigan law student

> Don't even get me started. I still know the names of the U of I [University of Illinois] police by heart. I got stopped more times than I can even tell you; at least 15 to 20 times over a 3-year period. That's a *very* conservative estimate.

> *University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana undergraduate student*

African Americans and other students of color confront unrelenting oppression and discrimination as part of their everyday college experiences at historically White institutions[1] (HWIs; Allen, 1992; Smith, Altbach, & Lomotey, 2002). The findings in multiethnic college surveys suggest that students of color, both females and males, struggle to survive academically while battling against racism (Allen & Solórzano, 2001; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003). Campus interview data and reports from the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice clearly describe campus environments where African American males tend to be the primary target of verbal and physical abuse and racially motivated hate crimes (Carroll, 1998; U.S. Department of Justice, 2001, 2004). Additionally, African American male collegians constantly confront negative stereotypes about their intellect (Brown & Dobbin, 2004) and must excel academically despite racially biased course content and racially insensitive instructors (Ervin, 2001; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

The factors that shape the campus climate for diversity are interconnected and mutually determined (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). The institutional environment is influenced by (a) government policies, (b) the campus's historical legacy of racial exclusion, (c) numerical representation of African American male students and faculty, and (d) racial behaviors inside and outside the classroom (Hurtado, 2002). Understood in this context, more sophisticated questions should be asked—and answers sought—about the academic pipeline for African American males. It is important to consider how campus environments, subjectively reported as unsupportive and racially hostile, lead to alienation, dissatisfaction, academic disidentification, disengagement, and blocked academic aspirations for many Black males (Bowman & Smith, 2002; Smith, 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2006; Steele, 1997).

We present *racial battle fatigue* as a theoretical framework for examining social-psychological stress responses (e.g., frustration; anger; exhaustion; physical avoidance; psychological or emotional withdrawal; escapism; acceptance of racist attributions; resistance; verbally, nonverbally, or physically fighting back; and coping strategies) associated with being an African American male on historically White campuses. Our national, multiple-campus study suggests the concepts *racial microaggressions* and *racial battle fatigue* can help us to better understand how the campus racial climate and surrounding communities affect the educational experiences and outcomes among students of color in general and African American males in particular. We believe African American male college students have "raced" and "gendered"

experiences at all stages of the educational pipeline. These experiences are often detrimental to their educational aspirations and achievement. We present evidence of how the social and institutional environments in which HWIs are situated often respond negatively to the presence of African American males. As a result, African American males experience, interpret, and respond in unique manners to these environments compared to Whites, other males, females of color, or even their Black female counterparts.

Understanding the Cumulative Effects of Racial Microaggressions as Racial Battle Fatigue

Willie and Sanford (1995) warned that researchers and policy makers have not fully understood the association between pluralism and racial turbulence because the perspective has often been too limited and "focused on ways of recruiting diverse student bodies without examining the social structures and processes that have excluded certain groups in the past" (p. 253). Many studies and debates tend to over-simplify conversations about racism, sexism, and their intersectionality. We seek a more sophisticated analysis of race, gender, multiple dimensions of oppression, and intersectionality. In this vein, it cannot be assumed that because African American men are males, they receive benefits and privileges comparable to White males. Nor can it be assumed that Black males are automatically advantaged in college compared to Black women and/or other students of color.

Our purpose is not to engage in a frivolous game of "oppression sweepstakes," endlessly arguing about whether Black males are more or less oppressed than Black women, Latinos, Asians, and other males of color. To do so would obfuscate rather than clarify the complexity that is race in 21st-century America. Instead, our approach examines how race, gender, and other factors intersect to create specific, unique conditions of disadvantage (or privilege) for some compared to others. At minimum, Black males carry the burden of two negative social identities as they move through society, one as a member of the African American race (i.e., anti-Black racism) and the other as a Black male (i.e., Black misandry or anti–Black male attitudes and oppression). However, in most research that includes Black men (or Latino males, for that matter), gender or race–gender identity and oppression is invisible, submerged within descriptive or proscriptive race-based analyses. We maintain that differential exposure to race-related stressors at the societal, institutional, interpersonal, and individual levels and the interpretations and coping responses employed by African Americans can lead to the traumatic psychological and physiological stress conditions of racial battle fatigue (Smith, 2004, 2005a; Smith et al., 2006).

Racial Microaggressions in Historically White Environments

The concern about greater distress and academic attrition among Black males attending historically White universities should not be misunderstood as individual failure to cope with stress or as being academically underprepared (Prillerman, Myers, & Smedley 1989). Pierce (1974) has argued that in analyzing racial discrimination, we "must not look for the gross and obvious. The subtle, cumulative mini-assault is the substance of today's racism" (p. 516). He defined these mini-assaults as microaggressions and explained that these racialized insults "may seem harmless, but the cumulative burden of a lifetime of microaggressions can theoretically contribute to diminished mortality, augmented morbidity, and flattened confidence" (Pierce, 1995, p. 281). African American males not only experience mini-assaults or racial microaggressions, they also experience macrostressors or racial macroaggressions (Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). Racial macroaggressions are large-scale, systems-related stressors that are widespread, sometimes becoming highly publicized, race-related, traumatic events. For example, the 1963 Birmingham church bombing or "driving-while-Black" restrictions would classify as racial macroaggressions (Feagin, 2006).

Landrine and Klonoff (1996) maintain that whether at the micro- or macrolevel, perceived racial discrimination is a nearly universal stressor for Blacks. According to the authors, these universal race-related stressors are linked with poor mental and physical health outcomes. Based on a sample of African Americans ages 15 to 70 years, Landrine and Klonoff reported that 98.1% of Blacks said they experienced racial discrimination during the past year and 100% reported that they had experienced racial discrimination at some point during their lifetime. Moreover, 99.4% of the sample indicated that these race-related experiences were stressful. Thus, racism has a systemic, powerful, and far-reaching effect in the lives of Black people (Feagin, 2006). The impact of racial microaggressions on individual Black targets become communicable as the psychological and emotional pain of the incidents is passed on to family, friends, and the larger social group and across generations (Feagin & McKinney, 2003; Smith, 2005b).

According to Smith (2005b), racial microaggressions can range from racial slights, recurrent indignities and irritations, unfair treatment, stigmatization, hyper-surveillance, and contentious classrooms to personal threats or attacks on one's well-being (also see Bobo & Smith, 1998; Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Essed & Stanfield, 1991; Williams, Yu, Jackson, & Anderson, 1997; Wilson, 1990). As a result of chronic racial microaggressions, many African Americans perceive their environment as extremely stressful, exhausting, and diminishing to their sense of control, comfort, and meaning while eliciting feelings of loss, ambiguity, strain, frustration, and injustice (Brown et al., 1999). When racially oppressed groups are in situations where they experience environmental stressors as mundane events, the ramifications are as much a psychological and emotional burden as they are a physiological response (Carroll, 1998; Pierce, 1974).

Racial Battle Fatigue in Historically White Environments

Racial battle fatigue addresses the physiological and psychological strain exacted on racially marginalized groups and the amount of energy lost dedicated to coping with racial microaggressions and racism. The concept of racial battle fatigue synthesizes and builds on the extensive discipline-specific research literature and studies of stress responses to racism and its impact on health and coping (e.g., Brown, Parker-Dominguez, & Sorey, 2000; Brown, Wallace, & Williams, 2000; Carroll, 1998; Clark et al., 1999; Feagin & McKinney, 2003; Feagin & Sikes, 1994; Gougis, 1986; James, 1994; Pierce, 1974, 1975a, 1975b, 1995; Prillerman et al., 1989; Sapolsky, 1998; Scaer, 2001; Shay, 2002; Shay & Munroe, 1999; Smith, 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Stevenson, 1994a, 1994b, 1997, 1998; Williams et al., 1997). Racial battle fatigue also uses the literature on combat stress syndrome (also known as combat stress fatigue, combat trauma, combat injury, or posttraumatic stress disorder or injury) for understanding the effects of hostile environments (Pierce, 1975a, 1995; Shay, 2002; Shay & Munroe, 1999; Smith, 2004; U.S. Department of the Army, 1994; Willie & Sanford, 1995). Combat stress syndrome is diagnosed when military personnel suffer from mental, emotional, and physiological injuries in response to persistent, extreme stress or risk.

Unlike typical occupational stress, combat stress syndrome and racial battle fatigue are natural responses to living and working under mundane conditions of heightened distress, especially when facing potential perils or dangers because of tough, violent conditions or the perception that one's life, personal dignity, or character is being threatened (Pierce, 1974, 1975a, 1975b, 1995; Shay, 2002; Shay & Munroe, 1999; U.S. Department of the Army, 1994). For the military soldier, combat stress is the result of being placed in a foreign environment and having to be constantly on guard for imminent danger in less-than-ideal and life-threatening conditions. For African Americans, racial battle fatigue is the result of constant physiological, psychological, cultural, and emotional coping with racial microaggressions in less-than-ideal and racially hostile or unsupportive environments (campus or otherwise). African Americans experience mundane environmental stressors as physiological, psychological, and emotional burdens (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 2001).

In the aftermath of a racially traumatic event, it is normal to have feelings of detachment or emotional numbness or a feeling of distorted or altered reality (e.g., wondering, "Did I hear what I thought I just heard?"). Surprise, shock, and frustration are oftentimes followed by the attempt to force the event from memory, denying that it occurred, or reliving the event in dreams or in conversations with others. Unfortunately, for most people of color, these negative feelings or the associated collective memories seldom fade; instead, they become a part of a person's life history. For African Americans and other people of color, the mental, emotional, and physiological symptoms of racial battle fatigue can develop from exposure to chronically stressful race-related conditions. These conditions can range from chronic exposure

to and experiences with racial slights, recurrent indignities and irritations, unfair treatment, and contentious classrooms to personal threats to one's well-being (Clark et al., 1999; Essed & Stanfield, 1991; Prillerman et al., 1989; Smith, 2004, 2005a; Williams et al., 1997). College and university campuses and their surrounding communities are often located in historically White environments where racial discrimination exists in both subtle and overt forms (Devine, 1989; Dinwiddie & Allen, 2003; Dovidio, Kawakami, Johnson, Johnson, & Howard, 1997; Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000). African Americans are trying to transition into these historically White spaces and succeed, despite never knowing if or when they might be the targets of racial discrimination.

The cumulative symptoms of racial battle fatigue are both physiological and psychological (Smith, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). Examples of physiological symptoms include, but are not limited to, (a) tension headaches and backaches, (b) elevated heart beat, (c) rapid breathing in anticipation of racial conflict, (d) an upset stomach or "butterflies," (e) extreme fatigue, (f) ulcers, (g) loss of appetite, and (h) elevated blood pressure. The psychological symptoms of racial battle fatigue include (a) constant anxiety and worrying; (b) increased swearing and complaining; (c) inability to sleep; (d) sleep broken by haunting, conflict-specific dreams; (e) intrusive thoughts and images; (f) loss of self-confidence; (g) difficulty in thinking coherently or being able to articulate (confirming stereotype); (h) hypervigilance; (i) frustration; (j) denial; (k) *John Henryism*, or prolonged, high-effort coping with difficult psychological stressors; (1) emotional and social withdrawal; (m) anger, anger suppression, and verbal or nonverbal expressions of anger; (n) denial; (o) keeping quiet; and (p) resentment (for more information on the effects of racial stressors, see Clark et al., 1999; Feagin & McKinney, 2003; Feagin & Sikes, 1994; James, 1994; Pierce 1974, 1975a, 1995; Prillerman et al., 1989; Turner & Myers, 2000; Williams et al., 1997). As a result of mundane racial microaggressions, social feelings of cohesion and moral trust are often retarded or broken between students of color and the HWI community (Smith, 2004).

Responding in emotional self-defense to traumatic events, Black students might slowly or suddenly distance themselves from stressful conflicts and deny or avoid recalling the impact of such experiences. In fact, African American males bear a social cost when they attribute blocked opportunities for success to discrimination. Kaiser and Miller (2001) found that no matter how much discrimination an African American male faces, he is viewed as hypersensitive, emotional, argumentative, irritating, troublesome, and complaining when he suggested that discrimination was the cause of a failing grade. As a result, according to these authors, African American males are more likely to minimize acts of racial discrimination. In a supporting study, Swim et al. (2003) found African American gender differences in behavioral responses to racist incidents. African American male students (36%) were less likely than African American female students (81%) to respond directly or indirectly to racist incidents. Moreover, these gender differences were not because of differential

types of incidents experienced by Black women and men. These researchers maintain that African American males suffer greater consequences for assertively confronting perpetrators.

The social condition that produces racial battle fatigue for African Americans is enveloped in societal ideologies and beliefs about Blacks as a group. In this social milieu, where institutional and individual racist practices are present (whether overtly, covertly, subtly, or as color-blind acts), African Americans are constantly dedicating time and energy to determining if there was a stressor, whether that stressor was motivated by a racist purpose, and how or if they should respond. With a history of more than several centuries of racial struggle in the United States, African Americans are socialized to employ many forms of coping strategies for combating racial microaggressions (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Clark et al., 1999; Prillerman et al., 1989; Stevenson, 1994a, 1994b, 1997, 1998). Research suggests that this socialization process has prepared them more effectively for dealing with racial macroaggressions than with microaggressions (Prillerman et al., 1989; Stevenson, 1994a, 1994b, 1997). Depending on the coping responses, adaptive or maladaptive, African Americans will experience racial battle fatigue in varying frequencies and degrees that directly affects psychological and physiological stress response and related health outcomes.

Despite various coping strategies, Black male college students express high levels of repressed frustration, greater dropout or "slow-out" rates, and lower grades because of the mundane, extreme, environmental stressors faced in public, academic, and social spaces on and off campus (Carroll, 1998; Feagin, 2002; Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 2001; Solórzano, Allen, & Carroll, 2002). More research is beginning to examine African American male collegians' success and struggles (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Stevenson, 1998; Swim et al., 2003). However, more often than not, the outcomes are not pleasant for Black males. Trend data indicate that Black males are more likely than Black females to drop out of high school and college, and consequently more Black men will abuse drugs, become incarcerated, and have higher rates of psychological disturbances (Duncan, 2003). For African American males, hopes of achieving the "American Dream," of being employed with a college degree, are too often thwarted. A raced–gendered analysis of national enrollment data found a disproportionately low representation of Black males to Black females. For every Black male enrolled in college, there were two Black females enrolled; similar disparities exist with respect to earned degrees (Harvey & Anderson, 2005).

Mundane Stress, Black Misandric Environments, and Campus Turbulence

Regrettably, Black males' efforts to resist—and succeed—against racism and Black misandry (or anti–Black male oppression) have not received extensive scholarly attention. Yet we are aware of the oft-cited statistic that in many states, the number of

African American males incarcerated exceeds the number enrolled in college. The plight of Black males has been largely ignored, unanalyzed, or underanalyzed. Consequently, popular and conservative commentaries tend to be the rationale *du jour*—that is, race discrimination no longer matters for academic achievement (Brown et al., 2003; D'Souza, 1991; Schlesinger, 1992). This gives support to the "sincere fictions" in White minds that justify assumptions about Black male pathology and blame Black men for any lack of success in a supposedly fair and open society (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Feagin, 2000; Feagin, Vera, & Batur, 2001).

Today, we are witnessing expressions of practices and ideologies used to justify slavery and the continued subordination of people of African descent (Anderson, 1993; Ellison, 1952; Jordan, 1968; Wilson, 1990). Smith (2005b) defines *Black misandry* as an exaggerated pathological aversion toward Black men created and reinforced in societal, institutional, and individual ideologies and practices (e.g., see Bonilla-Silva, 2001, 2002; Bowman & Smith, 2002; Brown et al., 2003; Feagin, 2000; Scheurich & Young, 2002; Smith, 1998, 2005a, 2005b; Smith et al., 2006). This form of ideological pathology, like Black misogyny, is reinforced in scholarly ontologies, axiologies, and epistemologies where Black men (and Black women) are held in suspicion, marginalized, hated, rendered invisible, put under increased surveillance, or assigned to one or more socially acceptable stereotypical categories. Researchers might ask Black males about their racial insights or experiences shared with Black women or how they contribute to their own pathologies, but rarely are African American men asked about their unique race-by-gender oppression in this country.[2] This deeper level of analysis is more meaningful for understanding the true experiences of Black males.

Black Misandry and Racial Battle Fatigue

Growing literature suggests that stress-related diseases result from the fact that African Americans have to keep activated a psychological and physiological response system, originally evolved for responding to acute physical emergencies. For many Blacks, this system is now "switched on" constantly to cope with chronic racial microaggressions (Clark et al., 1999; Essed, 1997; Essed & Stanfield, 1991; Sapolsky, 1998; Scaer, 2001; Shay, 2002; Smith, 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2005; Smith et al., 2006; Solórzano et al., 2002; Williams et al., 1997). Pierce (1995) suggests that Black males (students) constantly confront oppressive agents, environments, or situations that combine to limit what he calls "STEM," or their space, time, energy, and motion. Depending on the environment, and how rigid and unyielding the racial control, African American males will experience more or less intense racial microaggressions. In HWIs, control is often wielded by White administrators, professors, students, and others, but it is understood (implicitly and explicitly) by all involved that ultimately this control is enforced by White power,

that is, police power and "community policing."[3] Whether the aggression is on or off campus, ideologies of Black misandry are so entrenched in American society (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000) that Black males' experiences in historically White spaces are what Pierce (1974, 1975a, 1975b, 1995) and Carroll (1998) refer to as mundane extreme environmental stress (MEES).

The MEES framework sees stress as mundane for African American males because it is a part of the everyday experiences that are typically taken for granted; extreme because it has a major impact on their physiological, emotional, or cognitive reactions and worldview; environmental because it is part of the ecology of ideological, cultural, institutional, and policy practices of environments readied and aimed to be deployed against the Black male presence; and stressful because in combination, these factors are indeed stressful and consume valuable time and energy that could be used for more creative, educational, professional, and humanitarian purposes (Solórzano et al., 2002). These Black MEES conditions are experienced as a sense of lessened environmental control and comfort (safety, happiness, sense of belonging, supportive), heightened physiological or emotional strain (anger, upset, disappointment, frustration, withdrawal, shock, hopelessness, helplessness, fatigue, increased blood pressure), and personal threats or maltreatment (intimidation, hypersurveillance, rejection). These stressors lead to the cumulative condition of racial battle fatigue—the psychological, physiological, and emotional cost of coping within historically White environments where racial microaggressions are common (Smith, 2004, 2005a, 2005b).

Research Procedures and Participants

Participants and Site Selection

To investigate how racial microaggressions in White environments can produce psychological conditions of racial battle fatigue, this study examined African American male students' social and academic experiences at elite, historically White campuses. This study is primarily interested in the psychological effects rather than physiological responses of racial battle fatigue. Different procedures would be required to fully capture the physiological manifestations of racial battle fatigue. Through purposive sampling, we sought male students who self-identified as African American at Harvard University; Michigan State University; University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley); University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; University of Michigan; and the University of Michigan Law School. Students were recruited using various approaches: membership in African American campus student organizations, referrals, electronic mail, and advertisement in student newspapers. Students who agreed to participate in the study were contacted by the project coordinators for each site, and data collection times were arranged. Focus groups were held in classrooms or conference rooms at each institution and took place

between April and May 2000. Students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign were e-mailed open-ended questionnaires that asked for reflections on specific campus-related experiences. Student e-mail responses were then sent to the project coordinator for that site. A total of 36 African American male students participated in the study. Pseudonyms are used to protect student identities.

Instrumentation

Guided discussions about campus racial climate allowed researchers to identify commonalties as well as unique experiences among participants. Focus groups created safe spaces for participants to reflect and share experiences on a related topic. The group exchange encouraged participants to disclose feelings about their perceptions of racial encounters. Additionally, the focus group was considered a safe place and space for encouraging participants to recall forgotten or suppressed memories. The focus group interview covered eight areas of inquiry: (a) the types of racial discrimination experienced by students, (b) what psychological responses occurred from each racial incident experienced by the students, (c) how students reacted to racial discrimination, (d) how mundane racism affected their ability to perform academically, (e) the advantages of having a critical mass of students of color on campus, (f) whether the racial climate for students of color has improved or worsened in the past few years, (g) whether they would recommend their college to students of color, and (h) what advice students would give for the study. Here, we report findings from the first three questions. Finally, semistructured, one-on-one interviews were held with two participants who had experienced racial microaggressions on campus but were unable to meet during the designated focus group time. In preparation for each focus group and/or semistructured interview, extensive field notes, research memos, and information from briefing meetings were compiled.[4]

Data Analysis

The constant comparison method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used as the data analysis strategy. Using this methodological approach, well-defined themes and patterns were identified. All focus groups and semistructured interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants, and transcripts were produced from these taped focus groups. All e-mail responses from the students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign were treated as transcripts. The focus group data collected from the other institutions were transcribed, coded, and analyzed along with Illinois data into themes and patterns. Member checking and peer debriefing were used to establish rigor and trustworthiness of the data-coding process.

Using the grounded theory approach, the researchers were able to examine how the social environment engenders conditions for racial microaggressions that produce symptoms of racial battle fatigue. The campus racial climate experienced by

Black males was important for understanding the theory's fit, generality, and control within the context of this study. Additionally, observations and interviews allowed the researchers to develop empirically grounded theory. For purposes of this study, our primary interest was to discover the locations and intensity of racial microaggressions that students encounter and their psychological responses (e.g., anger, shock, frustration, comfort, lowered sense of belonging) that lead to varying degrees of racial battle fatigue. By exploring the racial microaggressions experienced by participants and their reported perceptions of the campus racial climate, we systematically searched for emerging categories.

Focus group and semistructured interview analyses are used to describe how 36 African American male students experience racial microaggressions at selected HWIs. These focus groups and one-on-one interviews do not represent a random student sample, nor are the findings intended to be statistically generalizable. Rather, this qualitative analysis examines the lived experiences of the participants and illustrates how their narratives can provide understanding, foster deeper and more meaningful inquiry, and be a guide for future research into how the HWI campus racial climates can produce conditions that lead to racial battle fatigue.

Results

The findings from this study are addressed in five ways. We first examined the various forms of racial microaggressions experienced by African American males attending HWIs. Second, we looked for examples of how these males interpreted and reported racial microaggressions. Next, we explored the three primary domains where African American males experience racial microaggressions, including campus–academic, campus–social, and campus–public spaces. Fourth, we identified the agents or perpetrators in each narrative who committed reported discriminatory acts against the participants. Last, we investigated how these African American male students responded to different forms of racial microaggressions. We looked for examples of psychological responses by exploring the voices and narratives of these students. (We include physiological responses only when the respondents spontaneously mentioned them.) We were interested in the impact of campus racial microaggressions and whether or how respondents offered challenges during each encounter. Finally, we discuss the need for future research and outline the policy implications of these findings for the study of racial microaggressions, campus racial climate, and racial battle fatigue.

Major Themes in the Experiences of African American Male Students

Two major themes emerged from these findings: (a) anti-Black male stereotyping and marginality and (b) hypersurveillance and control. Black males reported being

placed under increased surveillance and control by community policing tactics on and off campus. Across this theme, African American males were defined as being "out of place" and "fitting the description" of illegitimate members of the campus community. In each account of perceived racial microaggressions, African American male students reported having psychological responses (e.g., frustration, shock, avoidance or withdrawal, disbelief, anger, aggressiveness, uncertainty or confusion, resentment, anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness, and fear). To be sure, there were variations in the intensity or severity of racial microaggressions that students reported and in whether they were acute or chronic. However, there was unanimous agreement that the college environment was much more hostile and unwelcoming toward African American males than toward other groups. For example, in response to a probe about how it makes them feel when White students do not recognize them as legitimate academic members of the student community, two students commented,[5]

> I get kind of upset by it because the simple fact that they're not recognizing that, you know, me as a Black male can do the same things that they [Whites] can do. And, if they got here through academics, then I did the same. (Reggie, a UC Berkeley student)
> I would echo what both of them said. Yeah, definitely, a lot of people will ask me—just see me walking around on campus—if I even go here or, you know, they seem surprised when they find out I do go here. (Craig, a second UC Berkeley student)

African American males experienced their campuses and surrounding communities in ways that most students seldom experience—as outsiders who appeared to be out of place, and they were constantly reminded of this perception by "fitting the description" of an unwanted element.

Key Domains of Racial Microaggressions

African American males in our study reported experiencing various forms of racial microaggressions in three racialized domains: (a) campus–academic, (b) campus–social, and (c) campus–public spaces. Campus–academic spaces were on-campus areas where students are near or in academic or administrative buildings (e.g., within classroom settings, student centers, or administrative offices or walking on campus). Campus–social spaces were areas where students live, socialize, or participate in recreational activities (e.g., recreational fields, fraternity houses, minority student group functions). Campus–public spaces were areas adjacent to campus. All of the institutions in this study had public areas on or directly off the school grounds (e.g., restaurants, convenient stores, off-campus computer labs, coffee lounges). Each institution owned some of these public areas, and their campus police were the primary law enforcement agencies. To further explore and understand the complexity and breadth of the racial microaggressions, there are two main factors or roles evident in each space. One is the understanding that each respondent perceived the

encounter in a raced and gendered context. Second, and yet equally critical to note, is that law enforcement personnel were common factors in every case. One student summed up the hypersurveillance by police when he said, "I think most people look at cops and feel comfortable and happy to see them. I'm not happy to see them."

Campus–academic spaces. The criminalization of African American males was among the most often reported and offensive concern shared by Black male students. These racial microaggressions were also the most pervasive and caustic, required the most assertive use of adaptive coping strategies, and left the most lasting effects as they encroached on all aspects of the students' lives. Oftentimes casual strolls by Black males in historically White spaces were greeted with White fear and contempt. To reduce their fear of the Black male presence in these historically White spaces, Whites sought to eliminate the perceived threat and to reestablish environmental control via activation of increased Black misandric surveillance and restrictions. As a result, campus and local police were consistently deployed to suppress and control the Black male body. In short, community policing tactics were used "to keep them in their place." As Kevin, a student at the University of Illinois, disclosed,

> One summer I was taking a physics course—I used to be in engineering. I went to the physics lab on Sunday to study on the computers. Our assignments were on a Plato program. A university officer came into the computer lab and asked for my ID. I asked him why. He stated that someone called and reported a suspicious-looking person entering the building.

It is not clear if Kevin was the only student in the lab, which could possibly explain why the officer approached him. However, what is also not clear is why the officer initially asked for proof of ID without first identifying the nature of the complaint or providing a description of the "suspicious-looking person." Kevin indicated that this situation was awkwardly humorous, shocking, and frustrating to him. He further explained,

> I laughed and said, "Oh really?" I told him that I'm a student studying for an exam and I wouldn't even be able to log onto the computer if I wasn't enrolled in the class. He [the campus police officer] again asked for my ID. At this point I handed him my student ID. Wait . . . there's more. The officer then asked, "Do you have another piece of ID?"

At this point, it became quite clear to Kevin that what was occurring was beyond the officer's suspicion but rather a deeply rooted belief that Kevin "fit the description" of who does not belong in certain places and areas of campus and thus should be held under suspicion. Although Kevin complied with what he believed was an unwarranted interrogation, the White officer demanded further proof to validate Kevin's student status. In disbelief of what was happening, Kevin continued,

This, I couldn't believe. I again asked him, "What's the problem?" He said that he wants another piece of ID to verify the first one! After informing him that he was on some bullshit, I showed him my state ID. As he was looking at it, a second cop was coming around the corner down the hall toward us. The first cop shouted "He's a student" as he handed me back my IDs. He told me that it was his job to follow up on those types of calls. I told him that they should have their callers define "suspicious." Anyway, that shit pissed me off. I guess someone saw a Black man walk into the computer lab and assumed I was there to steal instead of study.

The fallout of being consumed with anger from recurrent racial indignities is one manifestation of racial battle fatigue. When Whites fear Black males' presence, the general feeling is that Black men are out of control and threaten safety in "their" environment, which produces a sense of heightened White anxiety. One strategy to restore confidence and reduce White stress is through community policing activities of this unwanted presence of Black males, who are viewed as suspicious and being "out of their place." Whites will mobilize law enforcement to regain control of historically White spaces. Troy, a student at Harvard University, shared how he was racially targeted and felt racially marginalized on campus by a police officer.

On freshman week, last year, I was walking around the campus just to look at it because I hadn't been up here since sixth grade. I was just looking at what the buildings look like and I was stopped by one of the HUPD [Harvard University Police Department] officers. And he asked me who I was and why I was here. I told him that I was a freshman looking around. He asked me to show ID, which I did, and then he said, "Okay, be more careful next time" and drove off.

Troy learned an early lesson: that he was not wanted, valued, or respected as much as he might have expected or desired. Encountering a single racial microaggression during the freshman year or "freshman week" does not mean that the rest of a student's campus life will be filled with racial hostility or racial microaggressions. However, our findings suggest that for Troy, this experience set a tone and would be the first of many racial microaggressions to come. Troy was simply walking across the campus when he was confronted by a campus police officer displaying a rather cold, aggressive, demeaning temperament. The message sent loud and clear was "I am here to protect Whites and others from people like you." There are very few safe spaces on historically White campuses and in surrounding communities where racial microaggressions can be avoided. Regardless of whether a Black male is on or off campus, they remain targets for discriminatory acts in these historically White spaces.

Campus–social spaces. Whereas the previous excerpts illustrate racist and Black misandric acts within the campus–academic setting, the following passages demonstrate that Black males also encounter racial microaggressions in spaces that are more social in nature. Once again, our data show that the very agents in place to

protect college students—campus and local police—are the same agents used to control Black males' bodies through hypersurveillance and threats of arrest. This form of racial profiling takes on a familiar but distinct meaning as it shifts from the academic spaces of the classroom and university buildings to social spaces. Ironically, the social spaces in these campuses are areas where students go to have fun and relieve stress from their rigorous academic coursework. Unfortunately, this is not necessarily so for African American male college students.

Kyle, a student at UC Berkeley, discussed differences in the treatment of other racial groups and African American males. Of particular note are differing race and gender restrictions regarding participation in the same extracurricular or recreational activities as schoolmates.

> [At] Underhill [residence hall], all last semester, almost every night, there's Whites, there's Asians in Underhill playing Frisbee, or playing football, or whatever have you at 1 o'clock in the morning. [They are] out there yelling, having a good time and never [having] any problems. So, me and my friends [all Black males] are out there about to play some football, and it's like 11 o'clock. All of a sudden, UCBP [UC Berkeley Police] sweeps up. First, it's one car, and they get out the car and it's like, "We got some complaints, you guys need to leave." Mind you, there's about maybe 10 of us and we're out there still just tossing the football around. Then, after he's there for maybe about 2 minutes, all of a sudden from this entrance over here, we have two other [UCBP squad] cars swooping in on Underhill lot.

The police are apparently implementing community policing tactics routinely targeted against Black males. This example is representative of many others, where we found that when African American males assemble, unlike any other group, they are viewed as a potential threat despite evidence and proper rationales proving otherwise. Kyle, who reported being livid about this all-too-common experience, continued,

> We're still just sitting here discussing . . . and we're like, "Well, we're just out here to play football." . . . We weren't making any extra noise other than [what people make who play football] and [we continue] pleading our case, saying, "Well, people do this all the time during the school year, so what is [the problem]?"

Even after explaining how other students play football or Frisbee at Underhill lot throughout the year, a fact Kyle feels the officers already know, it is still obvious that the gathering of Black male students sends a racialized message of disturbing the peace or loitering. Kyle continued,

> And they [UCBP officers] stood there just as plain faced as could be. "Well, there was a complaint from the dorms that you guys were too loud and that you guys were disturbing the peace so we're going to have to ask you to leave. Nobody can play football in this parking lot. We're putting a stop to that" or whatever. Mind you, it [football in Underhill's parking lot] still goes on this semester.

Kyle and his peers tried explaining rationally why, as students, they were using campus property, but their message fell on deaf ears. Not only were the officers nonreceptive to the idea of Black male students playing football on campus grounds, but the police officers were obviously preparing themselves to enforce their position physically with arrests. Kyle expanded,

> And so now, we're up to three police cars. We're still discussing that [students play football in Underhill lot] and then, finally, here comes a fourth car, one of the vans or whatever, the UCBP vans and they swoop up. Then there are two bike cops who come over. So now, there are like a total of four or five cars and then we have two cops on the bike, all here for us [Black male students], who are not displaying any type of violence or anything like that towards [one another or authority], but we're upset.

Obviously, Kyle and his peers would be justified in expressing discontent and challenging the police officers' order that they leave the premises. Yet Kyle and his friends were faced with an all-too-familiar dilemma for Black male students. Kyle explained,

> And, we're saying at that same time, we're feeling restricted because if we act in a way that we want to react—number one, we're going to jail; number two, it's just going to feed into the stereotype that they think we're supposed to be violent or whatever.

Constant self-questioning and efforts to avoid reinforcing racial–gender stereotypes are part of Black males' race–gendered experience that is very common (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Furthermore, although anger suppression may have worked best in this situation, Kyle clearly expressed physiological responses that can be costly over time. The backlash of strategically dealing with this dilemma is being overwhelmed with racial battle fatigue. In an attempt to maintain control as well as to dispel the myth that Black males are not inherently deviant, Kyle explained how he and his peers continued to maintain a conversation with the police officers, even when it was blatantly clear that the authorities were not receptive. Finally, Kyle shared his thoughts:

> But, we actually just stood out there and I just really pleaded our case for like at least 45 minutes. They were not trying to hear us at all. We had to leave the parking lot. It reminded me, I'm a Black man at Cal.

An important component of the college transition and development process is being able to integrate successfully into new academic and social environments (Tinto, 1993). The measure of success for students who accomplish this feat is the concomitant payoffs in degree completion, personal satisfaction, future postgraduate study, increased career opportunities, and higher incomes. This retention strategy is not that simple and straightforward for African American males. However, one of the

ways Black males have historically been able to offset the racially hostile, exclusive college experience at HWIs is by belonging to a historically Black fraternity. Historically Black fraternities offer a sense of brotherhood, fellowship, academic and social support, and networking and leadership opportunities through fraternal ties with graduate members. Despite all of the benefits that Black fraternities add to a positive campus climate for African Americans and other students of color, in many cases, these groups are still marginalized and stereotyped as ganglike. Marcus, a UC Berkeley student, shared being frustrated, amazed, and maligned by the following incident:

> We were at the parking lot and this was when one of my line brothers [i.e., same fraternity pledge class] were in Rachdale . . . because of a party. We were having a step practice [i.e., African American fraternity dance performance with African roots] in the parking lot. So, we had the radio on and we were learning how to step. From the entrance [of the parking lot], it had to be eight cars. They [police officers] just all came—"woo, woo, woo, woo" [making the sound of sirens]—and we were standing there, like, "Are you serious?"

Understanding the culture of historically Black fraternities and the unique ways in which they interact and promote their brotherhood and service to the wider community is critical. These international organizations are mandated to fulfill important community service requirements that can directly increase Black student satisfaction and retention. Unfortunately, what the presence of Black fraternities offers to the good of the campus community does not necessarily translate into a socially acceptable identity or role model for the institution. For some on campus, and for too many police officers, a group of Black male students is a sign of gang activity and potential violence. In sarcastic amusement, Marcus continued,

> [Laughter] And, we're all stuck in there. [The police officers said,] "We've had complaints there was a fight going on over here." We're like, "A fight?" The officer [implied] we fit the description. So these letters that we have on [implies to the officers] we were the guys in the fight. "Well, we [fellow officers] didn't get the details, but we heard it was five Black men." [Marcus replied,] "Okay, well, it wasn't us." [Police officer:] "Well, you guys are gonna have to leave." [Marcus explains,] "We're waiting for one of our friends to come down so we can leave." [Police officer:] "Well, you guys are gonna have to leave now." And, we're like, "Are you serious? We're just sitting here . . . you know we're at step practice."

Despite trying to convince the officers of their status as a recognized university student organization, their pleas were ignored. Marcus further explained,

> "We all go to Cal, here's our ID." They're [police officers] like, "No, it's not gonna work. Not this time. You guys will have to leave." And, it was just an extremely problematic situation 'cause I have a mouth and I go, [laughter] "No, I'm not leaving

because you came and told me I have to leave because I was in the fight. Do I look like I was in a fight?" You know?

Another student, Mason, a student at University of Michigan Law School, shared how he was annoyed on almost a weekly basis about the disparate treatment between Black males and Whites:

> With the school events, [it's] definitely racial, they regulate and try to shut down, and [make you leave through certain doors]. Yeah, there's definitely that [racism]. And, then, I don't know if it's Ann Arbor police or if it's public safety or both of them working together, but why shouldn't a street full of [White] fraternity, frat houses where they know everyone's getting drunk, girls are getting raped in there. All this stuff is going on . . . You can't tell me it's the way [White] people act, and the girls aren't getting raped, and people aren't getting drunk. Crazy things . . . dying or drinking themselves to death and everything . . . and, the police will not stop that, they will not shut them [White frat houses] down, they will not go investigate.

Finally, Mason shared his view that when it comes to functions organized by Black fraternities, they are closed down or are placed under heavy surveillance by police officers, whereas on the contrary, events held by White fraternities—despite what Mason reports as obvious law violations (e.g., drinking beer on the front lawn, public nudity, fights)—are not closed down. Mason continued,

> But they [police officers] drive down the street and then they see that there's a house. And, they can tell by the [forms] of the people out there that the people are, you know, the Blacks. . . . They're anything but [Whites], naturally they [police officers] start to park in front, and they start to investigate, and they start to try to shut that party down when everyone's basically contained in the house and on the porch. And, it's ridiculous. They're making rounds. Black students can't even chill. And, then they [White fraternities] have [students naked] running . . . running! That's illegal, isn't it? Isn't that indecent exposure? It's illegal. Yet, you know they organize for people to run down the street naked, and it's an annual . . . event that the police support. Had that been something where the presence of Black students was, like mainly us, it would be shut down, it would be shut down!

Black college fraternities in the United States have a rich history that dates back to the beginning of the 1900s. Of the four oldest college fraternal organizations, two were founded on historically Black campuses (Omega Psi Phi in 1911 and Phi Beta Sigma in 1914, both at Howard University) and two at historical White campuses (Alpha Phi Alpha in 1906 at Cornell University and Kappa Alpha Psi in 1911 at Indiana University). Today, these international organizations maintain graduate-alumni and undergraduate chapters in almost every U.S. state and on most college campuses. A very short list of the caliber of men who joined these organizations includes Ernest Everett Just (biologist), Langston Hughes (poet), Carter G. Woodson

(historian), Percy L. Julian (chemist), Benjamin E. Mays (former president of Morehouse College), Count Basie (jazz musician), Charles Drew (physician), Bill Cosby (comedian and philanthropist), and Jesse Jackson (civil rights activist). Yet instead of assuming that current fraternity members hold similar commitments to social justice and the pursuit of high academic and professional achievement, they are treated as criminals and gangbangers. In Mason's words, "a Black student can't even chill" in spaces designated to build community, reinforce positive images, and relieve daily stressors.

Campus–public spaces. As in the other domains, African American males' normal and benign behavior in campus–public spaces is considered deviant, and their mere presence provokes apprehension among White peers and suspicion among police officers. Ahmad, a student at the University of Illinois, painfully but meticulously described an experience that many of the young men in this study reported as widespread. For this reason, we provide Ahmad's narrative in greater detail.

> I experienced one incident in particular that will always vividly stand out in my mind. I was a first semester sophomore . . . at U of I. I lived in the Pennsylvania Avenue residence halls [PAR] at the time. One late autumn night, around 10:00 p.m., I was hungry and decided to walk up to the Colonial Pantry about four blocks north of PAR near the Busey-Evans female dorms to buy some snacks. As I approached the store, I was walking northbound on Goodwin Avenue at the time—this fact will become pertinent later—I noticed a young White campus police officer staring me down as if he recognized me from some criminal line-up. I walked right past him and didn't think anything of it—I had received that look many times from White police officers before. But this time the officer followed me into the store. I noticed him watching me, but again I didn't think too much about it. . . . The officer was still staring me down.

Here, Ahmad perceived that he was being negatively profiled by a White police officer. The fact that Black males such as Ahmad are often considered to fit the description of criminals is chilling. Moreover, such Black misandric confrontations are too common. Ahmad continued,

> At this point I began to stare back at him [the White police officer] because I got the impression that he was waiting for me to steal something. As I made eye contact with the officer, I proceeded to get in line and pay for my snacks. The officer stopped staring at me, turned around, and began walking to the door. At that point I figured my actions convinced him that I wasn't about to do anything illegal, but I did notice him grab his radio and place a call. After I paid for my goods, I proceeded to walk to the door. At that time the officer turned around and asked me to "step outside for a second."

By returning an eye-to-eye stare with the police officer, Ahmad hoped his guiltless but defensive posture was enough to assure his innocence. Feeling confident that he had not done anything in a suspicious manner, Ahmad was still confronted by the White officer. He elaborated,

> Still in the store, I asked the officer in a tone loud enough to be heard by everyone in the store, "What is it, officer, did I do something wrong?" He repeated his command to step outside, and I cooperated because I knew he had nothing on me. At this point I was getting mad because I'm wondering what he wants with me. When we stepped outside, he began to question me about my whereabouts during the evening and asked if he could see some ID.

At this point, the exchange between Ahmad and the White police officer reflects a historical moment for Black men. Ahmad alerted patrons of his unjustified situation with the police officer. Ahmad was angry and still at the mercy of the White police officer, so he decided to adhere to the officer's demands and step outside the store.

> As I pulled my student ID out of my wallet, I explained to the officer that I live in PAR and that I was out buying some snacks to eat. He asked me was I just at Campus Town about 10 minutes ago. If you recall, Campus Town is on Green Street, which is north of the Colonial Pantry on Goodwin. The officer knew that he saw me walking from the south—or northbound—on Goodwin as I approached the store. Colonial Pantry is about a good 5- to 10-minute walk southeast of Campus Town, and if I were coming from Campus Town I would have been heading southbound on Goodwin! There is no way that I could have made it from Campus Town to a point south of the Colonial Pantry to only turn back around and head north again in a matter of 10 minutes! In other words, this is a bogus field investigation, and he and I both knew it from the start!

Ahmad clearly understood that he was being unjustly targeted and attempted to reason with the officer. Ahmad explained,

> To his question, I replied, "No, I just came from PAR! How could I have been at Campus Town 10 minutes ago if I just came from PAR?" He then asked me to set my bag down and place my hands against the wall.

Ahmad answered all of the officer's questions, presented proof of his student status, and clearly explained that it was not feasible to be the suspect. However, the White police officer stubbornly clung to the belief that Ahmad fit the description of the criminal reported to the police—despite logical explanations. At this point, it is understandable why Ahmad became agitated.

> I replied, "Officer, I've been cooperative with you up until now, but I would appreciate if you would explain to me what this is all about." He [the White police officer] said, "I'll explain it to you in a minute. Just put your hands against the wall." I cooperated and let him search me. After he patted me down and found nothing on me, he finally explained that a women's purse was just reported stolen at Campus Town and that the alleged perpetrator was described as a Black male, between 5' 7" and 6' 0" tall, wearing blue jeans, gym shoes, and a dark coat! Now, this is the middle of November in Champaign, Illinois! What Black male wouldn't fit that description?

A justification from the White police officer only reaffirmed what Ahmad already knew, that he was being watched, pursued, detained, and searched because he was a Black male. What is maliciously obvious is that it really does not matter that Ahmad is not the guilty party. Rather, what is most important is that Ahmad is a Black male in a society that holds premeditated Black misandric beliefs that he must be guilty of something. In a further attempt to appeal to the White police officer's common sense, Ahmad continued,

> As I explained to the officer that I wasn't the person he was looking for, another Black male walked past both of us on the sidewalk. I noticed that the brother stared at me with a strange look on his face. The officer didn't see the brother look at me because he [the officer] was facing me and had his back to the pedestrian. As the brother passed both of us, he caught the attention of the officer. The officer wasn't done with me yet because he still had my ID.

Now Ahmad was faced with a serious dilemma: Should he redirect attention to another Black male who also "fits the description" or continue to allow himself to be unjustly interrogated? Should Ahmad assume the other Black male now at the scene is guilty and fall victim to the same racial profiling and Black misandry that he perceives the police officers to be demonstrating? Ahmad proceeded,

> At that point another police officer came by on foot and asked what was going on. The first officer explained that he had detained me under suspicion of the alleged purse snatching. The second officer said, "Well, I was just following another guy who fit the description, the guy who just passed here a few seconds ago." At that point all three of us looked in the direction of the brother who had just walked past. As soon as we all looked at him, the brother took off running! At that point the first officer gave me my ID back, and both officers began foot pursuit of the second 5' 7" to 6' 0" Black male with blue jeans, gym shoes, and a dark coat!

Walking off campus into its surrounding communities has proven to be challenging for many Black male students. What is simple wanderlust or exploration for some can be a dangerous enterprise for Black males. Because systemic, visceral White fears toward Black men have justified questioning, searching, detaining, and sometimes brutalizing African American males, the power of Black misandry should not be underestimated for its psychological and physiological impact. What occurred in the above passage is far too common. Black males are under constant surveillance regardless of whether they have ever committed a crime. Instead of "innocent until proven guilty," they are regularly convicted without the thought of reasonable doubt or a fair trial. Such stigmatization leads not only to countless unlawful interrogations but also to many false arrests and to academic disidentification (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 2001; Steele 1997). Ahmad, in haste and relief, quickly exited the scene. He concluded,

I didn't stay around to see if they caught the brother or not. However, I just kept thinking to myself, if that brother hadn't walked by when he did, they [White police officers] may have tried to frame me for the purse snatching simply because I was in violation of that nationwide statute 'BWA': Black while in America!

It is a sad commentary when, at any given moment, the lives of many Black males are in the hands of people who consciously or unconsciously make fateful decisions based on Black misandric beliefs. In the physical sense of unwarranted detention or in the sense of mental imprisonment (i.e., constantly placed on guard or feeling followed, pursued, or hounded), Black males in all walks of American life attempt to cope in environments where their race–gender group fits the description of outsider, criminal, unemployable, unintelligent, lazy, and/or dangerous person. In the process, they are stripped of the humanity, liberties, and dignity to which all law-abiding citizens should be entitled. Having to live, literally and figuratively, on the run from physical and emotional threat is more than a perception for many Black males but a reality that exists not only off campus in the public realm, but also within and among the walls of the "ivory tower."

Concluding Thoughts About African American Males in Historically White Spaces

To be a Black male is to have your integrity chronically under question, to always have to somehow verbally or nonverbally, communicate convincing reasons for being where you are if you are not in your "place." Only the carefully presented façade, the meticulous expression of nonaggressive, nonassertive body language, the representation of a carefully managed nonthreatening persona, or old age; only standardized, "non-Black" dress, standardized English, averted eyes intently focused on the leading newspaper, magazine, or book can alleviate to some tolerable degree the fears and suspicions of others. But this diminution of fear and suspiciousness in others, bought at the too-high price of self-annihilation, is always tentative, delicate, and is easily rent by the smallest misstep or the tiniest deviation. (Wilson, 1990, p. 36)

In this study, we examined African American male students' experiences with day-to-day racism on historically White campuses. More important, we offered a detailed, accurate examination of Black males' experiences by not considering only their racial or gender identities, but by including their race–gender identities. In doing so, we begin to better understand how Black misandric environments differentially affect Black males relative to other students. Furthermore, by using a raced–gendered analysis to examine Black misandric environments, we are able to consider the nuances of institutional and societal ideologies, behaviors, and experiences—singly and in combination. In turn, we explore how these relate to perceived social stress, academic achievement, and subsequent mental and physiological health among Black male college students. A related task is to identify possible mechanisms, processes,

strategies, and informal or formal relationships that Black males specifically, and students of color in general, can better employ as adaptive coping resources. The main focus of this article was not to report adaptive coping strategies, although these are critically important. Rather, our goal was to identify specific domains and common occurrences of racial microaggressions that produce racial battle fatigue in its psychological form. In the process, we introduced a racial construct, Black misandry, that describes how other groups position, conceptualize, define, and redefine Black males as subordinate, inferior, and/or criminal (Blumer, 1958; Smith, 2005b).

Common Black Misandric Beliefs

The excerpts included in this article represent the individual as well as collective voices of African American male respondents. The culmination of their experiences reflects the racial microaggressions they encounter as they negotiate their identity in a world that marginalizes their existence and transforms them from a Black male to an object, from a student-scholar to a racial target, and from a potential protector to a potential predator. African American males were portrayed or viewed as predators, cheaters, personal threats, violence prone, and monolithic and as having undifferentiated group identities as thieves, incompetents, violators, and/or subhumans. Rarely were these Black male college students defined as capable, productive, intellectual, and law-abiding individuals. Black male students were reacted to negatively, as the media often represents them (Hunt, 2004), as "fitting the description" in all that is the opposite of what society idealizes as "White": good, pure, scholarly, law abiding, productive, hardworking, meritorious, responsible, and safe. These narratives represent respondents' voices as they express racial battle fatigue in feelings of disbelief, rage, alienation, fear, invisibility, pain, and disappointment. It is important to note that these voices also illustrate resiliency, respect for one's inner voice, and the ability to resist the stigmatization associated with being a Black male while being in pursuit of an ultimate goal, higher education. Such resistant behaviors have been shown to produce positive outcomes even in the face of incredible disadvantages (Smith, 2004; Solórzano et al., 2002).

African American male students in this study confirmed in their own words, by telling their own life experiences, that racial encounters produce painful psychological stress responses. Although we did not ask how constant environmental stressors affected academic achievement, we do know that the majority of these students became more determined to overcome the racial and academic obstacles they encountered. Each reported feeling anger, disgust, distress, and a diminished sense of belonging on their respective campuses. We were told that having to respond constantly to negative stereotypes, debilitating actions, and White people's ability to interfere with their dreams was not an easy task. Without a doubt, these men are survivors—resilient fighters. In fact, most of these students persisted to graduation and many went on to graduate or professional schools and successful careers.

According to Prillerman et al. (1985), psychosocial stressors and mediators are linked etiologically to many psychological, physical, and functional outcomes. This study suggests that the social conditions Black students face have not dramatically improved in the past 20 years since the Prillerman study. Many African American students and other students of color still navigate stressful environments with personal vulnerabilities and strengths as well as with social resources and assistance. However, attempting to assuage the impact of racial battle fatigue to earn a college degree is not the sole responsibility of a Black student or Black student organizations. Universities must assume an immediate and definitive role in reducing racial microaggressions and be more proactive in promoting adaptive coping for Black students (Pierce, 1975a). Otherwise, these institutions will continue to block, intrude, or stifle effective coping and adaptation for the foreseeable future.

There is a persistent, crisis-level underrepresentation of African American males on historically White college campuses. For example, in 2005, a mere 130 (only 29 were nonathletes) of more than 4,000 freshmen admitted to University of California, Los Angeles, were Black males, a statistic that is all too commonplace across the nation. After 100 years, the cynical, rhetorical question posed by W. E. B. Du Bois (1903) is still paramount for Black males: "How does it feel to be a problem?" To be sure, race is not solely an African American male problem. It is a societal problem with direct implications for the experiences of Black males. Black males in this national study have proven that they can succeed despite what appears to be insurmountable odds. What might happen if Black men were treated as they see themselves and granted full humanity and opportunity? Instead, many are treated as depicted by Baldwin (1995), who charged that "the action of the White Republic, in the lives of Black men, has been, and remains, emasculation. Hence, the Republic has absolutely no image, or standard, of masculinity to which any man, Black or White, can honorably aspire" (p. 21).

Notes

1. We use *historically White institutions* instead of *predominantly White institutions* to distinguish that the gross numbers or percentages of White students have less to do with the composition of the majority populations than it does with the historical and contemporary racialized infrastructure that is in place, the current racial campus culture and ecology, and how these modern-day institutions still benefit Whites at the expense of Blacks and other groups of color.

2. Similar arguments can be made for American Indian, Asian Pacific American, and Latino or Chicano males as well as other racially oppressed males of color.

3. For our purposes, community policing is any citizen who is racially primed (see Smith, 2005b) to believe in anti-Black stereotypes and believe that Black males are suspects of antisocial behaviors without justification. In short, Black males are guilty until proven innocent, or as one of our interviewees describes it, they are guilty for being "Black while in America."

4. Copies of the focus group protocol, focus group questionnaires, and the e-mail questionnaire are available by request from the lead author.

5. Pseudonyms are used to identify student quotes.

References

Allen, W. R. (1992). The color of success: African American college student outcomes at predominantly White and historically Black public colleges and universities. *Harvard Educational Review*, *62*, 26-44.

Allen, W., and Solórzano, D. (2001). Affirmative action, educational equity and campus racial climate: A case study of the University of Michigan Law School. *La Raza Law Journal*, *12*, 237-363.

Anderson, J. D. (1993). Race, meritocracy, and the American academy during the immediate post–World War II era. *History of Education Quarterly*, *33*(2), 151-175.

Baldwin, J. (1995). *The evidence of things not seen*. New York: Henry Holt.

Blumer, H. (1958). Race prejudice as a sense of group position. *Pacific Sociological Review*, *1*(1), 3-7.

Bobo, L., & Smith, R. A. (1998). From Jim Crow racism to laissez-faire racism: The transformation of racial attitudes in America. In W. Katkin, N. Landsman, & A. Tyree (Eds.), *Beyond pluralism: Essays on the conception of groups and group identities in America* (pp. 182-220). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2001). *White supremacy and racism in the post–civil rights era.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2002). The linguistics of color-blind racism: How to talk nasty about Blacks without sounding "racist." *Critical Sociology*, *28*(1/2), 41-64.

Bonilla-Silva, E., & Forman, T. (2000). "I'm not a racist but . . .": Mapping White college students racial ideology in the U.S.A. *Discourse and Society*, *11*, 51-86.

Bowman, P. J., & Howard, C. (1985). Race related socialization, motivation, and academic achievement: A study of Black youths in three generation families. *Journal of American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, *24*, 134-141.

Bowman, P. J., & Smith, W. A. (2002). Racial ideology in the campus community: Emerging cross-ethnic differences and challenges. In W. A. Smith, P. G. Altbach, & K. Lomotey (Eds.), *The racial crisis in American higher education: Continuing challenges to the twenty-first century* (pp. 103-120). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Brown, K., Parker-Dominguez, T., & Sorey, M. (2000). Life stress, social support, and well-being among college-educated African American women. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, *9*(1/2), 55-73.

Brown, L., & Dobbin, H. (2004). Students' of color and European American students' stigma-relevant perceptions of university instructors. *Journal of Social Issues*, *60*(1), 157-174.

Brown, M. K., Carnoy, M., Currie, E., Duster, T., Oppenheimer, D. B., Shultz, M. M., et al. (2003). *Whitewashing race: The myth of a color-blind society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Brown, T. N., Wallace, J. M., & Williams, D. R. (2000). Race-related correlations of young adults' subjective well-being. *Social Indicators Research*, *53*, 97-116.

Brown, T. N., Williams, D. R., Jackson, J. S., Neighbors, H. W., Torres, T., Sellers, S. L., et al. (1999). "Being Black and feeling blue": The mental health consequences of racial discrimination. *Race and Society*, *2*(2), 117-131.

Carroll, G. (1998). *Environmental stress and African Americans: The other side of the moon*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Clark, R., Anderson, N. B., Clark, V. R., & Williams, D. R. (1999). Racism as a stressor for African Americans: A biopsychosocial model. *American Psychologist*, *54*(10), 805-816.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Beyond racism and misogyny: Black feminism and the 2 Live Crew. *Boston Review*, *16*(6), 6-33.

D'Souza, D. (1991). *Illiberal education: The politics of race and sex on campus*. New York: Free Press.

Devine, P. G. (1989). Stereotypes and prejudice: Their automatic and controlled components. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *56*(1), 5-18.

Dinwiddie, G. Y., & Allen, W. R. (2003). Two steps forward, three steps back. In C. Camp Yeakey & R. D. Henderson (Eds.), *Education, opportunity, and society in the new millennium* (pp. 563-594). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Dovidio, J. F., Kawakami, K., Johnson, C., Johnson, B., & Howard, A. (1997). On the nature of prejudice: Automatic and controlled processes. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *33*(5), 510-540.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1903). *The souls of Black folk: Essays and sketches*. Chicago: A. C. McClurg.

Duncan, L. (2003). Black male college students' attitudes toward seeking psychological help. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *29*(1), 68-86.

Ellison, R. (1952). *Invisible man*. New York: Vintage.

Ervin, K. S. (2001). Multiculturalism, diversity, and African American college students: Receptive, yet skeptical? *Journal of Black Studies*, *31*(6), 764-776.

Essed, P. (1997). Racial intimidation: Sociopolitical implications of the usage of racist slurs. In S. H. Riggins (Ed.), *The language and politics of exclusion* (pp. 131-152). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Essed, P., & Stanfield, J. A. (1991). *Understanding everyday racism: An interdisciplinary theory*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Feagin, J. R. (2000). *Racist America: Roots, current realities, and future reparations*. New York: Routledge.

Feagin, J. R. (2002). *The continuing significance of racism: U.S. colleges and universities*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Feagin, J. R. (2006). *Systemic racism: A theory of oppression*. New York: Routledge.

Feagin, J. R., & McKinney, K. D. (2003). *The many costs of racism*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

Feagin, J. R., & Sikes, M. (1994). *Living with racism: The Black middle class experience*. Boston: Beacon.

Feagin, J. R., Vera, H., & Batur, P. (2001). *White racism* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Feagin, J. R., Vera, H., & Imani, N. (2001). *The agony of education: Black students at White colleges and universities* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Gougis, R. (1986). The effects of prejudice and stress on the academic performance of Black-Americans. In U. Niesser (Ed.), *The school achievement of minority children: New perspectives* (pp. 145-157). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Harvey, W. B., & Anderson, E. L. (2005). *Minorities in higher education 2003-2004: Twenty-first annual status report*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Hunt, D. (Ed.). (2004). *Channeling Blackness: Studies on television and race in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hurtado, S. (2002). Creating a climate of inclusion: Understanding Latina/o college students. In W. A. Smith, P. G. Altbach, & K. Lomotey (Eds.), *The racial crisis in American higher education* (pp. 121-136). New York: State University of New York Press.

Hurtado, S., Milem, J., Clayton-Pedersen, A. R., & Allen, W. R. (1998). Enhancing campus climates for racial/ethnic diversity: Educational policy and practice. *Review of Higher Education*, *21*(3), 279-302.

James, S. A. (1994). John Henryism and the health of African-Americans. *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry*, *18*, 163-182.

Jordan, W. D. (1968). *White over Black: American attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812*. New York: Norton.

Kaiser, C. R., & Miller, C. T. (2001). Stop complaining! The social costs of making attributions to discrimination. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *27*(2), 254-263.

Landrine, H., & Klonoff, E. A. (1996). The schedule of racist events: A measure of racial discrimination and a study of its negative physical and mental health consequences. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *22*, 144-168.

Lewis, A., Chesler, M., & Forman, T. A. (2000). The impact of "colorblind" ideologies on students of color: Intergroup relations at a predominantly White university. *Journal of Negro Education*, *69*(1/2), 75-91.

Nora, A., & Cabrera, A. F. (1996). The role of perceptions of prejudice and discrimination on the adjustment of minority students to college. *Journal of Higher Education*, *67*(2), 119-148.

Pierce, C. M. (1974). Psychiatric problems of the Black minority. In G. Caplan & S. Arieti (Eds.), *American handbook of psychiatry* (pp. 512-523). New York: Basic Books.

Pierce, C. M. (1975a). The mundane extreme environment and its effect on learning. In S. G. Brainard (Ed.), *Learning disabilities: Issues and recommendations for research* (pp. 111-119). Washington, DC: National Institute of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Pierce, C. M. (1975b). Poverty and racism as they affect children. In I. Berlin (Ed.), *Advocacy for child mental health* (pp. 92-109). New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Pierce, C. M. (1995). Stress analogs of racism and sexism: Terrorism, torture, and disaster. In C. Willie, P. Rieker, B. Kramer, & B. Brown (Eds.), *Mental health, racism, and sexism* (pp. 277-293). Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Prillerman, S. L., Myers, H. F., & Smedley, B. D. (1989). Stress, well-being, and academic achievement in college. In G. L. Berry & J. K. Asamen (Eds.), *Black students: Psychological issues and academic achievement* (pp. 198-217). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Sapolsky, R. M. (1998). *Why zebras don't get ulcers: An updated guide to stress, stress-related disease, and coping*. New York: W. H. Freeman.

Scaer, R. (2001). *The body bears the burden: Trauma, dissociation and disease*. Binghampton, NY: Haworth.

Scheurich, J. J., & Young, M. D. (2002). White racism among White faculty: From critical understanding to antiracist activism. In W. A. Smith, P. G. Altbach, & K. Lomotey (Eds.), *The racial crisis in American higher education: Continuing challenges to the twenty-first century* (pp. 221-243). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Schlesinger, A. M. (1992). *The disuniting of America: Reflections on a multicultural society*. New York: Norton.

Shay, J. (2002). *Odysseus in America: Combat trauma and the trials of homecoming*. New York: Scribner.

Shay, J., & Munroe, J. (1999). Group and milieu therapy for veterans with complex post-traumatic stress disorder. In P. A. Saigh & J. D. Bremner (Eds.), *Posttraumatic stress disorder: A comprehensive text* (pp. 391-413). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Smith, W. A. (1998). Gender and racial/ethnic differences in the affirmative action attitudes of U.S. college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, *6*(2), 127-141.

Smith, W. A. (2004). Black faculty coping with racial battle fatigue: The campus racial climate in a post–civil rights era. In D. Cleveland (Ed.), *Broken silence: Conversations about race by African Americans at predominately White institutions* (pp. 171-190). New York: Peter Lang.

Smith, W. A. (2005a). *Battle fatigue on the front lines of race: Teaching about race and racism at predominantly White institutions*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Smith, W. A. (2005b). *Racial battle fatigue, race-related stressors, and the academic challenges for college students of color: An interdisciplinary theory*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Smith, W. A., Allen, W. R., & Danley, L. L. (2005). *"YOU make me wanna holler and throw up both my hands!" Campus culture, Black misandric microaggressions, and racial battle fatigue*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Smith, W. A., Altbach, P. G., & Lomotey, K. (Eds.). (2002). *The racial crisis in American higher education: Continuing challenges to the twenty-first century*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Smith, W. A., Yosso, T. J., & Solórzano, D. G. (2006). Challenging racial battle fatigue on historically White campuses: A critical race examination of race-related stress. In C. A. Stanley (Ed.), *Faculty of color teaching in predominantly White colleges and universities* (pp. 299-327). Bolton, MA: Anker.

Solórzano, D., Allen, W., & Carroll, G. (2002). Keeping race in place: Racial microaggressions and campus racial climate at the University of California, Berkeley. *UCLA Chicano/Latino Law Review*, *23*(Spring), 15-112.

Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotype shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, *52*(6), 613-629.

Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *69*(5), 797-811.

Stevenson, H. C. (1994a). Racial socialization in African American families: The art of balancing intolerance and survival. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, *2*(3), 190-198.

Stevenson, H. C. (1994b). Validation of the scale of racial socialization for African American adolescents: Steps toward multidimensionality. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *20*(4), 445-468.

Stevenson, H. C. (1997). Managing anger: Protective, proactive, or adaptive racial socialization identity profiles and African American manhood development. *Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community*, *16*(1/2), 35-61.

Stevenson, H. C. (1998). Raising safe villages: Cultural-ecological factors that influence the emotional adjustment of adolescents. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *24*(1), 44-59.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Swim, J. K., Hyers, L. L., Cohen, L. L., Fitzgerald, D. C., & Bylsma, W. H. (2003). African American college students' experiences with everyday racism: Characteristics of and responses to these incidents. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *29*, 38-67.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Turner, C. S. V., & Myers, S. L., Jr. (2000). *Faculty of color in the academe: Bittersweet success*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

U.S. Department of the Army. (1994). *Battle fatigue GTA 21-3-5 warning signs: Leader actions*. Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. Department of Justice. (2001). *Hate crimes on campus: The problem and efforts to confront it*. Washington, DC: Office of Justice Programs and Bureau of Justice Assistance.

U.S. Department of Justice. (2004). *Hate crime statistics, 2003*. Clarksburg, WV: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Criminal Justice Information Services Division.

Williams, D. R., Yu, Y., Jackson, J. S., & Anderson, N. B. (1997). Racial differences in physical and mental health. *Journal of Health Psychology*, *2*(3): 335-351.

Williams, D. R., Neighbors, H. W., & Jackson, J. S. (2003). Racial/ethnic discrimination and health: Findings from community studies. *American Journal of Public Health*, *93*(2), 200-208.

Willie, C. V., & Sanford, J. S. (1995). Turbulence on the college campus and the frustration-aggression hypothesis. In C. V. Willie, P. P. Rieker, B. M. Kramer, & B. S. Brown (Eds.), *Mental health, racism, and sexism* (pp. 253-276). Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Wilson, A. N. (1990). *Black-on-Black violence: The psychodynamics of Black self-annihilation in service of White domination*. Brooklyn, NY: Afrikan World Infosystems.

William A. Smith (PhD, University of Utah) is an associate professor in the Department of Education, Culture, and Society and in the Ethnic Studies program. As of July 2007, he serves as the associate dean for diversity, access, and equity in the College of Education, and he has a presidential appointment as the special assistant to the president and the faculty athletics representative. His research interests are in the areas of social justice of higher education. His current research focuses on racial battle fatigue or the affects of psychological and physiological stress responses to coping with mundane racism for faculty and students of color.

Walter R. Allen (PhD, University of California, Los Angeles [UCLA]) is currently a professor of sociology, and he holds the Allan Murray Cartter Chair in Higher Education at UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. He is also codirector of CHOICES, a longitudinal study of college attendance among African Americans and Latinos in California.

Lynette L. Danley (PhD, University of Utah) is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy and in the Ethnic Studies program. Her research interests are in the mentoring and persistence of faculty and students of color. Her current scholarship uses womanist theoretical epistemologies and methodological approaches.