

The Relationship between Racial/Ethnic Microaggressions and Mental Health among Latinx College Students

Kaylee Ortega
Department of Ethnic Studies

Primary Thesis Advisor
Joanne Belknap, Ph.D., Ethnic Studies Department

Honors Committee Members:
Arturo Aldama, Ph.D., Ethnic Studies Department
Enrique J. López, Ph.D., School of Education

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Abstract

This study documents the presence of various types of racial discrimination experienced by Latinx college students, the effects of this racism on the students' self-reported anxiety and depression levels, and how these are related to the students' generation as college students. (i.e., their parents' history of attending and completing college). This research builds on the existing research on Asian American college students, applying it to the impact that racism, discrimination and microaggressions can have on Latinx students, the invisibility *and* hyper-visibility that these students feel as a result of this racism, the lack of support that they receive for it, and whether it is related to their generational level (i.e., their parents' college history). The data are from basic demographic information and two survey instruments: the Racial Microaggressions Survey (Torres-Harding, Andrade, & Diaz, 2012) and the Brief Symptom Inventory Scale (Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1983). The results from the approximately 200 Latinx college students who participated in this on-line survey indicate not only a troubling prevalence of racial discrimination and microaggressions, but that these experiences are significantly related to the students' mental health/well-being. The findings are discussed in terms of addressing the racial campus climate (policy) and directions for future research on college students of color.

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CHAPTER I: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Since the very foundation of the United States, both the overt and covert racism have had profound impacts. These well-documented and profound impacts of racism, including trauma, emotional pain, humiliation, and the prevention of individuals' and communities' optimal growth and functioning, have been found among youth and adults of Color¹ (e.g., Cokeley, Hall-Clark, & Hicks, 2011; Forrest-Bank, Jenson, & Trecartin, 2015; Franklin et al., 2008; Harrell, 2000; Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002; Lambert et al., 2009; Liang & Molenaar, 2016; Nadal et al., 2014; Sue, 2010; Torres-Harding, Andrade, & Diaz, 2012). Despite this solid research base, only recently has research (finally) begun to address racism as a contributing factor to the overall *health* of people of Color (PoC) (e.g., Karlson & Nazroo, 2002; Matthew, 2015). According to Karlsen and Nazroo (2002, p. 624), "in the United States, self-reported experience of interpersonal racism has been shown to be associated with raised blood pressure; increased psychological distress, depression, and stress." Although the scholarship and data are expanding in identifying and documenting the range of impacts caused by racism, this work is surprisingly minimal in terms of the harm experienced by first- and subsequent generations of Latinx² college students.

¹ According to Potter (2015), several scholars choose to capitalize the word Color, but not White as a way to symbolize resistance and challenge the racial stratification of the U.S. However, I choose to capitalize both Color and White similar to Potter's style in order to show how, "race is a strong social determinant and a matter of identity" (Potter 2015, p. 18) for both racially marginalized groups and non-people of Color.

² Consistent with other scholars (e.g., Santos & Van Daalen, 2016), I use the term Latinx to refer to all aspects of gender identity and to challenge the gender binary. This term will be used throughout my thesis with the exception of when I use direct quotes by those using other identifiers (e.g. Latina/o).

In 1998, McCormak reported evidence suggesting increasing racial discrimination occurring on college campuses, with African Americans and Latinx experiencing the greatest victimization of incidents involving personal discrimination (McCormak, 1998). However, to date, most of the research on racial discrimination on college campuses focuses on African American college students (Lambert et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2011b; Smith, Hung & Franklin, 2012; Smith et al., 2016). Studies that have branched out of this Black and White dynamic have primarily investigated Asian American college students' experiences with racism and how this effects their mental wellbeing, particularly anxiety and depression (Liang, Li, & Kim, 2004; Liu & Suyemoto, 2016; Hwang & Goto, 2008).³

The purpose of this thesis is not to deny the importance of this body of research on the impact of campus racism against African American and Asian American college students; nor is it to suggest that this is not excellent research, as neither point is true. However, given that Latinx appear to be an ethnic group, along with African Americans, experiencing the most racist discrimination on college campuses, this research on racism, including racial microaggressions, also needs to be more directly conducted on Latinx college students than it has been to date.

Moreover, by the year 2050, Latinx are projected to account for one-fourth of the U.S. population (Torres, Moore & Yznaga, 2011, p. 526). Additionally, those who identify as Latinx continue to be the largest portion of first-generation college students to be enrolled in to post-secondary education (National Center for Educations Statistics, 2010, as cited by Pease, 2013), *and* they are at risk of developing psychological problems due to life stressors associated with the adaption process and living in the United States (Moore, Torres & Yznaga, 2011).

³ Although the focus was on Asian Americans, some of these studies included Latina/os in their samples (Hwang & Goto, 2008).

Although some scholars and college administrators are aware of the increasing Latinx population in the U.S. *and* in college enrollment, few studies address how Latinx college students' experiences with racism are related to their mental health. Even less common is a scholarly attempt to compare these Latinx college students' racism-mental health relationship across generations of college participation. Therefore, the goal of my thesis is to not only document the prevalence of Latinx students' self-reported racism experiences, and how these are related to mental health, but to also determine whether any relationships (or lack thereof) between experiencing racism and levels of self-reported mental health by college Latinx are related to these students' parents' college attendance (as a means of measuring "college generation"). These questions drive my thesis study whereby I aspire through a self-report survey modeled after the existing research on Asian American college students' racism and mental health, to study University of Colorado-Boulder (CU-B) Latinx students, a historically marginalized group on the CU-B campus to document: (1) the presence of racist discrimination (specifically microaggressions) experienced by these students; (2) their mental health; (3) the relationship between their self-reported racism and mental health; and (4) whether the racist/discrimination-stress relationship varies across the respondents' generation as Latinx in U.S. higher education. (see Hwang & Goto, 2008).

Racism in Modern Day United States: Racial Microaggressions

Most social science scholars today recognize race as a socially, *not biologically*, constructed concept, and a phenomenon that still possesses, through racism, the power to inflict negative impacts that range from quite minor to extremely consequential (e.g., Potter, 2015; Zuberi, 2001). Members of a society are the ones to determine what race is and the defined racial groups have a unique relationship with one another, "stratified into superior and subordinate

classifications” (Potter, 2015, p. 10). These classifications and its members can either benefit from the subordination of people of Color or can greatly hinder them through the use of racist tactics, manifested in “inferior housing, education, employment, and health services” (Sue, 2010, p. 7). Over all, racism is used to grant racial superiority to those who are in the positions of power and privilege, such as non-people of Color⁴ or White Americans, among the United States (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Racism’s complexity, then, makes it difficult to define due to its ability to be manifested through individual and/or institutional interactions, and either overtly or discretely (Franklin, Boyd-Franklin & Kelly, 2008). Perhaps Shelly P. Harrell’s (2000, p. 43) racism definition is most appropriate in guiding my thesis: “a system of dominance, power and privilege based on racial group designations...where members of the dominant group create or accept their societal privilege by maintaining structures, ideology, values, and behavior that have the intent or effect of leaving non dominant-group members relatively excluded from power, esteem, status, and/or equal access to societal resources.”

Although some U.S. Americans are quick to react against overt racism or racist comments and actions that are intended to harm people of Color, best witnessed through *individual racism* (Sue, 2010, p. 7), far fewer fail to see racial discrimination play a more covert role that is an even larger role in our institutions. More specifically, Sue (2010, p. 8) identifies “laws that promote racial profiling, segregated churches and neighborhoods, discriminatory hiring and promotion practices and educational criteria that ignore and distort the history of minorities” as some of the less covert but still very troubling and consequential aspects of racism (Sue, 2010, p. 8). Overt expressions of racism can be practiced through either institutions or individual interactions and are typically far more easily identified (Sue, 2010). But due to a

⁴ White and non-people of Color will be used interchangeably throughout the study.

belief in color-blindness, many (primarily White) U.S. Americans believe that race no longer matters and problems “affecting people of Color are fundamentally rooted in their pathological cultures” (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). This could not be further from the truth.

Although, *overt* forms of racial discrimination are less prominent today (Sue, 2010) and are often shunned and unwelcomed by the general society, we cannot ignore the fact that people of Color are still three times more likely than Whites to be poor, receive an inferior form of education, and more likely to become targets of racial profiling by the police (Bonilla-Silva, 2010), all of which indicate racism alive and thriving. Racism has now morphed into a subtler way of expression, in our “cultural assumptions/beliefs/ and values” (Sue, 2010, p. 8) and is now practiced through what Derald Wing Sue describes as *racial microaggressions*. Most White Americans see themselves as incapable of possessing racist thoughts or stereotypes against people of Color (Sue, 2010), but no one is immune from learning these social norms in a society based on racial stratification. Microaggressions are perpetuated below a subconscious level, even if perpetrators have good intentions. They can be delivered through daily interactions and although they “may appear harmless or innocent in nature they are nevertheless detrimental to recipients because they result in harmful psychological consequences and create disparities” (Sue, 2010, p. 15).

Although there is a recent and growing awareness of racial microaggressions and their potential to cause harm, much of the current racism research focuses more on conscious or explicit (as compared to implicit) racism thereby providing the false impression of racial progress from the Jim Crow era (Bonilla-Silva, 2010 p. 12). But racial ideology has only changed and its subtlety is experienced and witnessed on college campuses. Franklin and his colleagues’ (2014, p. 5) review of this research found that college students today are reporting

increasingly worse racial climates on their campuses, are experiencing subtle racial discrimination, and that students' experiences can vary across different racial and ethnic groups. Latinx have continued to be reported as an understudied group relative to discrimination (Hwang & Goto, 2008), despite being one of the fastest growing populations in the United States (Alamilla, Kim, & Lam, 2009, p. 2). Significantly, Franklin, Smith, and Hung's (2014) review of many studies found that Latinx students experience more racial discrimination, more than their white peers, such as racial microaggressions, and a hostile campus climate, all of which indicate a need to survey the experiences of Latinx students.

Racial Battle Fatigue

William A. Smith first coined the term and phenomenon Racial Battle Fatigue (RBF) as a framework to describe the psychological and physiological effects of racial stress associated with being African American, or a person of Color, on historically White campuses (Franklin et al., 2014; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Mitchell, Fasching Varner, Albert & Allen, 2015; Smith, Mustaffa, Jones, Curry & Allen, 2016; Smith, Yosso & Solorzano, 2011a). RBF is understood to resemble "combat stress syndrome" (Smith et al., 2007, p. 555) and to be incurred by a situation and/or event resembling a hostile environment. RBF framework has been used to debunk the myth of a post-racial era of U.S. higher education (Mitchell et al., 2015) and reveal a connection between racial microaggressions with negative symptoms such as, anxiety, depression, anger and physiological effects of rapid breathing and an upset stomach (Smith, 2011a). These psychological and physiological reactions can occur after experiencing some form of racial stressor or if a student of Color is anticipating a racial conflict (Smith 2011a). Smith et al., (2016) state that although racial microaggressions are labeled as "micro," their effects largely resemble macro-stressors. Smith's (2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2016) RBF perspective correlates well

with Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) concept of daily stresses. Daily stressors, such as microaggressions, may appear simple and irrelevant, but can have long lasting affects where the cumulative impact is more intense than some explicit racism and macroaggressions.

Black male students have largely been the central focus of RBF research which is not surprising in that William A. Smith first identified and studied this phenomenon with a focus on Black male students (Smith et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2011b; Smith, Hung & Franklin, 2012; Smith et al., 2016). Indeed, with his colleagues, Smith recently stated: "Black males are considered the most stereotyped of any group on campus and in larger society" (Smith et al., 2016, p. 1193). Notably, Smith and his colleagues' (2016) RBF themes are very compatible with Torres-Harding and her colleagues' (2012) findings regarding their study on racial microaggressions between multiple ethnic groups, including Latinx college students. Torres-Harding et al. (2012) discovered Latinx had a significant experience, on predominantly white campuses, with "criminal stereotypes" (Torres-Harding et al., 2012, p. 161) and "low achieving/undesirable culture" (Torres-Harding et al., 2012, p. 161) which includes assumptions of low intelligence. Similarly, Smith et al., (2016) found Black male students experiencing "the criminal/predator stereotype" (Smith et al., 2016, p. 1197) and an "anti-intellectual stereotype," (Smith et al., 2016, p. 2000), both resembling Torres-Harding et al.'s (2016) findings. Additionally, Franklin et al., (2014), in a study that specifically focused on Latinx college students and RBF, discovered a link between racial microaggressions with RBF-related stress responses for Latinx students, suggesting that "psychological stress responses for Latina/os are most impacted by racial microaggressions in the RBF framework" (Franklin et al., 2014), further revealing the damaging effects of racial microaggressions.

In my thesis, then, I argue that if historically White college campuses perpetuate a subtlety of racial discrimination and ideologies, then the effects from these covert forms of racial stressors can be further supported through a racial battle fatigue lens. Franklin et al. (2014) reviewed several studies based on Latinx students on college campuses and discovered students feeling “alienated, isolated and experiencing greater racialized stress than their White peers” (Franklin et al., 2014, p. 308). Furthermore, Latinx students reported astounding levels of anxiety in college (Franklin et al., 2014), further affecting their health, due to a constant battling with these daily micro-stressors. Students of Color, including Latinx, are forced to be on a high alert after undergoing these stressful situations, dedicating time and effort into unpacking the subtlety of their discrimination victimizations, question whether their perpetrators are racists, and decide whether, and if so how, to begin respond to such a traumatic event without falling prey to racial stereotypes (e.g., Smith et al., 2016).

Racial Battle Fatigue is another framework, similar to that of race-related stress, proving a connection between poor mental health and racial stressors. Understanding this connection can assist institutions in realizing how damaging campus racial climate can be for students of Color and its effect on persistence, retention and overall experience of students of Color. In their careful review of the research, Smith et al. (2014, p. 1192) warn that if nothing is done to address the accumulation of such stressful racist events on campus, then RBF has the potential to not only affect the targeted student, but to be passed down across generations, “through collective group memories, racial socialization, and coping processes.”

Definitions of Generational Status

Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin (1994) report that throughout the existing literature, the United States college experience has been described as a time of cultural and academic adaption of

one's institutional surroundings. I argue that this time of breaking away from traditions in order to allow the exploration of a new college student identity, which is likely difficult for all new college students, can be very confusing and troubling for many first-generation students who do not have parents who told them what college was/is "like." More specifically this "removal" from their cultural origins, along with usually very difficult financial circumstances and the difficulty of navigating college life with limited resources, can create a unique experience, compared to non-first generation students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, first generation students were more likely to work off campus, for more hours, less likely to be White, non-Latinx, than their non-first-generation counterparts, and more likely to be Latinx, and have to additionally face the obstacle of thwarted cultural mobility (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1994). Despite all of the added stresses, which can be assumed to disrupt their state of mental well-being, first-generation students' college enrollment into post-secondary education has increased since 1920 (Orbe, 2003), yet very few studies have been conducted focusing solely on this demographic (first "gen" college students), and the studies that have been conducted, do not separate first generation students based on their race/ethnicity. People of Color have different experiences when attending predominantly White institutions and if the majority of first generation students are less likely to be White, it is imperative to examine one ethnicity group at a time, while comparing them across generations (Alessandria & Nelson, 2005).

The definition of a first-generation student has varied. For the current study, I drew on Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin's (1994, p. 7) definition of first-generation students: college students "whose parents' highest education is a high school diploma or less" (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1994, p. 7). For the purposes of my thesis, I further categorized "generation" or "parental college" to (1) college students who had at least one parent who had attended some form of

higher education, but did not receive any degrees (i.e., associate's, bachelor's, Ph.D., etc.) and (2) college students who had at least one parent who had achieved an associate's but no bachelor's degree. These last two categories are consistent with Pease's (2013) label of "partial-legacy students." Studies have shown that partial-legacy students may have a different college experience compared to first-generation students and non-first-generation students, such as the possibility of hearing their parents' experience of college, which can create increased pressure to graduate and a separate reason for anxiety and depression (Pease, 2013). Furthermore, used Pease's definition of "legacy" students to define my final category of college student "generation: college students with at least one parent who received a bachelor's degree or higher from a college or university (Pease, 2013).

Theoretical Approach

Although critical race theory (CRT) has strong ties to critical legal studies, critical legal studies still lacked a focus around the intersections of law and racial power and often ignored the way racism "forced oppressions on unwilling victims" (Roithmayr, 1999, p. 3). CRT was created outside of mainstream views to emphasize a central focus on the lives of people of Color. CRT also seeks to prove the existence of racism embedded in our society, in order to promote the visibility of people of Color and combat their exclusion. Through the work of contemporary race scholars, CRT has been the foundation in creating smaller forms of theoretical work such as Latina/o Critical Race Theory, also known as LatCrit. LatCrit has been used to examine the many dimensions of Latinx experiences with race and racism, such as immigration, culture and language (e.g., Bernal, 2002; Robertson, Bravo & Chaney, 2016) and continues to emphasize the importance of further developing theoretical concepts for the research of multiple identities.

Significantly, CRT's expansion outside of law, has included being used to explain the workings of racism in education, such as examining the problematic promotions of "race-neutral" (Bernal, 2002; Hurtado, 2002, p. 121; Roithmayr, 1999, p. 1) ideas of merit and standardized testing in education and how these ideals ignore the relationship between race and racism among predominantly White institutions. The scholarly work that examines education through a critical race lens emphasizes the voices of people of Color in sharing their experiences with race, racism and the educational system (Bernal, 2002; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Roithmayr, 1999; Yosso et al., 2009), and can be expressed through qualitative data, such as a personal narratives and stories (Bernal, 2002; Robertson et al., 2016; Zirkel & Pollack, 2016). The norm embedded in the U.S. educational system places Eurocentric thinking as the most prestigious form of knowledge, due to the misinformed belief that U.S. is based off meritocracy, unbiasedness and a fair process (Bernal, 2002). Bernal (2002) expands on the harms of this approach in education. For example, such an approach forces students of Color to set aside their culture, identities and personal experiences throughout their schooling years, in order to fit in the academic world and be receptive to a more "formal" education. Unfortunately, this may lead students of Color to believe their personal accounts are inferior in comparison to the "greater knowledge" inside our educational systems. Although it is important to receive an education and continue on to higher levels of academia, U.S. educational institutions should not focus on a perspective solely based on White privilege. The application of critical race theory in education has the ability to set the lives of students of Color as the focus. This is then used as a sense of agency and a way to promote students of Color as valuable sources of knowledge to dismantle the existence of racism in our institutions (Bernal, 2002).

Robertson, Bravo & Chaney (2016) mentioned that our educational institutions resemble a miniature version of racism within the greater society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995 as cited by, Robertson et al., 2016). CRT allows scholars to examine the ways in which racism is embedded in the U.S. society, reveals the true nature behind most of the “race-neutral” (Roithmayr, 1999, p. 1) tactics in higher education and among the antidiscrimination policies that are meant to be “well intended” (Robertson et al., 2016). Race neutral policies in education, such as “merit,” are believed to be separate or immune from racism (Roithmayr, 1999, p. 1), and perpetuate the idea that racial discrimination is non-existent. By embodying the ideas of “race-neutrality,” higher education has become a breeding ground for the many forms racial discrimination ranging from interpersonal to institutional. The multiple forms of racial discrimination can have profound effects on students of Color retention rates and overall satisfaction with higher education. Microaggressions have recently become a topic for discussion surrounding racial discrimination on predominantly White campuses because of their ability to be casually present throughout the daily lives of students of Color. Microaggressions have been used in previous studies as a tool for critical race research, either in or outside of the academic world, allowing an approach that centers the experiences of people of Color as valuable (Pérez, Huber, & Solorzano, 2014).

CRT helps reveal the racial stratification within higher education that often perpetuates racial microaggressions. Outside of education, CRT has been used to understand the sociology of mental health, which can offer a more complex and dynamic understanding between the relationship of race and mental health; as well as serve as a stepping-stone for new future research (Brown, 2003). According to Brown, racial stratification is a way to invoke stressful situations that can in turn create emotional distress and its own forms of mental health problems.

(Brown, 2003). Among most mental health sociologists and mental health professions, race is considered an important variable if we wish to understand the distribution of mental health problems (Brown, 2003). Some scholars note that although people of Color, such as African Americans, report lower mental health disorders, we should begin to ask whether or not the definitions of mental health disorders and problems accurately and appropriately encompass the symptoms produced from racial discrimination and racial stratification (Brown, 2003; Cokely et al., 2011). Through a CRT lens, mental health professionals and mental health sociologists can further examine the sources of racial stratification related to the experiences of racial microaggressions, begin to understand its effects on people of Color and finally construct definitions that include the effects of racism on mental health.

Conclusion

There is no arguing that racial stratification continues to have profound effects on U.S. institutions and marginalized groups. Although, most of society has rejected blatant forms of racial discrimination we still do not live in the post-racial society that many U.S. Americans claim it to be. Denying this not only perpetuates the idea that race is non-existent, but completely erases the valid experiences of marginalized groups and the racial stressors they continue to battle with every day. Indeed, this practice not only denies race, but must then deny the existence of racism.

Racism in higher education, compared to other U.S. institutions, has been well documented and proven to occur in numerous subtler ways today compared to a few decades ago (Ancis, Sedlacek & Mohr, 2000; Anderson, 2002; Bernal, 2002; Cerezo, Lyda & Beristianos, 2013; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 2002; McCormak, 1998;

Minikel-Lacocque, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2015).⁵ “Racial microaggressions” has become an increasingly popular term to describe these incidents of implicit racial bias, and the presence of these behaviors has been shown to occur across several college campuses (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Sue, 2010). Although, these actions are at times done unconsciously by the perpetrators (Sue, 2010) and by larger institutions, we must still educate individuals, including higher education administrators, about the definitions of racial microaggressions and their potential to harm. Furthermore, we must hold both individuals and institutions who perpetrate racial microaggressions accountable, and seek to enforce a change in order to create an overall positive experience for students of Color, which given the extant research that has examined this, also lead to preventing or lessening negative health outcomes for students of Color.

Chapter 1, explains the recent concepts, theories and frameworks needed to address the research question of this current study; specifically, whether there is a relationship between experiencing racism and levels of self-reported mental health by college Latinx, and how this may reflect a difference across college students’ parents’ college attainment. Research on this topic largely focuses on African American college students, specifically males, due to the level of discrimination this group faces in comparison to others. Although, there are some exceptions to this, such as research dedicated to Asian Americans and Latinx students, such research is very limited and additional research can become a stepping stone in providing effective institutional policies and resources for Latinx students and perhaps other students of Color, and deter individual and institutional microaggression perpetration.

⁵ This is not to deny or minimize the less subtle, more explicit and even violent racism that college students of Color can still experience.

The following chapter is a literature review explaining the research on how race/ethnicity relates to microaggressions on campus, how racial microaggression victimization can trigger a stress response among students of Color, and the overall relationship between race-related stress and anxiety and depression. Chapter 3, will discuss the method I used to construct and distribute my survey, the data collection process, and the factor analysis I used to examine my data. Chapter 4 identifies the study findings. The final chapter will then include an overall summary of my research findings, the policy implications of my study, and the limitations of my study and existing research and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter I discussed the issues behind racism in the U.S., how racism is now perpetuated in the form of racial microaggressions and its overall effects on mental health of Latinx students through an RBF framework. Chapter I also discussed the definitions I would be using throughout my data collection to categorize Latinx students as first generation students and why I am looking at parental college levels in order to categorize these students. The following chapter is a review of the current research used to understand racial discrimination on college campuses, racial microaggressions as a form of stress and its relation to mental health and mental health services.

Racial Campus Climate

William A. Smith and his colleagues document that while institutions of higher education often times attempt to promote their “increasing” numbers of diversity on campus through college fairs, pamphlet and website photographs, and statistical numbers, but as they fail to effectively create a less hostile racial campus climate, students of Color continue to battle racial microaggressions and discrimination as part of their everyday experiences on historically White institutions (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007.) General institutional policies, interpersonal interactions with faculty, staff and White peers, as well as the predominant White culture that is expressed on campus as a whole, has historically been created by and catered to non-people of Color.

In order to understand the effects of racial discrimination on Latinx college students, it is important to realize the racial legacy embedded within predominantly White campuses, even if

an institution embraces a “diversity of convenience” (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solorzano, 2009, p. 664). In the book, *The Racial Crisis in American High Education*, James D. Anderson (2002) provides an historical perspective on this racial legacy and how it has continued into the 21st Century of U.S. Higher Education. In a society where race is classified into dominant and subordinate groups, since the 17th and 18th Centuries and before, we expect to see the ripple effects of these very same practices throughout various institutions of the United States today, including higher education (Anderson, 2002). This racialized subordination has stripped away the opportunity of many students of Color for higher education, by legally prohibiting them from attending colleges throughout the United States (Anderson, 2002). This gradually began to change at the end of the 1960’s, when all U.S. institutions of higher education initiated policies to accept more students of Color among colleges and professional degree programs (Anderson, 2002).

In the next couple of decades, people of Color will comprise about “40% of the U.S. population” (Anderson, 2002, p. 18), possibly making it even more important for college and university administrators to acknowledge the presence of students of Color. If these administrators are not interested in terms of fighting racism and the ability for students of Color in a climate free of racist stress, then they should be invested if the United States plans to be compete with the global economy. But instead of properly assisting students of Color by implementing policies for retention and improving campus racial climate, colleges have come to express a “diversity of convenience,” to enrich the lives of White students, with opportunities to learn from students of Color in order for White students to work “effectively” with the increasing diversity of the United States (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solorzano, 2009). Those who are currently in the positions of power among higher education continue to express racial discrimination, by

catering to White students, disregarding the racial legacy still imbedded in our educational systems, and failing to create effective policies in order to improve the college experiences of students of Color. Although today we may not explicitly prohibit the entry of students of Color into colleges with blatant policies of the past, we must understand the catering that is being performed and the covert ways a campus racial climate can prevent students of Color from attaining a bachelor's degree from four-year-institutions.

Research suggests that people of Color, and even specifically students of Color, do not perceive racial discrimination or campus racial climate similarly, but do experience it more so than White students (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Nadal et al., 2014; Torres-Harding, Andradem & Diaz, 2012; Utsey et al., 2002; Yosso et al., 2009). One study documented the perceptions of campus cultural climate by race and reported White students consistently reporting “less racial tension, few expectations to conform to stereotypic behavior, an experience of being treated fairly, a climate characterized by respect for diversity, and the most overall satisfaction” (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000, p. 183). Another more recent study reported the impact of racial microaggressions on college students' self-esteem and found that “Black, Latina/o and Multiracial participants experienced significantly more microaggressions than did White participants” (Nadal et al., 2014, p. 468). This study also reported that Latinx and African Americans were more likely than Asian American college students to report being treated as inferior (Nadal et al., 2014). Latinx and Asian Americans have been documented to experience discrimination related to being a “foreigner” and “not belonging,” in comparison to African Americans on college campuses (Torres-Harding, Andrade, & Diaz, 2012, p. 161). Furthermore, Latinx have reported being accused more often of doing something wrong on college campuses, such as stealing or cheating, compared to Asian Americans students (Hwang & Goto, 2008, p.

332). The different experiences among races/ethnicities stresses the importance for studies on many ethnic groups at a time if we wish to document the effects of racial discrimination among college students.

The Latinx community in the United States is now known to be the most poorly educated group (Fry, 2002). Despite their growing population in the United States (Alamilla, Kim, & Lam, 2009), Latinxs enrollment and graduation rates from four year institutions still lags behind, not reflecting this population boom (Hurtado, 2002). Racial discrimination among higher education can negatively affect the campus racial climate and eventually the retention and graduation rates of Latinx students among predominant White Universities (Bonilla-Silva, 2002; Franklin, Smith, & Hung, 2014; Solorzano, Villalpando, & Osegura, 2005). Studies have also reported Latinx as an understudied group among scholarly work that seeks to examine the relationship between mental health and racial discrimination (Hwang & Goto, 2008; Torres et al., 2011). With the lack of research, it is difficult to examine the full extent of the damage caused by interpersonal and structural racism on Latinx college students.

In fall 2015, the University of Colorado at Boulder (CU-B) reported total freshman enrollment of 6,028 students, 24% of which were Students of Color (“Undergraduate Enrollment and Graduation Rates”). From this enrollment, there has been a 9% increase of Latinx students admitted into CU-B, compared to fall 2014 (Poppen, 2015). Although CU-B stated that it, “welcomed its most academically qualified and diverse incoming freshman class in the campus’s history” (Poppen, 2015), the *Climate Survey of 2014*, from the Board of Regents of CU-B reported that only 30% of Latinx students felt CU-B was a diverse campus, and less than half felt valued and supported as a student at CU (Undergraduate Student Social Climate Survey, 2014). This survey was also able to document reports of microaggressions and discovered that Latinx were

more likely to indicate others treated them as “not being smart” and believed that this was due to their racial/ethnic identity. Latinx students also reported commonly hearing joking or mocking stereotypes about their racial/ethnic identities (Undergraduate Student Social Climate Survey, 2014). These reported levels of microaggressions clearly indicate troubling levels of racial microaggressions directed at Latinx students occurring on the CU-B campus, which, in turn, emphasizes the necessity of research to understand their effects on Latinx students who are currently attending CU-B.

The increasing numbers of Latinx on the CU Boulder campus, compared to other racial/ethnic groups, could be interpreted as invasive to White students, which could bring a backlash or increase of racial microaggressions and a corresponding increase in negative college experience for these students of Color. Furthermore, with the increasing racist rhetoric college students have heard throughout the recent 2016 U.S. presidential elections, specifically targeting people of Color, immigrants, Muslims, and other marginalized groups in the United States, it is additionally necessary to examine the experiences of Latinx ‘racial microaggression victimizations on a predominantly white college campus, *and* the impact of such aggressions on Latinx students’ mental health.

Microaggressions and Latinx College Students

Recent scholarship began to pay close attention to the concept of racial microaggressions, instead of examining overt forms of discrimination, because of the ability of racial microaggressions to be discrete, and at the same time, damaging to people of Color (Franklin et al., 2014; Nadal, 2011; Nadal et al., 2014; Solorzano, 1998; Smith, 2007; Sue, 2010; Torres-Harding et al., 2012; Yosso et al., 2009). Unlike overt forms of discrimination, racial microaggressions can appear harmless to most, but the minimization of their consequences can

contribute to their buildup, and eventually, impact students of Color through diminishing of physical, psychological and/or psychosocial well-being (Franklin et al., 2014; Nadal, 2011; Nadal et al., 2014; Smith, 2007; Solorzano, 1998; Sue, 2010; Torres-Harding et al. 2012; Yosso et al., 2009;

The subtlety of racial discriminations currently occurring across college campuses likely have varying effects across racial/ethnic groups. Smith et al. (2007) conducted a study specifically on African American male college students and their psychosocial experiences with microaggressions. These authors stated that the purpose of their study was to not contribute to the “frivolous game of ‘oppressions sweepstakes’” (Smith et al., 2007, p. 553). The scholars highlighted another important reason to conduct studies of racial discrimination with a focus on specific race and ethnic backgrounds: It is pointless to try to prove whether or not certain racial and ethnic groups suffer “more” oppression than others. Academic scholars should not only discuss the complexities of racial discrimination in modern day United States, but practice this concept through their research and study design, by critically examining how racial microaggressions uniquely affect Latinx, African Americans, Asian Americans, Indigenous peoples, and other racial and multiracial groups.

Few studies examine Latinx college students’ experiences with racial microaggressions, but the ones that do, share common themes throughout their findings, including being treated as a foreigner, criminal, and/or intellectually inferior, being ridiculed about their Latinx culture and language, and feeling isolated on campus (Torres-Harding, Andrade, Diaz, 2012; Huynh, 2012; Yosso et al., 2009; Nadal et al., 2014; Minikel-Lacocque, 2013; Cerezo et al., 2012). These themes have been discovered through both qualitative and quantitate studies and have been reported to effect psychological well-being, such as anxiety and depression levels among Latinx

college students (Hwang & Goto, 2007; Huynh, 2012). These racist experiences can in turn perpetuate a negative campus climate, which likely plays a significant role in effecting the retention and graduation rates for these victimized students.

The effects of racial microaggressions on the anxiety and depression levels of Latinx college students is best understood when we examine the overall functions of microaggressions and the ways in which they can be manifested. In 1970, Chester Pierce first mentioned the term microaggressions, as offensive mechanisms, and went on to describe their impacts and subtlety:

Most offensive actions are not gross and crippling. They are subtle and stunning. The enormity of the complications they cause can be appreciated only when one considers that these subtle blows are delivered incessantly. Even though any single negotiation of offense can in justice be considered of itself to be relatively innocuous, the cumulative effect to the victim and to the victimizer is of an unimaginable magnitude. Hence the therapist is obliged to pose the idea that offensive mechanisms are usually a *micro-aggression*, as opposed to a gross, dramatic, obvious *macro-aggression* such as lynching” (Pierce, 1970, p. 266).

Although most “offensive mechanisms” are subtle, the use of overt forms of discrimination should not be seen as something that has vanished. Overt discrimination is still present and occurs throughout society today, but should be understood as a tactic that is much easier to condemn (Solorzano, 1998), giving many the illusion that individuals and institutions have progressed, when a significant body of research reviewed in this thesis documents the prevalence of microaggressions, along with the increased difficulty most victims of racial microaggressions have in “calling out” these perpetrators in comparison to more blatant and explicit racism.

Race scholar Derald Wing Sue (2010) has unpacked microaggressions and expanded the definition to include discrimination that not only relates to race/ethnicity, but also includes gender and sexual orientation. Sue has stated three categories in which these offensive mechanisms can fall: microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations. Moreover, he details how each of the three categories has the potential to be expressed through individual, institutional and cultural sectors of society and have been documented to affect Latinx college students (Sue, 2010). Sue (2010, p. 28) cites Miller and Garran's (2008) work on *microassaults* as often occurring at a conscious level and intended to hurt victims through group identity attacks, using such tactics as purposeful discrimination, name-calling, and avoidant behavior. These microaggressions are often easily detected by individuals and have been used to "make fun of" Latinx culture and/or language on college campuses. Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solorzano (2009) conducted a qualitative study using focus groups to examine the experiences of Latinx college students, where one focus group participant reported that a student had yelled "Fuckin' beaners!" at her when she was walking to her *folklorico* performance and was wearing the traditional colorful uniform for the dance.

Microinsults "convey stereotypes, rudeness, and insensitivity and that demean a person's race, gender, or sexual orientation, heritage, or identity. They represent subtle snubs and are frequently outside the conscious awareness of the perpetrators" (Sue, 2010, p. 31). These offenses include assuming an inferior intelligence or criminal status and treated as a second class citizen, all of which have also been reported to occur on campus and against Latinx students (Cerezo et al., 2012; Huynh, 2012; Hwang & Goto, 2008; Nadal et al., 2014; Torres-Harding, Andrade, Diaz, 2012; Yosso et al., 2009). Lastly, *microinvalidations* are often perpetrated at an unconscious level and "exclude, negate or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings or

experiential reality of certain groups...” (Sue, 2010, p. 37). The so-called color-blind society we live in today is a breeding ground for these microinvalidations. It has also been used to perpetuate the idea of reverse racism when institutional efforts are made to address racial disparities (Zirkel & Pollack). Through color-blindness, non-people of Color have the ability to call these institutional efforts “unfair” and/or “anti-white” (Zirkel & Pollack), thus ultimately excusing the perpetrators from being perceived as racist or possessing stereotypical thoughts, by minimizing the feelings and expressions of microaggressed people of Color report experiencing. Latinx students have also reported to be perceived as “complaining too much” (Nadal et al., 2014, p. 462), which negates their experiences as valid. At times, even the simplest reactions from White peers have the potential to invalidate the experiences of Latinx students, such as by “eye-rolling” when a Latina student shares her frustration from the lack of representation on her campus (Nadal et al., 2014, p. 462). All three categories of microaggressions are capable of being overt or contain hidden messages, but each possess the ability to cause serious damage among Latinx students.

Macroaggressions GAS-Model and the Concept of Stress

For centuries, the existence of stress has been acknowledged by researchers, but defining this concept is the subject of much debate. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 21), “stress emphasizes the relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being.” Stress is composed of variables and is understood through a stimulus-response definition (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Major changes, often changes out of one’s control that affect many or few individuals and daily hassles, are seen as stress stimuli (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Regardless of the number of people affected from these changes, such as though a natural

disaster or marital divorce, these stimuli have the ability to invoke a state of stress and the power to disturb any individual. Although daily hassles are not as dramatic as the first two stimuli, they should not be assumed to cause “less” stress. Instead, they must be closely examined due to the frequency in which they appear on a daily basis (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Racial microaggressions mirror daily stressors in their ability to appear often and subtly on college campuses, affect Latinx college students, possibly causing symptoms of anxiety and depression. The stress-response relationship treats stress as “a disturbance from homeostasis, produced by an environmental change” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 15) and racial microaggressions have the ability to induce a stress response that can eventually lead in a physiologic or psychologic disturbance among Latinx college students.

All humans experience stress, but experiencing stress from microaggressions can disproportionately damage Latinx college students’ mental health in comparison to their White peers. In order to understand the effects of stress from microaggressions, Derald Wing Sue used the General Adaption Syndrome (GAS) by Selye (1956, 1982), often used to describe more of a physical response to stress, in order to mirror the effects of racial microaggressions. The first stage is the *alarm stage*, which represents the body’s ability to alert you when an invader is present. Sue compares this stage to the way microaggressions are largely analyzed, repeatedly by the victim, in order to decipher the perpetrator’s intentions. Unlike overt forms of racial discrimination, such as the Jim Crow laws which clearly identified racial stratification and bias, racial microaggressions force people of Color to question the intentions of the perpetrator, often leaving them confused and disoriented. *Adaption or resistance stage* follows. In a physiological sense, this is the stage where the victims begin to experience initial symptoms of sickness, such as a sore throat, high fevers, or headaches. In regards to microaggressions, this is when people of

Color experience symptoms of anxiety and depression. Just as it is important to receive medical treatment when experiencing physical symptoms, it is crucial for people of Color to analyze the sources of their anxiety and depression. Research has shown that race-related stressors are often not in most therapists' minds even today. This could be due to lack of representation of people of Color in this field (Lin, Nigrins, Christidis, & Karen, 2015), often times ignoring this as a major component to the decrease of mental health among a person of Color. If adequate treatment is not conducted and this stage persists, then the individual enters a *stage of exhaustion* where mental health disorders or chronic mental health illness are most likely to arise (Sue, 2010).

Race-Related Stress and Its Effects on Mental Health

In 1974, Hinkle pointed out that a single organism is not necessarily the only culprit to illness, but rather a multitude of variables, such as stress, from the environment has the ability to cause illness (Hinkle, 1974). The “one-germ, one disease, one treatment model” (Olser, 2013) is outdated and excludes the possibility of social factors and interactions contributing to the decline to human health. Stress is now understood to contribute to illness, specifically to the decline of mental well-being (Osler, 2013). When individuals reach high levels of stress from racial discrimination, they can respond in a physiological way, such as “increased rates of hypertension, poor self-rated health and even low-birth weight among the children of those discriminated against” (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002, p. 624), but psychological effects are not excluded. Experiencing racial discrimination has the ability to invoke stress and therefore cause a profound change among those who were targets. Just as the GAS-Model, presented by Sue (2010) mirrors the physiological effects of racial microaggressions, we should begin to understand racial microaggressions as social and environmental stimuli of stress that have the ability to affect the mental health of Latinx college students at CU Boulder.

Race-related stress refers to, “significant life experiences with racism that often involve overt discrimination” (Franklin et al., 2006, p. 15). Shelly P. Harrell identified at least six different types of race-related stress: racism-related life events, vicarious racism experiences, daily racism microstressors, chronic-contextual stress, collective experiences, and transgenerational transmission (Harrell, 2000). Each type of race-related stress can occur from an interaction with the environment and society, through an individual, an institution or anything in between. Racial microaggressions are most similar to daily racism microstressors because “they are a central part of understanding the dynamics of racism in contemporary America” (Harrell, 2000, p. 45). Like racial microaggressions, daily racism microstressors work every day to exclude and/or demean the presence of People of Color. They can appear unintentional, but can cause an emotional distress among oppressed groups. Harrell emphasizes the similarities between racial microaggressions and daily racism microstressors, suggesting that racial microaggressions be classified as race-related stressors that can negatively contribute to the change in mental well-being on people of Color

Mental illness is now ranked third in the burden of diseases and has been identified as having a profound presence among people aged 18 to 54 years old (Osler, 2013). Although research has shown that people of Color report less mental health disorders compared to their White peers, that does not mean that people of Color do not experience more serious mental health symptoms, such as anxiety and depression (Cokley et al., 2011). On the contrary, several studies have examined the relationship between racial discrimination and psychological stress and discovered higher rates for poor mental health or high rates of depression and anxiety among People of Color compared to Whites. (Cokely, et al., 2011; Lambert et al., 2009; Landrine et al., 2006; Hwang and Goto, 2008; Nadal, 2011; Smith, 2007). Among these same studies, several

have stated African Americans experiencing more perceived racial discrimination when compared most ethnic groups, such as Latinx and Asian Americans (Cokely et al., 2011; Lambert et al., 2009; Smith, 2007). Although a great amount of research supports this claim this does not erase the fact that Latinx are still experiencing more racial discrimination compared to Whites and also present a high self-rate of poor mental health status when compared to Whites (Cokely et al., 2011).

A common occurrence of racial discrimination on college campuses is a cause for concern, especially when scholarly work continues to prove an increase of poor mental health among students of Color associated with racial discrimination. Microaggressions fulfill the criteria to be classified as a stimulus for emotional distress and as a race-related stress response, which can later create symptoms of anxiety and depression. It is impossible to prohibit the occurrence of *all* racial discrimination on predominantly White institutions, but if administrators in higher education manage to create effective retention efforts and programs that create a less hostile environment, this could likely be a powerful in intervening during the *resistance stage* of the GAS-Model of stress and prevent poor mental health from escalating any further.

Racial/Ethnic Barriers in the Mental Health System

Outside of college campuses, another contributor to Latinx experiences of poor mental health could be related to poor medical treatment (see Carter, 2007; Matthew, 2015). Once these students have identified that they are experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression and decide to seek help, mental health services must be adequately prepared to provide for students of Color and understand this dynamic and impact of racism, including racial microaggressions. If we are determined to improve the mental health of Latinx college students, we must also ensure that the campus counselors and therapists are adequately trained and expected to identify the

symptoms of anxiety and depression, specifically related to racial discrimination. In turn, these must be translated into developing effective treatment plans. Kouyoumdjian and colleagues documented Latinx use of mental health services and have discovered that Latinx generally underutilize these services (Kouyoumdjian et al., 2003), due to socioeconomic factors and cultural barriers, such as language. (Kouyoumdjian et al., 2003). One could argue that because of this it is difficult to gain a clear depiction of mental illness within the Latinx population and understand whether the mental health field effectively addresses the emotional and physical effects of Latinx personal experiences with racial discrimination. Although Latinx continue to underutilize mental health services a research stated that People of Color as a whole are receiving inadequate treatment for mental health illness, more likely than Whites to delay or fail to see mental health treatment and have less access to mental health services, in comparison to Whites (McGuire & Miranda, 2008).

According to Carter (2007, p. 14), the U.S. department of Human Health Services conducted a study in 2001 on *Mental Health: Culture, Race and Ethnicity*, and reported People of Color “having less access and less likely to receive needed care, and the care they ultimately receive is often poor quality.” Clinicians’ lack of awareness of their clients’ political and social realities with interpersonal and institutional racism can significantly contribute to the clients’ poor mental health services and treatment (Carter, 2007). Within the mental health work force, People of Color make up about 16% of the active psychology work force in 2013, and Latinx only constitute 5% of that same percentage (Lin, Nigrins, Christidis, & Karen, 2015, p. 8). Although studies that have investigated whether people of Color prefer a therapist of a similar background, to date the findings are still inconclusive (Prieto, McNeill, Walls, & Gómez, 2001). One could still argue that a therapist’s lack of understanding of the direct effects of racism

(Carter, 2007); and the absence of people of Color as therapists and psychologists, make it simple for therapists to miss race-related stress as a contributor to mental health. This can be due to clinicians' inability to personally relate with race-related stress or identify its effects. Overall, the mental health profession has acknowledged the effects of racial discrimination, but have not been able to update the way they assess their clients' symptoms and mental health status. People of Color are more susceptible of manifesting mental health problems somatically, which at times is not included among assessments (Cokley et al., 2011). Symptom checklists and assessments were not developed with the help of people of Color and other oppressed groups, which can increase the level of underreporting people of Color's mental health symptoms (Cokely et al., 2011).

Conclusion

To conclude, racism has been a strong foundation in the United States and continues to be expressed in many insidious ways both institutionally and individually in higher education. Historically, universities have been created for non-people of color and although these institutions and their administrators may not perpetuate overt policies of racial discrimination and segregation, predominantly white institutions still cater to non-people of color and implement race neutral policies that can perpetuate covert forms of discrimination (see Bernal, 2002). It is naïve to assume that racial microaggressions on campus impact all ethnicities/races of students identically, which can make it preferable to focus on one racial/ethnic group at a time instead of lumping all students of Color in one category (see Smith et al., 2007). Even though there has been more research conducted on the existence and effects of racial microaggressions on African American and Asian American college students, compared to Latinx students, the existing research on microaggressions and Latinx college students indicates the prevalence and

harm of these victimizations (Alamilla et al., 2010; Cokley et al., 2011; Huynh 2012; Hwang & Goto, 2009; Pease, 2013). To understand how mental health is affected by covert forms of racial discrimination, it is vital to examine microaggressions as daily stressors with the potential to mildly to very powerfully negatively impact college students of Color. The remaining chapters, Three, Four and Five, will discuss how my thesis research methods, findings, and implications for theory, policy, and future research regarding Latinx college students' experiences with and impacts from racial microaggressions, and how this is related to their parents' college attainment/generation.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

Introduction

Chapters I and II highlight the recent literature review examining the relationships between race and racial discriminations and its effects on the mental health of Latinx college students. In addition to reviewing the relevant research, Critical Race Theory was explained as guiding this thesis study. I built the methods for my thesis research on Liu and Suyemoto's (2016) study on the effects of race-related stress on Asian American college students and how that can change across their parents' college "generational status." After carefully reviewing their methods, I worked to determine whether this study could be replicated with a focus on Latinx college students. Moreover, after an exhaustive literature review, I found few studies on Latinx college students' experiences with racial microaggressions, how these experiences were related to mental health, and whether these variables were additionally related to their parents' college attainment (Yosso et al., 2009; Lambert et al., 2012, Liang, Li & Kim, 2004; Liu & Suyemoto, 2016). Latinx now represent a high population of the United States, yet are considered one of the most poorly educated groups among people of Color (Fry, 2002). CU Boulder has continued to strive for diversity and in providing a safe campus climate, but after its most recent 2014 campus climate survey, it is quite clear that CU Boulder still fails to incorporate a space where Latinx students feel a sense of value (Undergraduate Student Social Climate Survey, 2014).

Studies consistently document that racism and its many tactics of discrimination continue to thrive in U.S. society today, which includes the experiences of college students of Color on predominantly white campuses. Overt forms of racial discrimination are believed to be largely socially unacceptable, providing the false impression that racial discrimination has been

completely eradicated and we currently live in a state of post-racism. The previous chapters provided an abundance of research findings that racial microaggressions are present and exist across U.S. institutions, including colleges and universities. This chapter describes the methods of data collection, the survey measurements, the analytical strategy, and limitations of the current study.

Impetus for the Current Study and Data Collection

When first pursuing my honors degree, I conducted numerous searches on potential research projects, with microaggressions against Latinx college students being my primary interest. As I used research engines (primarily the ISI Web of Science and Google Scholar), I found that some research had been conducted on racial microaggressions (and other types of racism) on college students, but this research was primarily conducted on African American (Lambert et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2011b; Smith, Hung & Franklin, 2012; Smith et al., 2016) and Asian American (Liang, Li, & Kim, 2004; Liu & Suyemoto, 2016; Hwang & Goto, 2008), with very limited data on Latinx college students. My careful reading of these extant studies on racial microaggressions against college students indicated that the ideal method would be a survey of Latinx college students that employed the Racial Microaggression Scale (RMAS) and Brief Symptom Inventory Scale (BSI) with some basic demographic information, including the participants' parents' college attainment to measure "generation." More specifically, my research is very much a replication of Liu & Suyemoto's (2016) study of racial microaggressions experienced by Asian American college students and how this was related to their anxiety and depression levels, *and* how it was related to their parents' college attainment. Additionally, my research design was heavily influenced by Torres-Harding and her colleagues' (2012) study, explained in more depth below.

The majority of the data collection and recruitment strategy for this study, on the other hand, was modeled from a previous research study design where in the summer and fall of 2015, with two other undergraduate students, I had the opportunity to work for Dr. Enrique Lopez, a professor in the College of Education at CU-Boulder. Through Dr. Lopez's mentorship, I was exposed to Qualtrics, a survey instrument software to use in on-line research. Dr. Lopez worked with me to use this same survey software tool distribute my questionnaire to undergraduate CU-Boulder Latinx students and collect the data. Following Dr. Lopez's design, I performed a similar recruitment method, by contacting various resource centers and student groups on the CU-B campus, asking them for assistance in distributing my survey link to their email list serves. Fortunately, Dr. Enrique Lopez also provided me with an additional 1,009 emails of undergraduate Latinx students in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) at CU-Boulder; this massive list of emails was generated through the department of CU Research on the CU-B campus.

Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP)

It is important to note that prior to the start of my data collection I had applied to the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP), a program on the CU-Boulder campus designed to assist undergraduate students in conducting research, analyze findings and ultimately create a successful project. Through UROP, I was awarded \$1,200, for the entire year, in order to complete this current study. With this funding I was able to conduct a raffle, where a winner would receive \$250. This raffle drawing was mentioned in the email invitation and the consent form. If students wanted to participate in the raffle drawing they had to have completed all three sections of the on-line survey (33 RMAS Items, BSI Measurements and demographic sections) and input their student email towards to end of the survey. After exporting the raw data set onto

SPSS, SPSS generated a random email from the total 200 student participants. This person was later contacted on March 3rd, 2017 and was given a cashier's check of \$250 on March 9th, 2017.

Qualtrics

Qualtrics was the software used to implement the final survey format and to generate an anonymous link to every student who would take this survey. Not only did I have experience with the Qualtrics system, but it is a well-respected method to conduct on-line surveys. Through Qualtrics, I was able to upload the full Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved consent form and survey measurements. The three areas of my survey were basic demographic questions, the Racial Microaggression Scale (RMAS) and the Brief Symptom Inventory Scale (BSI). I first posted the online survey and sent emails on January 27, 2017 and closed the survey on February 20, 2017. Potential participants had about 1 week or 2 weeks, from their last activity, to complete the survey. Once their time frame was over, the link would automatically expire and their responses, finished or unfinished, would roll into the total number of finished responses. To analyze the data, I electronically transferred the Qualtrics data to SPSS software. Qualtrics also gave me the option to force a response among specific questions in my survey. I made sure to use this option throughout the Racial Microaggression Scale (RMAS) 33-items, the Brief Symptom Inventory Scale (BSI), race/ethnicity question and parental generation question. It is important to note that not every student answered a follow-up question relating to RMAS stress response. If a participant reported "Never" for any of the 33-RMAS items than the participant would automatically skip the stress follow-up question. This same technique was used by Torres-Harding et al. (2012⁶).

⁶ The RMAS and BSI scales are described in more detail later in this chapter.

Recruitment

As previously stated, with the help of Dr. Lopez, student resource centers on campus, and two student organizations, I was able to reach well over 2,000 CU-B students. Aside from this list serve, I reached out to several resource centers on campus by email and personally contacting some of my mentors and known directors within each program. Many were able to distribute my survey through their own email list serve and among other programs and centers, outside or within their departments or organizations. For example, the Cultural Unity and Engagement Center managed to send my survey and email invitation to the Women's Resource Center, who also distributed the survey link. The Cultural Unity and Engagement Center is also composed of smaller programs. In total, then, there were three major resource centers that I contacted and two additional student groups. The student groups were Pi Lambda Chi Latina Sorority Incorporated along with UMAS y MEXA at CU-B⁷ and the three resource centers were⁸ The Cultural Unity and Engagement Center (CUE), The Student Academic Success Center (SASC), and Miramontes Arts and Sciences Program (MASP).

CU-B students are not restricted from utilizing more than one resource center, student program, and/or student organization. It is possible that some students may have received a survey invitation more than once, but after exporting the raw data set onto SPSS we were able to conduct a frequency of emails to ensure that no one took the survey more than once. No one did.

⁷ I distribute the survey to 17 ladies from Pi Lambda Chi Latina Sorority Inc., on January 27th, 2017. UMAS Y MEXA distributed my survey to 227 people on February 8th and February 15th.

⁸ Due to student privacy protection, I was unable to directly email undergraduates through the centers group list serves. For each center I had a personal contact who managed to reach a number of students through the center email lists and newsletters. The CUE, distributed on February 2nd, 2017 to around 169 "Be First" students and 775 "First Generation Students". The SASC program, distributed on February 9th, 2017 to approximately 600 currently enrolled SASC students. The MASP program on January 30th, 2017 to 140 currently enrolled MASP students.

(It is possible that one or more students made up some names, birthdates, and emails, in order to take the survey more than once, but this seems very unlikely.) There was also an additional option under Qualtrics “Survey Option” which restricted participants through the data collection system from submitting a survey response more than once (“Prevent Ballot Box Stuffing” option).

Every student who participated in this study, then, first received a copy of my email invitation (either directly from me and/or from another campus entity), which explained the purpose of the current study and provided a link to the Qualtrics survey. Given the possibility that a student who was not Latinx could have received an email for participation, students who reported any Latinx identity, including being bi- or multi-racial/ethnic, as long as one of these was Latinx, were included in my final sample.

The Sample

Two-hundred-twenty-two participants completed the online survey. Of these, 8.1% (n = 18) completed only a few of the items, so were removed from the sample. Of the 222, an additional 1.8% (n = 4) of the participants identified as something other than Latinx (i.e., 1 identified as “White,” 1 as “Caucasian,” 1 as “Asian/Pacific Islander,” and 1 as “Asian”). These participants were also removed from the final sample as the study was on Latinx students and microaggressions. There were an additional 8 participants who completed all or quite a bit of the racial microaggression scale, but did not complete the BSI. These participants are included in the analyses, where possible, to have as complete information on microaggressions as possible.

Notably, when I conducted t-tests comparing the mean racial microaggressions of those who completed the survey and those who did not, there was a strong pattern, and in a few cases this pattern was statistically significant. More specifically, the respondents who did not complete

the Brief Symptom Inventory Scale (BSI, the stress and anxiety measure) part of the survey, reported more frequently experiencing microaggressions and a greater impact from experiencing microaggressions. That any of these differences reached statistical significance is remarkable given that at most the cell size of the incomplete survey participants was an n of 8. For example, on the Likert scale of 1 to 4 indicating a more harmful impact, the participants who did not complete the survey ($\mu = 3.50$) reported a higher level than the students who completed the survey ($\mu = 2.60$) from “Other people hold sexual stereotypes about me because of my racial background” ($t = 2.266, p = .025$). It is beyond the scope of my honors thesis to present every possible analysis of my data, however it is worth noting a gender difference as well: When t-tests were conducted on the individual RMAS items by gender, where there were significant gender differences in the means, women always reported more frequency of a microaggression item or being more upset by a microaggression, and this was particularly acute for questions that were about sexuality.

Measurement Instruments

Demographic Data

Table 1 includes the data collection demographics: gender, age, ethnicity, class standing (year in college), and parents' college attainment. The items measuring gender, age and ethnicity were left open-ended (qualitative) for the participant to fill in freely (no options were provided). Using SPSS, I categorized the participants based on how they chose to identify themselves. All participants wrote either Female or Male and/or some similar version to this, such as “F” and “M.” From examining these responses I decided it was reasonable to create only two categories for gender. A similar process was used for the ethnic identities the students typed into the Qualtrics survey (again, this was open-ended, allowing the participants to describe their

ethnicity). First, I combined all students who identified as either Latina/o/x or a combination of Latina/o/x identities (e.g., Latina, Latino, “Mexican-American” or “Mexican and Guatemalan” or “Chicana”) as Latinx. (I decided not to make a separate category for self-identified “Chicana” or “Chicano” students because the small number of students reporting this identity, 8, made such statistical analysis impossible.) Second, I created a category of participants who typed in bi- or multi-racial identities (e.g., “Latina/White”). Thus, ethnicity was grouped into the two categories Latinx and Bi- or Multi-Racial.

Questions that addressed the demographics of “Class Standing” and “College generation/Parents’ Education” were closed-ended responses. It is important to note that although my study is in large part a replication of Liu and Suyemoto’s (2016) study, they used an entirely different definition of generation/parents’ college attainment status than what I developed. More specifically, for Liu and Suyemoto (2016), “generation status was constructed via two questions; one that asked whether participants were born in the United states and a follow-up question of age of immigration/ arrival of those born outside the United States” (Liu & Suyemoto, 2016, p. 139). My definition of generation/parental college attainment status is more nuanced, with a broader range of categories for parental level of education. As noted previously in this thesis, this is consistent with previous scholars who suggest students can be along a “generation” or “parents’ college education” spectrum including “first generation,” “partial legacy,” and “legacy” college students (see Nunez & Alamin, 1998 and Pease, 2013).

Racial Microaggressions Scale (RMAS)

Originally, I planned to use the General Ethnic Discrimination Scale (GEDS), an 18-item scale that measures overall discrimination experiences and appraised stress that is associated with discrimination (Landrine et al., 2006). This scale has been one of the only measurements

used for a multitude of ethnic and racial backgrounds, and assesses discrimination as a form of stress. After carefully examining these discrimination items with Dr. Enrique Lopez, however, I realized that I would have to alter several questions in order to fit the demographics of college students at CU-B, which threatened to invalidate the survey. Another issue I discovered was the lack of questions addressing racial microaggressions. Moreover, after reading several more studies on racism against college students, I discovered that racial microaggressions are much more common on college campuses, in comparison to overt forms of discrimination.

Given that the GEDS included very little to address racial microaggressions, and after learning about the RMAS, I realized this was a far better measurement instrument for my thesis than the GEDS. I soon then decided to change this portion of my survey to the RMAS. The RMAS is a 32-item scale that assess the occurrence of racial microaggressions among people of Color and the distress associated with the incident (Torres-Harding et al., 2012; Yosso, Smith, Ceja & Solorzano, 2009). RMAS, developed by Torres-Harding and colleagues (Torres-Harding et al., 2012), categorizes microaggressions according to themes discussed in literature, specifically by Derald Wing Sue. This racial microaggression scale is preferable to an ethnic/racial discrimination scale, such as the GEDS, due to the subtlety of much of racial discrimination on campuses, reminding us that, “one must not look for the gross and obvious. The subtle, cumulative miniassault is the substance of today’s racism” (Pierce 1974, as cited by Yosso, Smith, Ceja & Solorzano, 2009, p. 663). Furthermore, the validity of the RMAS scale was tested on college students. Therefore, the context of the questions was far more applicable to the students at CU-B. I was also able to keep the majority of the original survey question, with the exception of question “46” (Torres-Harding et al., 2012, p. 159). Question 46 stated, “I noticed that there are few people of my racial background on the TV, books and magazines”

(Torres-Harding et al., 2012, p. 159). I opted to divide this question into two separate questions (see questions 46A and 46B in Table 2) in order to address the lack of representation of people of Color in classrooms, textbooks, and lectures at CU-Boulder.

Brief Symptom Inventory Scale (BSI)

The second scale used in the survey is the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI), a well-known 18-item scale used to measure anxiety, depression and psychopathological symptoms. To my current knowledge, there has not been a study that has combined both the Racial Microaggressions Scale (RMAS) and the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) in order to document racial discrimination and how racial stress affects Latinx mental health. Both of the scales were used and found among separate research studies (Torres-Harding et al., 2012 for the RMAS and Liu & Suyemoto, 2016 for the BSI), but combined for the first time in my thesis study on racism and its impact among Latinx college students and how this is related to generation/parents college attainment.

Data Analysis

Tables 1 and 2 were constructed using frequency analysis of nominal, ordinal and ratio level data. Central tendencies were found for each of the demographics in Table 1 and for Table 2 RMAS items, along with their stress responses and correlations between both. Consistent with previous research on college students' experiences with varying types of racism (e.g., Liu & Suyemoto, 2016), and specifically Torres-Harding and her colleagues' (2012) study using the RMAS on college students of Color, Factor Analysis was used to group the types of racist victimization, specifically microaggressions in my thesis (and Torres-Harding et al., 2012). That is, I conducted factor analysis to correlate each of the 33-RMAS items to the six factors (Table 3)

found in Torres-Harding et al. (2012). All of the responses aligned with a factor/theme from the original study, including the two I altered in the end of the survey (about the visibility of other Latinx in classrooms, textbooks, and lectures). The following chapter on the findings not only identifies the factor groupings and means, but analysis was used to compare the correlations among the factor groupings, means, and BSI categories. Finally, the analysis in the next chapter compares these correlations across parents' college attainment/generation.

Limitations

My thesis is the first study to combine the RMAS and BSI measures, and one of the few extant studies focusing on Latinx college students' experiences with racism. However, like any study, this one is not without limitations. Although I successfully collected self-report data on Latinx college students' racial microaggressions, stress and anxiety, and a variety of demographic measures including parents' college attainment, I wish I had also found other ways to measure ethnicity, perhaps including how visibly "Latina/o" my participants believed they were. For example, in the part of the Qualtrics survey where respondents could type in their ethnicity, some stressed that siblings with who were darker skin tones encountered far more racism than the "paler" respondents. Second, even though I clearly stated the specified demographics in the consent form and in the beginning of the online survey and made sure to remove the students who did not include a Latina/o/x identity or combination of Latina/o/x identities, there is still a chance that participants could have lied about their racial/ethnic background in order to be considered for the raffle.

Third, although I carefully created the ethnicity categories, consciously aware of the significance in classifying participants as either Latina/o/x or Bi- or Multi-Racial, I encountered the ongoing struggle of race/ethnicity scholars that there is not one way to classify ethnicities,

but rather they depend on a multitude of perspectives. Similarly, I struggled with classifying students who listed a Latina/o/x identity along with “White.” It was not abundantly apparent whether at least some of them saw themselves as “white” Latina/o/x, or that they actually identified as bi-racial white *and* Latina/o/x. Ultimately, I decided to classify these participants as “bi- or multi-racial,” but this may not be optimal.

Similarly and finally, identities such as Latina/o/x, Chicana/o/x, Hispanic, and so on, are all complex and can have a different meaning across individuals. After conducting this study, I realized that I may have limited the number of participants by solely stating “Latina/os” and not specifying what this category entailed. For example, throughout the data collection period some students who had been notified of the study, emailed me about identifying as “Hispanic.” These students believed that they did not qualify for the study because they identified as Hispanic not “Latina/o”. If I had clearly stated that “Latina/o” was being used as more of an umbrella term, including Latinx, I may have been able to recruit a larger number of students for the study. In the same vein, some bi- and multi-racial potential students with a Latinx identity as at least one of their two or more racial/ethnic identities, may have decided not to take part in my study believing it was for “only” students who identified entirely as Latinx.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Introduction

The goal of this study was to examine the presence of racial discrimination experienced by Latinx students, their mental health, the relationship between their reported experiences of racial discrimination and mental health, and whether these variables and the relationships between them vary across generation/parents' college attainment. Latinx college students continue to be racially discriminated against on college campuses, yet few studies focus on their mental health outcomes from these daily stressors, compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Most of this extant research is on college students who are Black men or Asian Americans. The previous chapter explained the methods I used to examine this thesis question, in large part replicating Liu and Suyemoto's (2016) study on the racism-related stress among Asian American students using the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) to measure anxiety and depression and analyzing how this varies across parents' educational attainment. My study differs from Lieu and Suyemoto (2016) in that I used the Racial Microaggression Scale (RMAS) to measure race, consistent with Torres-Harding and her colleagues (2012), and my sample was Latinx college students. This current chapter describes the findings from my online survey.

Sample Demographics

Table 1 describes my sample, which was almost two-thirds (63.0%) women, ranging in age from 18 to 26 years old, with an average age of 20.8 years old. Approximately half ($n = 93$, 51.4%) of my sample were sophomores or juniors. Regarding the four categories for college generation/parents' education, the most predominant was that for 44.7% of the students, neither parent had attended any college, the lowest level of parental education. However, the next most

common category was the highest level, 36.3% of the sample had at least one parent who had attended college and received a bachelor's degree or higher (e.g., a master's, Ph.D., or law degree). About four-fifths (79.2%) identified with an ethnicity of Latinx, and the remaining students (20.8%) identified with what I classified as bi- or multi-racial, where at least one of their racial/ethnic identities was Latinx. Slightly over a tenth (10.5%) of the sample had at least 1 parent who had attended some college but had not received any college degrees, including an associate's degree, and 8.4% of the sample had at least one parent who had received an associate's degree (see Table 1).

Findings on RMAS Items and Stress Response Relationship

Table 2 provides the mean likelihood of experiencing each of the 33 RMAS items (ranging from 1 = Never to 4 = Often/frequently), and for those who responded experiencing each item, the mean of how stressful that racial microaggression was (ranging from 1 = Not at All to 4 = A High Level). In addition to reporting these means, Table 2 also reports on the correlation between the level of experiencing the item and the level of stress.

Regarding the mean values for experiencing each RMAS item, (Table 2) the items measuring Environmental Invalidation (items 42 through 46) had the highest reported incident average. Indeed, these were the only questions where the mean reached (or was above) 3.00, except for Item 23 from the Low-Achieving/Undesirable factor: "Other people act as if all of the people of my race are alike." Additionally, the Low-Achieving factor (items 22 to 33) is the next most frequently experienced set of microaggressions. The items measuring the Sexualization factor (items 19 through 21) were the next most frequently occurring factor of racial microaggressions. The lowest average factor of microaggressions that students reported

measured Criminality (items 14 through 18), but this is not to deny the prevalence of this microaggression as well.

The correlations between each of RMAS-Items and their Stress Response were all statistically significant (all at the $p \leq .01$ level, except for item 2 which was at the $p \leq .05$ level). This is expected: The rate of experiencing a racial microaggression is positively and significantly related to how stressful that microaggression is to a student. Table 2 indicates that while not every student experiences all RMAS Items, all RMAS Items are occurring to some degree on campus and are significantly related to stress for a majority of the Latinx students at CU-B.

Factor Analysis Findings from the RMAS Items

The factor analysis findings reported in Table 3 indicate that each of the 33 RMAS items “factored” almost identically with Torres-Harding et al.’s (2012) study using the RMAS with Latinx, African American, and Asian American college students. More specifically, the 6 factors were Invisibility (INV, items 39, 40, 41, 47, 49 and 52); Criminality (CRIM, items 14, 15, 16, and 18); Low-Achieving/Undesirable Culture (LOW, items 22, 23, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, and 37); Sexualization (SEXU, items 19, 20 and 21); Foreigner/Not Belonging (FOR, items 1, 2, and 4); and Environmental Invalidations (ENV, items 42 through 46B). Although, 32 out of the 33 RMAS-Items aligned perfectly with the way the original study had paired each item, question “33” (Table 3) was more closely correlated with the Low-Achieving/Undesirable Culture factor, than the Invisibility factor.

Table 4 summarizes the correlations among the six factors. Notably, all six factors were positively and significantly correlated with each other and all at the $p \leq .01$ level. The correlations ranged from $r = .32$ to $r = .73$. The most highly correlated factors were CRIM x

INV, LOW x INV, LOW x FOR, INV x FOR, and CRIM x LOW (r was over .60). The next most highly correlated factors were SEX x LOW, FOR x CRIM, FOR x SEXU, ENV x LOW, ENV x INV, SESU x INV, and SEXU x CRIM (with r ranging from .50 to .59). The least correlated factors were ENV x FOR, ENV x CRIM, and SEXU x ENV (with r ranging from .30 to .49).⁹

BSI Measurements and RMAS Items

The findings between each of the 6 individual RMAS factors and the RMAS factors summed (Total RMAS) and each of the 3 BSI measures and the BSI measures summed (Total BSI) among the entire sample of students were all positively correlated and significantly correlated. These findings are present in the first column of Table 6.¹⁰ The most strongly correlated, which were also all significant (r was greater than .60 and $p \leq .01$) were DEP x INV (r = .65), DEP x LOW (r = .63) DEP x Total RMAS Factor (r = .63), INV X Total BSI (r = .63), and Total BSI x Total Factor (r = .62). When comparing this to the BSI total measurement (the Somatization, Anxiety and Depression numbers summed) the data concluded a .62 Pearson correlation, with a significance level of $p < .01$ between and among the entire survey sample. This then indicates a relationship between experiencing racial microaggressions and increased somatization, anxiety and depression.

In comparing the RMAS total to each specific BSI factor I found that depression has the highest correlation with RMAS factors, with a correlation number of .63 and a significance of p

⁹ The shorthand for the six factors is Invisibility (INV); Criminality (CRIM); Low-Achieving/Undesirable Culture (LOW); Sexualization (SEXU); Foreigner/Not Belonging (FOR); and Environmental Invalidations (ENV).

¹⁰ The shorthand for the BSI categories is Somatization (SOM); Depression (DEP); and Anxiety (ANX).

< .01, followed by anxiety with a correlation of .58 and a significance of $p < .01$, and finally somatization with a correlation of .47 and a significance of $p < .01$. Furthermore, each RMAS factor was individually correlated with the total BSI factor. Table 6 shows how each RMAS factor was statistically significantly to the BSI measurement, $p < .01$. From these correlations, Invisibility with a correlation number of .62 and Low-Achieving/Undesirable Culture with .61 are the two factors that suggested a strong relationship to a negative mental health outcome. Foreigner, Criminality and Sexualization and Environmental are the factors that fall right after, respectively.

In sum, both DEP and ANX were significantly correlated with the whole sample in Table 6. Relative to the correlations between ANX and the individual factors, the correlations between DEP and the individual factors tended to be stronger, except for SEX where ANX (.47) seemed to have a higher correlation than DEP (.41). Total BSI was significantly correlated with all 6 individual RMAS factors and Total Factor. Stated alternatively, the 6 individual RMAS factors correlated with each individual BSI measure (SOM, DEP, and ANX), indicating the particular association of these factors with Latinx students' poorer mental well-being.

Mental Health (BSI) and RMAS Factors across Students' Generation/Parents' College Attainment

After examining the relationship between RMAS factors and mental health, among the entire sample of students, I analyzed how this compares between the generational categories that each of the 190 students reported. These findings are presented in Table 6. RMAS total factors and BSI total measurement correlations were significant across each generation status which means that regardless of whether a student's parent attended college or received a degree, Latinx students as a whole are affected by these factors of racial microaggressions. Importantly, my

findings indicate that the racial microaggression factors are most strongly correlated with the BSI measurement among Latinx students with at least one parent who received an associate's degree (but not higher degree) $r = .90, p \leq .01$, for RMAS Total x BSI Total, followed by: students whose parent received a four year degree or higher. ($r = .70, p \leq .01$, for RMAS Total x BSI Total). Students whose parents did not receive any college education had the third highest correlation between RMAS factors and BSI measures ($r = .55, p \leq .01$, for RMAS Total x BSI Total). Finally, students whose parent had some college education, but no degrees, had the fewest significant relationships and lowest correlations between the RMAS factors and BSI measures ($r = .48, p \leq .01$, for RMAS Total x BSI Total).

Ironically, the generation that received the highest Pearson Correlation between total RMAS factors and total BSI measurements did not have every RMAS factor express significance when correlated with a BSI measurement. For example, in Table 6 students whose parents had received an associate's degree lacked significant values between all of the Environmental Invalidation factors when correlated with the BSI measurements. Although the students I defined in this study as first generation did not receive the highest correlation value between RMAS and BSI measurement, this does not mean that they are not negatively affected by racial discrimination incidents and microaggressions on this campus; they still had a number of highly correlated and significant relationships between racial microaggression factors and poorer mental health. However, these findings suggest that there is another factor that may prevent this specific generation from developing anxiety or depression, or some resiliency that may be associated with this group.

RMAS Stress Factors and Mental Health (BSI)

Even though every student was not able to answer a follow-up RMAS stress question I was still able to generate a factor analysis to examine the relationship between RMAS Stress and mental health factors, which are reported in Table 5. The relationship between total RMAS Stress response and total BSI measurements were not statistically significant. Those that reported to be statistically significant had a p-value ranging between .05 and .01. Environmental Invalidations (.51, $p < .01$) along with Sexualization factors (.39, $p < .01$) seem to express the highest correlations to the Total BSI measurements. Over all, the total RMAS Stress factor did not have a statistically significant correlation to the BSI measurements, but I would still argue that because there was significant correlation between the 33 RMAS Items and the RMAS Stress Items and a significant correlation between the total RMAS factors to the total BSI measurements, Latinx students on campus are reporting these racist incidents as stressful, but an additional factor, aside from stress, may also affect their mental wellbeing.

Conclusion

Over all, my findings demonstrates a positive and significant correlation between all 33 RMAS Items and their Stress responses, proving the prevalence of these incidents and that racial microaggressions are a form of stress. Chapter IV also shows positive correlations between racial microaggressions and mental health, but demonstrates that they can vary across generations. Although my findings does not show a correlation between stress response and mental health this can still be used to understand how multiple variables aside from stress responses, are caused by racist incidents and can therefore negatively impact mental health. The general findings from Chapter IV provides useful data to better understand the prevalence of racial microaggressions, their relationship to mental health, and how this varies across generations. Chapter V will discuss

the possible reasons for these findings, how it aligns with the previous studies mentioned earlier and finally provide political implications and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Research has consistently proven how predominantly white campuses perpetuate racial discrimination upon students of color, either institutionally or individually (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Hurtado, 2002; Pierce, 1970) and how racial microaggressions, as a form of stress, causes a negative effect on mental health for Latinx students (Alamilla et al., 2010; Cokley et al., 2011; Huynh 2012; Hwang & Goto, 2009; Nadal, 2014; Pease, 2013). The amount of research surrounding the mental health effects of Latinx students from racial microaggressions is few in comparison to the studies that have been done on African Americans, and outside of this black and white dynamic, with Asian Americans students. Throughout Chapter IV, my data collection and analysis revolving around the relationship of racial microaggressions and stress correlated well with the research that seeks to understand racial microaggressions as a stress stimulus. The findings from Chapter IV also correlated with the relationship between racist incidents and negative mental health. This final chapter will discuss our findings from Chapter IV in relation to my overall thesis question and in relation to the previous studies mentioned in Chapter I and II. Although, my findings on the relationship between RMAS Stress factors and BSI measurements did not support my thesis argument related to this relationship, this may offer an insight on the complexities of stress and the multiple variables found between racist incidents and a negative mental health. Over all, this study provides an opportunity to document, yet again, the prevalence *and* damaging effects that racial microaggressions can have on Latinx students and how this changes throughout parental level of education. In addition, Chapter V will also provide future policy implications and suggestions for future research studies.

Findings

Using the data gathered from the racial microaggressions survey, along with the findings reported in Chapter IV, this thesis study documents that racial discrimination is stunningly prevalent with the expected association with poorer mental health on this predominantly White campus, specifically at CU-B. Although there have been few studies on Latinx students' experiences with racist incidents, the current study findings align with similar research studies done on college students of Color experiences with racial microaggressions, how it is related to their mental health, and the relationship between racial microaggressions and mental health across generations/parents' college attainment.

Racist Incidents Present on the CU-Boulder Campus.

There is no argument that covert forms of racial discrimination exist on predominantly white and historically white institutions of higher education. Even though predominantly white institution administrators may make the attempt to promote racial and ethnic diversity on their campuses, often touting the idea of “race-neutral policies” for all students, racial microaggressions are still occurring, both interpersonally and institutionally, which is supported throughout multiple studies (Ancis, Sedlacek & Mohr, 2000; Anderson, 2002; Bernal, 2002; Cerezo, Lyda & Beristianos, 2013; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 2002; McCormak, 1998; Minikel-Lacocque, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2015), and confirmed in the current study on Latinx college students.

Among my study participants, these Latinx college students reported over all lower averages among the items measuring Criminality, compared to the other five factors. The correlations between the Criminality factors and Stress response items were also lower compared

Pearson correlations, relative to the other 5 factors (see Table 2). As stated in Chapter IV, this particular finding does not necessarily align with the finding from Torres-Harding et al., (2012). In fact, after Torres-Harding and colleagues conducted a series of analysis of variance among the several racial/ethnic groups in their sample, they reported that African Americans and Latinx participants in particular having experienced Criminality factors, more so than Asian Americans (Torres-Harding et al., 2012, p. 160). Torres-Harding did also report that between African Americans and Latinx students, African Americans were much more likely than Latinx students to experience criminality (Torres-Harding et al., 2012, p. 160).

I speculate that the Criminality factor may not have been as significant because it was not being compared to other racial/ethnic groups leading to a smaller sample study. This could also relate to environment as well. Most students on college campuses may have interacted with the criminal legal system in a different fashion, such as the honor code or campus police. Liu and Suyemoto stated that Latinx students were more likely than Asian American students to be accused of cheating (Liu & Suyemoto, 2016), which I would argue relates to a Criminality factor. It is possible that the questions for this particular racist incident should have been altered to fit the college life of a Latinx student at CU-B.

Racial Microaggressions as a Form of Stress

As many previous studies report, racial microaggressions are a stimulus for stress, or at times, classify as a form of daily stressors (Lazarus & Folkman 1984; Hinkle, 1974; Sue 2010), which can further affect the mental well-being of students of Color. Table 2, correlations between RMAS Items and Stress shows a strong relationship between these two, which again further documents how truly stressful these racist situations can be, especially when experienced on a daily basis. From these findings we can conclude that although not every student

experienced every RMAS Item on the survey those who did encounter these incidents some were significantly stressed and/or upset about the situation indicating racial microaggressions as a stimulus for stress. Ironically, the total RMAS Stress responses were not significantly correlated with the total BSI mental health factors. Using Sue's (2010) concept of the accumulation of stress it is possible that in the current study, the total stress responses may have not been enough to induce a stress response related to a negative mental health outcome.

This does not mean that a stress factor is negligible in causing negative mental health. In fact, both ENV and SEXU had significant positive correlations (p -value $<.01$) with each individual BSI measurement and total BSI (see Table 5). The fewer significant correlations between individual RMAS Stress Factors and BSI measurements could also indicate that stress is not the only factor associated with racial microaggressions and their subsequent negative impact on college students' mental health. Appraised stress theory states that "people and groups differ in their sensitivity and vulnerability to certain types of events, as well as in their interpretations and reactions [...] one person responds with anger, another with depression, yet another with anxiety or guilt" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 22). If evidence shows that racial microaggressions is a stimulus for stress it could be that students differences in appraised stress, may have affected whether or not these students react with increased anxiety and depression. Stress responses from ENV and SEXU could have also been more "appraised" in comparison to the other RMAS factors, which explains why these two factors had positive and significant correlation values to total and individual BSI measures.

Furthermore, examining students' self-esteem levels could also indicate another link between racial microaggressions and mental health. According to Nadal et al., (2014, p. 463), self-esteem has been proven to be a buffer between the "impact of stress and the development of

disease”. Higher self-esteem has been related to a lower sense of hopelessness and suicide, “suggesting a protective nature of self-esteem [...] against negative psychological experiences” (Nadal et al., 2014, p. 463). It is possible that in this current study the majority of the students may have had higher self-esteem protecting them from negative mental health, which would explain the lack of correlation between Total RMAS Factor X Total BSI (see Table 5).

Racial microaggressions can still be understood as predictors of higher stress and poor mental wellbeing, but research must take into account variables such as, self-esteem and appraised stress, since there could be other links between racial microaggressions and how it affects anxiety and depression, but these two concepts are outside the scope of this research study.

Negative Effects on Mental Health

Table 6 includes the findings correlating the RMAS items, the BSI measures, and compares these correlations across generation/parents’ educational attainment. From the entire sample, we can conclude that there is a positive correlation between experiencing racial microaggressions and an increase in anxiety, depression and somatization. Although this is significant across the entire survey, it is important to note that when we compare these correlations across generations/parents’ college attainment, there are differences. Students whose parent attended college and received an associate’s degree reported the strongest correlation value between RMAS Items and BSI instruments. According to Pease (2013), students whose parent received some form of college education, but no college degree (whom she refers to as partial legacy students), were more likely to screen for minor depressions and anxiety, compared to students who classified as first generation and students whose parents received a bachelor’s degree. Also, when comparing first generation students to the other two generational categories

they were not more likely to screen positive for anxiety and depression. Although Pease (2013) did not distinguish among “partial legacy students” between parents who attended college and received no degree versus parents who receive an associate’s degree, but no bachelor’s degree, it is possible that his category of “partial legacy students” combined both, whereas in this current study I made a clear distinction between these groups. If this was the case, then this particular finding could align with what Pease (2013) discovered.

Pease (2013) stated that first generation students who attend college maybe the group of students who represent the “more academically and mentally resilient or ‘healthy’ proportion of first generation college students” (Pease, 2013, p. 85), which explains the low correlation value compared to other generational status in this current study. Peases’ conclusions and the findings from this study, related to generation status, can be explained by the “Latina/o Paradox” (Bowe, 2017; Salas-Wright & Kagotho & Vaughn, 2014; Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013). Although, my definition of first generation, along with Pease (2013), is not related to “immigrant status” (Salas-Wright et al., 2014), I would still argue that those whose parents never attended college (first generation students) can possess a protective factor, similar to those who are defined as first generation immigrants. Even though these students face an unbelievable amount of stress, related to them being the first in their family to go to college, there may possess a protective factor against mental illness, similar to the Latina/o Paradox. Another explanation for this finding could involve the data collection. A majority of the students gathered for this study were found among resource centers and student groups that attempt to provide a safe space and resources for marginalized students, including first-generation students. For example, the CUE center hosts a program called “the first-generation program” specifically designed to assist students who are the first in their families to go to college. Another example will be the Student Academic Success

Center (SASC). SASC includes the TRIO program which requires students to be either first-generation, possess a disability, or come from a low socioeconomic status. It could be that I missed first-generation students outside of these resource centers and student groups that offer support, who may express a stronger correlation between total RMAS factor and total BSI measurements.

It is also important to note that after conducting t-tests the eight students who did not complete the BSI measurements reported higher incidents of microaggressions and higher stress responses, when compared to the majority of the sample. The fact that these students also reached a level of significance is shocking given that they constituted a small portion of the sample, only eight students. Since these students did not report any BSI measurements, but did report a higher stress response than the rest of the sample on the RMAS stress measure, it is reasonable to speculate that these particular eight students would have had a higher correlation value between total RMAS and total BSI measurements. I also speculate that because these students were reporting high stress responses, this could have been a reason why they decided to not want to complete the rest of the survey, which could speak to additional race-related stress studies on college students of Color: Those most negatively impacted by racism may be the students least likely to want to participate in such a study, thus both the rates and impacts of campus racism are highly underreported.

Policy Implications

From my study findings, I conclude that racial discrimination in the form of racial microaggressions are still present, common, and very harmful across this predominantly white institution of higher education among this Latinx students, and this is likely the case at other predominantly white colleges and universities. These racist incidents have the potential, and

often do, cause mental harm to students of Color. Although research among racial discrimination in higher education does not focus on the mental health of Latinx students, findings from the current study document that these Latinx college students experience negative mental health effects from racial microaggressions.

CU-Boulder and other institutions of higher education, particularly those with predominantly white students and faculty, must recognize how higher education has become a breeding ground for covert forms of racist discrimination, likely perpetuated by these “race neutral policies” and actively promoting “color blindness.” Racial microaggressions may appear to be miniscule in comparison to overt forms of racial discrimination, such as hate crimes or Jim Crow policies, but they should not be ignored. My findings support the dire need to improve the racial campus climate for the mental health benefit of Latinx students, and likely for other students of Color. That is, although my study solely focused on one demographic my results can still contribute to the importance of providing a better educational environment for all students of Color.

Future Research

The survey measurements used in this study were effective in documenting the occurrence of racial microaggressions on campus and their effects on mental health. However, it should be noted that there are still areas of research that should be further investigated. Qualitative and quantitative data should be combined when scholars wish to understand the full impact of racial discrimination. Critical Race Theory allows the lives of people of Color to be placed as a central focus for research, valuing their experiences. If interviews were conducted alongside quantitative data collection, research could more ably address the resiliency factors among college students of Color, including Latinx college students, and further examine the

differences in mental health across generational status. It would also be helpful to further divide the identities of Latinx, by regions and perhaps by other indicators such as language/accents and skin tone, in order to examine the differences among stress responses of racial microaggressions.

Furthermore, future research should consider the possibility of understanding the positive attributes among first generation Latinx students. Although many scholars have documented that these particular students face an extreme amount of financial and assimilation stress (Pease, 2013), there may be something that helps these students keep a healthy mental state of mind, since these students had a lower correlation between racial microaggressions and poor mental health than those students whose parents received an associate's degree (see Table 6). My study documents the existence of racial microaggressions and its effects among Latinx students attending CU-B. However, if administration truly wishes to combat the mental health effects of racial microaggressions, work, commitment, and funding is needed to combat these daily stressors and provide these college students with the necessary racial diversity representation among the faculty, staff, and student body, and mental health care assistance that students of Color may need and most assuredly deserve.

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APPENDIX A: THE FINDINGS TABLES

Table 1: Survey Demographics

N = 192 ^a			
	N	n	%
<u>Gender</u> ^a	192		
Women		121	63.0
Men		71	37.0
<u>Age</u> ^b	181		
18-19		35	19.3
20		41	22.7
21		52	28.7
22-23		43	3.8
24-26		10	5.5
<u>Ethnicity</u> ^c	192		
Latinx		152	79.2
Bi- or Multi-Racial		40	20.8
<u>Class Standing</u> ^d	189		
Freshman		17	9.0
Sophomore		44	23.3
Junior		50	26.5
4 th Year Senior		48	25.4
5 th Year+ Senior		30	15.9
<u>College Generation/Parents' Education</u> ^e	190		
Neither parent attended any college		85	44.7
At 1 parent attended some college/no degree		20	10.5
At 1 parent attended college/received Assoc. Degree		16	8.4
At 1 parent attended college/received Bachelor's Degree		69	36.3

^aOf the 200 students with usable surveys, 8 did not complete the demographic information at the end of the survey.

^bThe students' ages ranged from 18 to 26, with a $\mu = 20.87$, median = 21.00, and mode = 21.

^cFor this question students were allowed to freely fill-in their responses for race/ethnicity (no options were provided). Only 8 (4.0%) of participants did not complete this item. From the racial identities typed into the survey, I constructed two ethnicity categories: the "Latinx" category included students who identified as either Latina/o/x or a combination of Latina/o/x identities (e.g., "Mexican-America" or "Chicano/Native American" or "Mexican/Guatemalan"). Even if students specifically identified as Chicana/o they were still included in this category. The last category includes students who had at least identified as Latina/o/x identity and additional identities outside of Latina/o/x (e.g., "Latina/White", or "Latinx/German/Asian").

^dThe class standings ranged from Freshman = 1 to 5th Year Senior or more = 5, with a $\mu = 3.16$, median = 3.00, and mode = 3.

^eThe options ranged from 1 = neither parent attended any college/university to 4 = at least one parent received a Bachelor's degree or higher (e.g., master's, Ph.D., law degree), with a $\mu = 2.36$, median = 2.00, and mode = 1. Two students picked the final option on the survey for this item, "other," and indicated "vocational school" and "options didn't match," so were not included in this table given the n of 1 each, and for the same reason, also not included in the bivariate analyses.

Table 2. Mean Responses to RMAS Items and Stress Response ^a (N = 200)

	<u>Item</u> <u>M</u>	<u>Stress</u> <u>M</u>	<u>Corr.</u> <u>r</u>
1. Because of my race, other people assume that I am a foreigner.	2.20	2.14	.23**
2. Because of my race, people suggest that I am not a “true” American.	2.12	2.64	.23*
4. Other people often ask me where I am from, suggesting that I don’t belong.	2.28	2.41	.50**
14. Other people treat me like a criminal because of my race.	1.60	2.99	.38**
15. People act like they are scared of me because of my race.	1.54	2.70	.46**
16. Others assume that I will behave aggressively because of my race.	1.75	2.71	.55**
18. I am singled out by police or security people because of my race.	1.65	3.15	.45**
19. People suggest that I am “exotic” in a sexual way because of my race.	2.37	2.47	.36**
20. Other people view me in an overly sexual way because of my race.	2.03	2.67	.49**
21. Other people hold sexual stereotypes about me because of my racial background.	2.09	2.64	.65**
22. Other people act as if they can fully understand my racial identity, even though they are not of my racial background.	2.79	2.91	.62**
23. Other people act as if all of the people of my race are alike.	3.02	3.06	.66**
28. Others suggest that people of my racial background get unfair benefits.	2.73	2.99	.62**
29. Others assume that people of my background would succeed in life if they simply worked harder.	2.80	3.01	.59**
30. Other people deny that people of my race face extra obstacles when compared to Whites.	2.85	3.03	.57**
32. Other people assume that I am successful because of affirmative action, not because I earned my accomplishments.	2.20	3.24	.50**
35. Others hint that I should work hard to prove that I am not like other people of my race.	2.40	3.01	.63**
36. Others suggest that my racial heritage is dysfunctional or undesirable.	2.10	3.02	.51**
37. Others focus only on the negative aspects of my racial background.	2.38	2.90	.58**
33. Others prefer that I assimilate to the White culture and downplay my racial background.	2.39	3.08	.42**
39. I am mistaken for being a service worker or lower-status worker simply because of my race.	1.89	3.11	.37**
40. I am treated like a second-class citizen because of my race.	2.07	3.19	.52**
41. I receive poorer treatment in restaurants and stores because of my race.	1.94	3.15	.44**
47. Sometimes I feel as if people look past me or don’t see me as a real person because of my race.	1.93	3.22	.54**
49. I feel invisible because of my race.	1.81	3.05	.47**
51. I am ignored in school or work environments because of my race.	1.76	3.11	.64**
52. My contributions are dismissed or devalued because of my racial background.	1.77	3.03	.58**
42. When I interact with authority figures, they are usually of a different racial background.	3.21	2.12	.34**
43. I notice that there are few role models in my racial background in my chosen career.	2.96	2.69	.53**
44. Sometimes I am the only person of my racial background in my class or workplace.	3.23	2.52	.51**
45. Where I work or go to school, I see few people of my racial background.	3.05	2.58	.52**
46A. I notice that there are few people of my racial background in class readings or textbooks at CU Boulder.	2.83	2.51	.46**
46B. I notice that there are few people of my racial background in class/lectures at CU Boulder.	3.43	2.83	.48**

^aThis sample includes all students, including the 8 who did not complete the BSI. RMAS item responses ranged from 1 = Never to 4 = Often/frequently, and these were followed by a “how stressful” question ranging from 1 = Not at all to 4 = High level. Only students reporting experiencing the original RMAS item, were provided with the follow-up stress item.

Table 3:
Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Six-Factor Solution for the 33-Item Racial Microaggressions Scale

Item	LOW	CRIM	INV	ENV	SEXU	FOR
1. Because of my race, other people assume that I am a foreigner.	.20	.19	.16	.14	.09	.75
2. Because of my race, people suggest that I am not a “true” American.	.28	.23	.26	.14	.30	.59
4. Other people often ask me where I am from, suggesting that I don’t belong.	.30	.18	.26	.29	.23	.56
14. Other people treat me like a criminal because of my race.	.15	.78	.15	.07	.17	.06
15. People act like they are scared of me because of my race.	.13	.75	.29	.05	.11	.14
16. Others assume that I will behave aggressively because of my race.	.27	.66	.18	.12	.27	.03
18. I am singled out by police or security people because of my race.	.17	.75	.18	.13	.14	.25
19. People suggest that I am “exotic” in a sexual way because of my race.	.11	.15	.14	.14	.85	.04
20. Other people view me in an overly sexual way because of my race.	.18	.26	.19	.05	.83	.15
21. Other people hold sexual stereotypes about me because of my racial background.	.36	.17	.19	.11	.72	.24
22. Other people act as if they can fully understand my racial identity, even though they are not of my racial background	.58	.29	.05	.20	.17	.27
23. Other people act as if all of the people of my race are alike.	.58	.16	.19	.19	.20	.30
28. Others suggest that people of my racial background get unfair benefits.	.52	.35	-.02	.37	.00	.21
29. Others assume that people of my background would succeed in life if they simply worked harder.	.69	.08	.13	.21	-.12	.11
30. Other people deny that people of my race face extra obstacles when compared to Whites.	.68	.27	.05	.13	.23	-.01
32. Other people assume that I am successful because of affirmative action, not because I earned my accomplishments.	.54	.41	.05	.21	.21	-.10
35. Others hint that I should work hard to prove that I am not like other people of my race.	.66	.10	.35	.09	.18	.17
36. Others suggest that my racial heritage is dysfunctional or undesirable.	.53	.14	.49	.09	.18	.16
37. Others focus only on the negative aspects of my racial background.	.52	.11	.49	.04	.22	.18
33. Others prefer that I assimilate to the White culture and downplay my racial background.	.63	-.00	.33	.11	.19	.07
39. I am mistaken for being a service worker or lower-status worker simply because of my race.	.18	.51	.55	.18	.03	.15
40. I am treated like a second-class citizen because of my race.	.33	.37	.52	.19	.04	.42
41. I receive poorer treatment in restaurants and stores because of my race.	.14	.48	.40	.22	.04	.34
47. Sometimes I feel as if people look past me or don’t see me as a real person because of my race.	.12	.47	.58	.25	.07	.26
49. I feel invisible because of my race.	.21	.14	.70	.17	.22	.13
51. I am ignored in school or work environments because of my race.	.15	.34	.72	.21	.23	.03
52. My contributions are dismissed or devalued because of my racial background.	.14	.38	.71	.21	.11	.09
42. When I interact with authority figures, they are usually of a different racial background.	.18	.16	.07	.65	-.02	.05
43. I notice that there are few role models in my racial background in my chosen career.	.28	.05	.34	.45	.06	-.38
44. Sometimes I am the only person of my racial background in my class or workplace.	.14	.18	.12	.73	.12	.18
45. Where I work or go to school, I see few people of my racial background.	.06	.12	.11	.77	.10	.07
46. AI notice that there are few people of my racial background in class readings or textbooks at CU Boulder.	.23	-.09	.39	.52	.02	.14
46. BI notice that there are few people of my racial background in class/lectures at CU Boulder.	.17	.05	.19	.81	.12	.10

Note. INV _ Invisibility factor; CRIM _ Criminality factor; LOW _ Low-Achieving/Undesirable Culture factor; SEXU _ Sexualization factor; FOR _ Foreigner/Not Belonging factor; ENV _ Environmental Invalidations factor. Items in bold italic indicate the respective factor onto which each item load.

Table 4:
Correlations between RMAS Factors (N = 192)

	LOW	CRIM	INV	ENV	SEX	FOR
LOW	1.00					
CRIM	.63**	1.00				
INV	.73**	.73**	1.00			
ENV	.55**	.36**	.55**	1.00		
SEX	.59**	.52**	.53**	.32**	1.00	
FOR	.68**	.58**	.67**	.44**	.56**	1.00

Note. INV _ Invisibility factor; CRIM _ Criminality factor; LOW _ Low-Achieving/Undesirable Culture factor; SEXU _ Sexualization factor; FOR _ Foreigner/Not Belonging factor; ENV _ Environmental Invalidations factor. Whole sample N = 192.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 5:
Correlations between RMAS Stress Measures and BSI Measures

	SOM	DEP	ANX	Total BSI
LOW	.21	.17	.23	.22
CRIM	.33*	.16	.33*	.29
INV	.22	.076	.32*	.23
ENV	.36**	.49**	.51**	.51**
SEXU	.31**	.37**	.37**	.39**
FOR	.20	.25*	.21	.24*
Total Factor	.195	-.016	.162	.122

Note. INV _ Invisibility factor; CRIM _ Criminality factor; LOW _ Low-Achieving/Undesirable Culture factor; SEXU _ Sexualization factor; FOR _ Foreigner/Not Belonging factor; ENV _ Environmental Invalidations factor; SOM _ Somatization; DEP_ Depression; ANX _ Anxiety. Whole sample N = 192.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 6:
Correlations between RMAS Factors and BSI Measures, across generations.

Item ^a	Whole Sample N = 190	No Parental College n = 85	Some Parental College/No Degree n = 20	At least one Parent Received Associate's Degree n = 16	At least One Parent Received a 4 Year Degree or Higher n = 69
RMAS Total x BSI Total	.62**	.55**	.48*	.90**	.70**
RMAS Total x SOM	.47**	.46**	.35	.71*	.46**
RMAS Total x DEP	.63**	.55**	.46	.79**	.77**
RMAS Total x ANX	.58**	.49**	.47*	.89**	.68**
LOW x BSI TOTAL	.61**	.54**	.54*	.82**	.62**
LOW x SOM	.43**	.40**	.36	.62*	.40**
LOW x DEP	.63**	.54**	.51*	.80**	.68**
LOW x ANX	.59**	.52**	.55*	.80**	.59**
CRIM x BSI TOTAL	.53**	.48**	.12	.87**	.60**
CRIM x SOM	.44**	.44**	.04	.78**	.49**
CRIM x DEP	.51**	.44**	.27	.78**	.57**
CRIM x ANX	.49**	.43**	.03	.86**	.58**
INV x BSI TOTAL	.62**	.56**	.38	.87**	.65**
INV x SOM	.46**	.43**	.29	.75**	.44**
INV x DEP	.65**	.59**	.41	.85**	.70**
INV x ANX	.57**	.50**	.32	.79**	.63**
ENV x BSI TOTAL	.42**	.31**	.55*	.44	.44**
ENV x SOM	.28**	.23*	.37	.17	.24
ENV x DEP	.49**	.36**	.60**	.50	.58**
ENV x ANX	.36**	.25*	.47*	.43	.36*
SEXU x BSI TOTAL	.46**	.43**	.38	.44**	.49**
SEXU x SOM	.39**	.43**	.27	.40**	.29*
SEXU x DEP	.41**	.38**	.21	.30**	.48**
SEXU x ANX	.47**	.37**	.49*	.56**	.54**
FOR x BSI TOTAL	.54**	.36**	.58**	.67**	.67**
FOR x SOM	.42**	.30**	.40	.78**	.47**
FOR x DEP	.53**	.36**	.52*	.50	.69**
FOR x ANX	.52**	.31**	.60**	.70**	.66**

Note. ^a Two students were removed from the original 192 because they had both selected “other” as generational status answer option and their response could not be categorized. INV _ Invisibility factor; CRIM _ Criminality factor; LOW _ Low-Achieving/Undesirable Culture factor; SEXU _ Sexualization factor; FOR _ Foreigner/Not Belonging factor; ENV _ Environmental Invalidations factor; SOM _ Somatization; DEP_ Depression; ANX _ Anxiety. Top categories highlighted in bold represent the generational categories that each student fits in.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$