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Relationship Between Racial Trauma, Microaggression, Cultural Coping Behaviors, and Resilience Among Black Counseling Students

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Walden University
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Abstract

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EdS, Florida Atlantic University, 2008

MA, Andrews University, 2005

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Counselor Education and Supervision

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Abstract

Black students in counseling programs face many challenges stemming from racial trauma and microaggression; for instance, they are at greater risk for mental health problems and degree incompletion. Grounded in critical race theory, the purpose of this quantitative correlation study was to examine whether racial trauma, the experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors were significant predictors of resilience and whether cultural coping behaviors mediated the relationship between racial trauma, microaggression, and resilience among Black counseling students. A convenience sample was used to anonymously survey 80 Black counseling students. The results of the multiple regression mediation analysis showed a statistically nonsignificant predictive relationship between racial trauma, the microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience (p = .271). Cultural coping behaviors did not significantly mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience (p = .981) or microaggression and resilience (p = .171). Future researchers should further explore the relationship between racial trauma, microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience of Black counseling students. Counselor educators and supervisors may benefit from this study because it provides a greater understanding of Black counseling students' experiences with racial trauma and microaggression and their use of cultural coping behaviors to maintain resilience. Counselor education programs can potentially use the outcome of this study to inform and support Black counseling students by developing and implementing policies and practices that promote mental health, degree completion, and positive social change.

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Dedication

I dedicate this degree to my late father, who passed only a few months after I started the doctoral program; my mother, who never stopped praying for me; and my wonderful spouse and children, who stood by my side.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I want to thank God for bringing me through this doctoral program and placing individuals in my life who prayed for, supported, and encouraged me. I give God all the glory for achieving this milestone! I am thankful for the support and prayers of all my family, friends, and colleagues.

I am grateful to Walden University faculty, staff, and students who supported me in countless ways, especially my dissertation committee members who guided me through the process. Lastly, I want to give a heartfelt thanks to all the anonymous participants who took the time to complete my dissertation survey. I am humbled and appreciative of the support of everyone I have had the privilege to work alongside during this journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Racial inequality, racial discrimination, and racism exist in U.S. society. Black college students' experiences are microcosmic examples of these social issues. Research supports the assertion that some Black college students experience racism, racial discrimination, and microaggression on their campuses and off. In a study by M. T. Williams et al. (2018), African American undergraduate students reported experiencing relatively 70% more general ethnic discrimination and 2 times as much microaggression compared to European Americans. Likewise, in a study by Lewis et al. (2021) Black college students reported greater occurrences of racial microaggression on campus compared to Asian, Latinx, or multiracial students. According to Henfield et al. (2011), African American students are burdened with having to experience, respond to, and address race-related incidents and overcome them in pursuing their degrees.

A search of the literature yielded numerous definitions of racialized trauma. I use the terms "racial trauma" and "race-based stress" interchangeably in this study. Comas-Diaz et al. (2019) defined racial trauma or race-based stress as events of danger associated with racial discrimination experiences that are real or perceived. Mental Health America (2022) referred to racial trauma or race-based traumatic stress as an injury, emotional or mental, that happens as a direct result of racism, ethnic discrimination, racial bias, and hate crimes. Microaggressions, on the other hand, are verbal messages, behaviors, environmental signs, or symbols targeting an individual's identity based on race or ethnicity, gender, religion, abilities, or other characteristics (Sue et al., 2007; Torres-Harding et al., 2012a; Wong & Jones, 2018). Microaggressions are

generally brief, insulting, and derogatory indignities that most perpetrators are unaware of communicating (Sue et al., 2007). If not recognized and addressed, racial trauma and microaggression may have a cumulative negative effect on those who have face with the aftermath of the events.

Most studies conducted on racial trauma and microaggression have focused primarily on Black undergraduate students (Greer, 2021; Greer et al., 2015; Grier-Reed et al., 2021, 2022; Hargon et al., 2022; A. J. Johnson, 2020; Mills, 2020; M. T. Williams et al., 2018). Consequently, a gap existed in the literature on racial trauma and microaggression among Black graduate students. Vaishnav (2021) reiterated this sentiment, stating that most research has focused on undergraduate students, whereas doctoral students' experiences with racial microaggressions remain largely unexplored, specifically within counselor education. Wong and Jones (2018) also noted that there were no studies of microaggression in master's social work education or other master's counseling programs. Thus, the apparent lack of studies on racial trauma and microaggression among students in doctoral, social work education, and other master's level counseling programs supported a need for further studies among this population, specifically in counseling-related fields.

Researchers have noted the adaptability and resilience of those negatively impacted by racial trauma or race-related stress and microaggression through the use of cultural-specific coping behaviors and resources (Horsford et al., 2019; House, 2022; O'Hara & Cook, 2018; Teti et al., 2012; Utsey et al., 2008a, 2008b). House (2022) found that there are many strategies African American students use to fight racist experiences in

the college setting in asserting their voice—for example, using cultural code-switching, connecting with other Black students, and avoiding behaviors. The use of cultural coping behaviors among Black students appears to be a protective factor for combating racial experiences, contributing to students' adaptability and resilience in the university environment. In this study, I investigated whether racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors predict resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. In addition, I investigated whether cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs.

Engaging in evidence-based research associated with racial trauma, microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience may enhance the knowledge of Black students' experiences in college and university settings and of those in counselor education programs. The results of this study have potential positive social change implications, in that it may assist counselor educators in understanding and improving Black graduate students' experiences in counselor education programs. In Chapter 1, I will present background information supporting the topic of this dissertation. I will state the problem, purpose of the study, and research questions (RQs) and hypotheses. I will also introduce the theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions, and assumptions. Finally, I will discuss the scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance.

Background

There is a long history of racial oppression of Black people in the United States. One cannot discount the significance and relevance of such history in contemporary society. Stressors such as racism, racial discrimination, and microaggression can be detrimental and traumatic for many Blacks. Intense or frequent racist stressors are more likely to elicit and lead to racial trauma (Hargon et al., 2022). Racism, racial discrimination, and microaggression can damage mental health and exacerbate anxiety, stress, depression, dissociation, and trauma symptoms (Abdullah et al., 2021; Greer & Cavalhieri, 2019; Polanco-Roman et al., 2021; M. T. Williams et al., 2018). Additionally, racist events may lead to internalized shame among African Americans (A. J. Johnson, 2020). Nadal et al. (2019) stated that previous literature indicates a significant relationship between microaggression, depression, and anxiety, yet few studies exist on the effects of racial microaggression on traumatic stress symptoms.

In their study on microaggressions and trauma, Nadal et al. (2019) discovered that the experience of a large amount of racial microaggressions was linked to more traumatic symptoms. Additionally, microaggressions that occurred in the school or workplace were significantly associated with trauma. Greer (2021) stated that "culture-specific coping strategies might mitigate the effects of racism on academic self-concepts for African American students" (p. 224). In investigating coping strategies, race-related stress, and academic self-concept, Greer found race-related stress to be a strong predictor of academic self-concept. Specifically, Greer found that stress associated with racism negatively affected African American students' attitudes about themselves as learners.

The experiences of counseling students of color (Baker et al., 2015; Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017) and African American doctoral students in counselor education programs (Henfield et al., 2013) have been little studied. The studies relating to counseling students' experiences have primarily focused on doctoral students (Baker & Moore, 2015; E. M. Brown & Grothaus, 2019; Cartwright et al., 2021; Constantine & Sue, 2007; Henfield et al., 2013, 2011; Horsford et al., 2019). Fewer researchers have focused on master's students (Baker et al., 2015; Haskins et al., 2013). Additionally, the studies documented are primarily qualitative and mixed methods. This disparity presents a need for quantitative studies to address this gap.

In counselor education, graduate students of color experience the challenges of managing work, family, and school; feeling marginalized in their programs; and dealing with White ascendancy (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017). There is sense of isolation described by graduate students of color resulting from microaggressions and bias experienced in the classroom environment when engaging in peers and faculty discussions (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017). The findings of Baker et al. (2015) align with those of previous researchers (Henfield et al., 2011, 2013; Haskins et al., 2013) in regard to the experiences of underrepresented counseling students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Students reported that they did not feel included in obtaining information, were viewed differently due to their race, and were not represented in discussions in class or among their peers. Additionally, Horsford et al. (2019) uncovered that African American and Black women in clinical programs entered as outsiders and had harmful interactions with professors where they felt isolated and mistreated.

Black graduate students face challenges in counselor education programs because of their race, which may contribute to race-related stress. Henfield et al. (2013) reported that doctoral African American students perceived the challenges faced in counseling education programs at PWIs as feeling isolated, lack of connection with peers and cultural understanding. The sense of isolation experienced by Black students in counselor education may adversely affect their emotional and psychological well-being and academic success. Among Black master's counseling students attending a PWI, Haskins et al. (2013) found that feeling isolated and tokenized described Black students' lives and that students' coursework lacked the inclusion of Black counselors' perspectives. Also, Black students felt the access and support they received from faculty of color and White faculty were different from that provided to their White peers.

When exploring racial microaggressions in the supervisory relationships with Black trainees and White supervisors, Constantine and Sue (2007) found that microaggression was directed toward Black student trainees in how White supervisors invalidated racial cultural concerns and harbored stereotypical biases about Black clients and students. Black student trainees felt White supervisors were hesitant to provide performance feedback to avoid being viewed as racist, and they mainly concentrated on their clinical weaknesses. Constantine and Sue found that Black trainees reported that clients of color were blamed by White supervisors for their mental health issues that stemmed from injustice and offered culturally insensitive and biased treatment recommendations. The racial microaggression experienced by Black trainees takes a psychological toll on them (Constantine & Sue, 2007). When considering mentorship

challenges among Black female doctoral students, Cartwright et al. (2021) stated that inequalities in opportunities and exposure to mentorship continue to exist for these students in counselor education programs. Despite these challenges in the counselor education program, Cartwright et al. noted that the doctoral students found significance and value in their experiences. The difficulties Black counseling students face because of their racial background support a focus on this population.

Black college students use many coping strategies to manage racism and racial discrimination, research shows. For example, Africultural coping, culture-specific coping, religiosity, religious problem-solving, racial socialization and messages, racial identity attitudes, racial pride, ego resilience, collective efficacy, and sociofamilial resources are identified in the literature as some coping strategies utilized by Black college students to manage racial discrimination (D. L. Brown & Tylka, 2011; Driscoll et al., 2015; Greer et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2020; Lewis-Cole & Constantine, 2006; Shahid et al., 2018; Utsey et al., 2008a, 2008b). Greer et al. (2015) found that among African American undergraduate students attending predominantly White colleges and universities there was an association between being older in age and problem-oriented coping and low stress. Thus, graduate students may be more apt to handle race-related stressors on a college campus than undergraduate students due to increased age and experience in a higher education setting.

Grier-Reed et al. (2022) examined the relationship between flourishing and posttraumatic growth among Black undergraduate students who reported a history of racial trauma. They found a linear relationship that was significant between posttraumatic

growth and flourishing. Grier-Reed et al. noted that Black undergraduates who can deepen their connections with others, tap into their inner strength, and gain new perspectives, and who have an appreciation for life and are able to connect to spirituality, tend to grow. These students are also more likely to have reported flourishing despite experiencing racial trauma. The literature suggests that coping and healing strategies used by Black students decrease the likelihood of race-based stress symptoms, which can lead to trauma (Hargon et al., 2022).

Although previous research on various aspects of racial trauma, microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience is documented, there remains a gap in understanding and knowledge on the subject. In reviewing the literature, I found no study on the association between these variables among Black counseling students in counseling education programs. Based on the 2017 Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) Vital Statistics Survey, African American/Black students represented 18.39% of master's students and 25.09% of doctoral students enrolled in CACREP programs (CACREP, 2018). African American/Black students were the second highest percentage compared to Caucasian/White students, who represented 59.75% of master's-level students and 55.33% of doctoral students in CACREP programs (CACREP, 2018). The percentages of African American/Blacks in graduate programs reveal that this population is a minority and may experience racism.

Thus, I presumed that Black graduate counseling students may be susceptible to racism and racial discrimination, which may negatively affect their mental or

psychological health. Therefore, I thought it might be advantageous to examine racial trauma and the experience of microaggression of Black students in counseling programs because of the potential adverse effects on their mental health, academic success, and degree completion. Subsequently, it might be valuable to examine how cultural coping behaviors utilized by Black counseling students may contribute to resilience, considering the lack of research on this topic in the literature among this population.

I considered this gap by examining whether racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors predict resilience in Black students in counseling education programs and whether cultural coping behaviors mediate the predictive relationship between these variables. The findings of the study may aid counselor education programmers in understanding the experience of Black students and supporting them to reduce barriers to success. Also, the results of the study may assist counselor education programmers to ameliorate the experience of Black individuals by developing and implementing better antiracist practices to create a safer learning environment that facilitates and encourages positive experiences and successful program completion. Previous researchers have noted the importance of counselor education programs being proactive in institutional changes to retain African American students (Henfield et al., 2013). For example, Haskins et al. (2013) emphasized a necessity for change systemically in counseling curricula that reflect Black counseling students' perspectives in the curriculum. Also, Constantine and Sue (2007) emphasized a need for counselor educators to provide a safe, educational environment in the supervisory relationship where there can be discussions and integrations of racial-cultural issues.

Problem Statement

Racial trauma and the experience of microaggression contribute to the adverse effects of mental health issues among Blacks. Research shows that Black undergraduate students encounter racial trauma and microaggression at greater rate than any other ethnic group on college campuses (Lewis et al., 2021; M. T. Williams et al., 2018). Because African Americans and Blacks are the second largest group of racial/ethnic students in CACREP programs (CACREP, 2018), this suggests that Black graduate counseling students may have similar experiences, putting them at greater risk for mental health issues. As counselors-in-training, and counselor educators-in-training, Black graduate students' mental health is important and provides justification for examining not only the adverse impact of racial trauma and experience of microaggression but the cultural coping behaviors that may contribute to their resilience.

In a review of the literature, I did not find studies on the relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience in Black students in counselor education programs. Many studies to date have focused mainly on undergraduate students; few studies exist on graduate students. Focusing on Black graduate counseling students may bridge the gap between what is unknown and known about racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience, to enrich the understanding of this topic, thereby contributing to the current literature on Black graduate students. Additionally, the results of this study may aid counselor educators in enhancing their understanding of racial-related issues faced by

Black counseling students and the cultural coping behaviors that contribute to students' resilience.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative correlational survey research study was to determine if racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors, are significant predictors of resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs and to examine if cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between racial trauma, microaggression, and resilience. Although researchers have examined racial trauma, microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience in various forms, none have examined the four variables combined, according to my research. The aim of this study was to contribute to the literature relating to how Black counseling students cope with racial trauma and microaggression through cultural coping behaviors that may promote their resilience. The results of this study can potentially benefit counseling programs in that it may provide counselor educators with a greater understanding of the experiences of Black students in their programs and the cultural relevance of coping behaviors they use to manage the impacts of racial trauma and microaggression. Also, the findings can potentially assist counseling programmers in addressing the adverse effects of racial trauma and microaggression through a strength-based approach that is culturally relevant to Black students' educational context and needs.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In this dissertation, I examined the following RQs and hypotheses:

RQ1: Do racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors predict resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs?

$H_0$1: Greater racial trauma and experience of microaggression do not predict lower resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs while greater cultural coping behaviors do not predict higher resilience.

H_a1: Greater racial trauma and experience of microaggression predict lower resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs while greater cultural coping behaviors predict higher resilience.

RQ2: Do cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs?

$H_0$2: Cultural coping behaviors do not mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs.

H_a2: Cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs.

RQ3: Do cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between the experience of microaggressions and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs?

$H_0$3: Cultural coping behaviors do not mediate the relationship between experience of microaggression and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs.

H_a3: Cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between experience of microaggression and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs.

Theoretical Foundation

Race relations profoundly shape the lives of individuals in the United States. To understand the relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience in Black counseling students, I used critical race theory (CRT). In the 1970s, CRT surfaced from the work of many legal activists and scholars (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). CRT was fitting for this study because it has been utilized to analyze and address issues of race in education. Race and racism are fundamental to the criticism and analysis of CRT. The basic premises of CRT are that (a) racism is difficult to address, (b) White ascendancy serves the dominant group, (c) race is a social concept, and (d) the unique voice of being a person of color and of minority position bring a level of expertise to converse about race and racism (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). CRT provides an avenue to factor in racial trauma and microaggression rooted in racism and racial discrimination. Racism is an embedded structure that profits White people at minority individuals' expense (C. Brown, 2018).

There is a long history of racial oppression of Black people in the United States. One cannot discount the significance and relevance of such history in contemporary society. Aymer (2016) stated that an essential implication of using CRT is its premise that suggests the historical antecedence, in that slavery and discrimination provide a foundation for analyzing racial oppression in society. Race as a social construct benefits

the dominant group and contributes to the perpetuation of discrimination. It is necessary to consider the implications of racism to comprehend its ramifications on Black counseling students. CRT is a framework that can be beneficial to understand the negative impacts of the social construct of race, racial discrimination and microaggression experienced by minorities, such as Black counseling students. It can also be helpful in conceptualizing racial trauma and microaggression, and their relevance to cultural coping behaviors that may alleviate the damaging results of race-related experiences and contribute to resilience.

From a CRT conceptual lens, one would expect that the experience of Black students within their counseling program context differs from that of other ethnic groups. Understanding the experience of racial trauma and microaggression of Black counseling students may spotlight their social situation to transform it. Thus, CRT was relevant to this study because of its emphasis on race and racism, which was vital to the RQs and variables. CRT provided a lens to better understand Black counseling students' experiences. The knowledge yielded by the study may highlight necessary steps to address and ameliorate racial discrimination, racial trauma, and microaggression in counseling programs to foster a safer climate.

Nature of the Study

A quantitative research method was appropriate for this dissertation. Specifically, a correlational cross-sectional survey was appropriate because I sought to identify whether a predictive relationship between the variables was present. In quantitative methods, the researcher carefully measures a group of variables to answer a RQ and test

hypotheses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A correlational cross-sectional survey is utilized to collect data to make inferences about a specific population of interest at one point in time (Lavrakas, 2008). I used this design to make predictions and examine the mediation relationship between the variables of racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. The independent variables in this dissertation were racial trauma, microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors. The dependent variable was resilience.

Additionally, I administered a cross-sectional survey to gather information from the sample to formulate quantitative descriptors that characterized the larger population (see Groves et al., 2009). Multiple regression analysis is a statistical test used in correlational research to investigate the relationship between one dependent variable and several independent variables to ascertain whether there is a relationship among them (Burkholder et al., 2016; Warner, 2013). As a statistical tool, multiple regression analysis makes it feasible to combine multiple independent or predictor variables to estimate the direction, strength, significance, and prediction of the dependent variable (Allen, 2022; Warner, 2013). Additionally, multiple regression analysis can be used to predict certain values of variables based on the known value of other variables and to test scientific hypotheses about the extent certain independent variables explain the variation in a dependent variable (Segrin, 2022). In this study, a multiple regression analysis was utilized to observe whether there was a statistically significant predictive relationship between the variables and to ascertain whether cultural coping behaviors were a statistically significant and mediating variable between racial trauma and resilience, and

between microaggressions and resilience. IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 28) was used to analyze the data.

Definitions

I define specific terms, as they are used in this study, that are critical for the reader to understand, as follows:

Black counseling students: Students from the African Black diaspora. This may include African Americans or any descendant from Native African people.

Cultural coping behaviors: Cultural-specific coping of Blacks. Utsey et al. (2000) described cultural-specific coping of African Americans as reflective of a worldview that acknowledges spirituality, harmony, balance, collective group orientation, and rituals that encompass the characteristics of individuals of African descent.

Microaggression: Brief, everyday racial verbal messages, behaviors, environmental signs, and symbols that are premeditated or unintended and communicated aggressively or maliciously towards people of color because of their race, ethnicity, or other characteristics (Sue et al., 2007; Torres-Harding et al., 2012a; Wong & Jones, 2018).

Racial trauma or *race-based stress*: Dangerous events related to real or perceived experiences of racial discrimination (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019). The terms “racial trauma” and “race-based stress” for the purpose of this study will be used interchangeably.

Resilience: An individual's ability to endure and bounce back from life challenges (Walsh, 2016).

Assumptions

When conducting a study, researchers make basic assumptions about the nature of the study. Four assumptions are associated with this dissertation. The first assumption was that the survey instrument would accurately measure participants' experiences of racial trauma and microaggression and capture the perceptions of the cultural coping behaviors and resilience to handle these race-related encounters. The second assumption was that participants had an actual race-related encounter and would be able to recall their experiences of racial discrimination and microaggression. The third assumption was that participants would understand the questions asked in the survey and respond accurately and truthfully. According to Lavrakas (2008), a participant's willingness and ability to provide accurate data in a survey may vary over time; also, the respondents can vary in these aspects. Last, I assumed that participants would want to participate in a study on race-related experiences.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was confined to examining the relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. As the researcher, I considered how cultural coping behaviors were related to resilience in Black counseling students who experienced racial trauma and microaggression based on the results. Participants included in this study were graduate-level master’s or doctoral counseling students who identified as Black and reported having a race-related incident such as racial discrimination, racial trauma, or racial microaggression in the school or community setting. Participants attended any

master's or doctoral counseling program, such as clinical mental health counseling; marriage, couple, and family counseling; school counseling; and rehabilitation counseling.

I used CRT to contextualize the experience of racial trauma and microaggression of Black counseling students. An important implication of using CRT is the premise on which it is based. CRT suggests that the historical event of slavery and centuries of unequal treatment provides a framework for investigating the effects of racial oppression within society on various levels (Aymer, 2016). I excluded other theoretical frameworks, such as relational cultural theory, Afrocentric theory, and resilience theory.

Limitations

I anticipated that there would be limitations to this study. First, self-reported surveys may be a limitation because respondents' answers may be biased, and the accuracy of what is reported is not verifiable. Second, using convenience sampling to select participants to complete the online survey may result in not recruiting a true representation of the population, which may limit the external validity. Consequently, I could not generalize the findings beyond the sample of participants. Doing so would pose a threat to the study's external validity (see Bielenia-Grajewska, 2018; Toepoel, 2016). Third, a causal relationship could not be determined due to the use of a correlational design in this study. Thus, I could not assess whether the cultural coping behaviors of Black counseling students caused resilience.

Significance

Higher education can be a place where Black college students experience the worst racism (Volpe et., 2020). Thus, counselor education programs are positioned not only to train counselors but also provide an environment that fosters their growth and development. There presented a necessity to examine the race-based encounters of Black counseling students because they encounter more racial discrimination than other ethnic races. The study may contribute to the literature by advancing the knowledge of racial trauma, microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience among students in counseling programs, an under-researched sample population in the literature. The study may further understanding the cultural coping behaviors that promote resilience resulting from racial traumatic and microaggression experiences of Black counseling students. The study has potential positive social change implications in that the insight gained could assist counselor education programmers in improving the experience of Black counselors in training. The results may assist counselor education programmers in realizing the need for better anti-racism practices and policies to create a safer learning environment that facilitates and encourages Black counseling students' experience and successful program completion.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided an outline of this study. I identified the problem statement, purpose of the study, RQs and hypotheses, theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scopes and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. The purpose of this study was to examine the predictive and mediating

relationship between racial trauma, experiences of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience in Black students in counseling education programs. Few studies have been conducted on racial trauma and microaggression in counseling programs among graduate students (Vaishnav, 2021; Wong & Jones, 2018). In this context, I aimed to address this gap and expand to the knowledge on this topic. In Chapter 2, I will discuss the literature search strategy I used to explore this dissertation topic. Also, I will provide an in-depth examination of the theoretical foundation that grounds this study. Last, I will review the essential variables and synthesize the studies found in the literature that are relevant to this dissertation research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Between 2009 and 2020, Black postbaccalaureate master's and doctoral-level students in the fall of 2020 increased by 14%, from 338,000 to 383,000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Given the increase of Black students in postbaccalaureate programs, one would expect a similar trend and an increase in counseling programs. According to Field et al. (2020), there has been substantial growth in counselor education over the past decade, with increased enrollment in master's and doctoral students in the CACREP. African American and Black counseling students in the CACREP programs comprise 18.39% of master's and 25.09% of doctoral students level (CACREP, 2018). The population of Black students deserves attention because the statistics indicate an increase in their enrollment in postbaccalaureate and counselor education programs. Also, considering the statistics the literature supports the notion that Black students in higher education encounter more racial discrimination as minorities than any other ethnic group (Lewis et al., 2021; M. T. Williams et al., 2018).

Black students reportedly experience racial trauma, racial microaggression, and systemic and institutional racism in higher education (Grier-Reed et al., 2021; Volpe et., 2020). Volpe et al. (2020) stated that many Black emerging adults attending college experienced racism. House (2022) indicated that the experience of African American students differs from European Americans due to them having to learn how to navigate in a university setting while facing race-related incidents within the broader society. Sibrava et al. (2019) discovered a correlation between discrimination encountered frequently and social adjustment, quality of life, and overall function. African Americans reported

frequent experiences of discrimination, such that 56.25% indicated encountering these experiences weekly (Sibrava et al., 2019). As Black students enrolled in postbaccalaureate programs increase, specifically counseling programs, one might expect that they would encounter racial-related incidences in their program of studies or educational institution and their daily lives in society.

Many of the studies documented on racial trauma or race-based stress and microaggression, have predominately been on Black undergraduate students (Greer, 2021; Grier-Reed et al., 2022; Grier-Reed et al., 2021; Hargon et al., 2022; Johnson, A. J. 2020; Mills, 2020; M. T. Williams et al., 2018). Few have examined the experience of racially diverse students in counselor education (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017; Baker et al., 2015). However, of those who did, most have primarily focused on doctoral students (Cartwright et al., 2021; E. M. Brown & Grothaus, 2019; Horsford et al., 2019; Baker & Moore, 2015; Henfield et al., 2013, 2011; Constantine & Sue, 2007). With less studies focused on master's students in counseling programs (Baker et al., 2015; Haskins et al., 2013). Furthermore, there has been studies documented on how Black college students utilized cultural coping behaviors or cultural-specific strategies to navigate and cope with racism, racial discrimination, racial trauma, and experiences of microaggression in relationship to fostering adaptability and resilience (Lewis & Constantine, 2006; Greer, 2011; Greer & Cavalhieri, 2019: Greer, 2021; Horsford et al., 2019; House, 2022; Teti et al., 2012; Utsey et al., 2008a, 2008b).

The studies documented have mainly been qualitative and mixed research designs, and little to none are quantitative, which indicates a possible need for more

quantitative studies. No documented research has investigated the relationship between racial trauma, microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs, as conducted in this dissertation. The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate the predictive relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. Also, it was to investigate if cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between racial trauma, microaggression, and resilience of Black graduate students in counseling programs.

In Chapter 2, I will discuss the current literature relating to this study. First, I will explain the search strategy utilized to exhaust the literature. Second, I will discuss the theoretical foundation that will ground this study. Third, I will discuss the literature reviewed relating to key variables and synthesize the findings. Last, I will justify the relevance of the previous studies on the topic to this dissertation and what remains to be studied.

Literature Search Strategy

Walden University's library was the first resource used to begin the literature review to locate journals for this study. A broad search of the literature was conducted on various databases to exhaust the exploration of the research topic. The databases used to exhaust the literature review were Thoreau, Psych Info, SAGE Knowledge, and Google Scholar. Several articles were gathered from different journals relating to this study topic, such as Counselor Education and Supervision, Journal of Counseling and Development,

the Journal of Mental Health Counseling, Journal of Multicultural Education, Journal of Black Psychology, The Professional Counselor, The Counseling Psychologist, and more.

Additionally, specific and relevant terms were used to narrow the scope of the search, such as race or racial; racial trauma, racial stress, race-based stress; trauma; racial discrimination; microaggression; resilience, adaptability, coping or hardiness; cultural factors, cultural influences, cultural-specific coping strategies or cultural coping behaviors; protective factors; culture, cultural or ethnicity; Black, African American or Black American; university students, college students, graduate students, undergraduates, doctoral students or masters students; and counselor education and supervision, counselor training or counselor education. Various combinations of the terms were used to yield additional search results. Regarding the scope of the literature, articles that were full-text, published between 2016-2023, and peer-reviewed were included. The exceptions were related to the references to literature on the theoretical foundation and the instrumentations. Articles from quantitative and qualitative research studies were used to synthesize this current review.

Theoretical Foundation

CRT flourished in the 1970s because of many legal activists and scholars across the country, including influential writers like Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado, to name a few (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017; Given, 2012). CRT came forth from legal studies and feminist efforts and movements (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). CRT has rapidly spread to many disciplines, although it began as a movement in the law (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). Critical race theorists ascribe to basic tenets and propositions. First,

racism is everyday lived experience of people of color in the United States (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). Racism is embedded in society (Given, 2012). Second, "White overascendancy" benefits the dominant group (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017, p. 8). From the proposition of White overascendency, the idea of interest convergence was coined, which refers to how racism advances the interest of the dominant group (C. Brown, 2018; Delgado & Stefanic, 2017; Given, 2012). Third, "race is a social construct that is a product of social thoughts and relations" (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017, p. 9). Last, the "unique voice of color and minority status brings a presumed level of competence to speak about race and racism" (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017, p. 11). From a CRT perspective, there is significance in the first-person narrative or counter-storytelling of people of color's racialized experiences (C. Brown, 2018).

Researchers have utilized CRT as a theoretical framework to ground their study (Truong & Museus, 2012; Lewis et al., 2021; R. M. Johnson & Strayhorn, 2022). Lewis et al. (2021), in a mixed-method research study, utilized CRT to explore the phenomena of race to comprehend what contributes to and hinders belonging among undergraduate, graduate, and professional students of color attending historically White colleges and universities. Lewis et al. stated that racial microaggression is a large structural mechanism of racism on college campuses, and CRT provided a perspective focused on the counter-stories, experiences, and how racial microaggression intersects students of color's lives at historically White colleges and universities. In a qualitative study, Truong and Museus (2012) utilized CRT as one of the theoretical frameworks to investigate the coping ability of doctoral students of color and their response to racism and racial trauma.

Truong and Museus noted that CRT was fitting for this study because it places race at the center and recognizes people of color's distinct experiences. Truong and Museus's application of CRT allowed for emphasis on participants' accounts and interpretations of their racism and racial trauma.

R. M. Johnson and Strayhorn (2022) conducted a mixed-method study and used CRT and socialization theory as a theoretical and methodological framework to examine the socialization experiences of Black men doctoral students in the United States. R. M. Johnson and Strayhorn specifically aimed to comprehend the significance of race and racism in Black men doctoral students' socialization experiences. They considered how race, racism, and other factors influenced in the Black men's academic and socialization experiences and the meaning given to these racialized encounters. R. M. Johnson and Strayhorn noted that the basic tenets of CRT informed their study in that there is a recognition that racism is endemic to society.

Critical Race Theory's Relevance to the Present Study

The basic tenets and propositions of CRT informed this study because of the targeted population and variables. CRT informed this study in that race and racism are emphasized in the criticism and analysis of the theory, which relates to the variables of racial trauma and microaggression. CRT was relevant because it places significance on racism as a normal and common everyday experience of Black people in the United States. William et al. (2021) stated racism, prejudice, and racial injustices against Black people have a long history in the United States. Given the long history of oppression of Black people in the United States and colonial America, it would necessitate a framework

that captures the essence of racism and racial discrimination in all forms. One of CRT premise suggests that enslavement, centuries of discrimination, and unequal treatment provide a context for analyzing the effects of racial oppression (Aymer, 2016). While racism advances the interest of the dominant group (C. Brown, 2018; Delgado & Stefanic, 2017; Given, 2012), it must be understood within context to be addressed and to empower Black people fully. Thus, CRT provided a lens to conceptualize and understand racial trauma, the experience of microaggression, and their significance to cultural coping behaviors in sustaining resilience despite race-related occurrences of Black graduate counseling students. From a CRT perspective, racism is an element in politics, the educational system, media, sports, and the judicial system that is persistent and permanent (C. Brown, 2018). Thus, there may be a relationship between the variables of racial trauma, and microaggression in this study, which CRT may provide a context for understanding the impact it may have among Black counseling students.

Critical Race Theory's Relevance to the Research Questions

The aim of this study was to investigate if there is a predictive relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. Also, the study investigated if cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationships between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. The basic tenets and propositions of CRT capture the significance of the racism that Black graduate students may encounter in their academic and everyday lives. Also, CRT

provides a point of reference to conceptualize and address social injustices in different contexts.

The hypotheses of this study were that (a) greater racial trauma and experience of microaggression will predict lower resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs, while greater cultural coping behaviors will predict higher resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs; (b) cultural coping behaviors will mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs, and (c) cultural coping behaviors will mediate the relationship between experience of microaggression and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. CRT was relevant because it frames the RQs and hypotheses in this study, in that racial trauma and microaggression are essentially racism ingrained in society that benefits the majority. Also, it provided a context to comprehend how Black graduate students in counselor education programs may cope and demonstrate resilience despite racism and racial discrimination.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

College students have many experiences in college that contribute to their development and mental health. Black college students, in particular, have experiences that are often uniquely different from those of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. According to Henfield et al. (2013), African American students experience numerous subtle racist incidents in the academic setting. The persistent race-related incidents Black students encounter can potentially be detrimental to their well-being. Exposure to persistent race-related stressful conditions may lead to emotional and physiological

symptoms of racial battle fatigue (RBF) for African Americans and Blacks (W. A. Smith et al., 2007). RBF characterizes the lost stamina by marginalized groups while coping with the strains from the physiological and psychological effects of racial microaggression and racism (W. A. Smith et al., 2007).

RBF develops from the increased psychosocial and physiological effects of microaggression and macroaggression marginalized people (Smith et al., 2016). For instance, some Black college students attending PWI experience psychological, emotional, and academic challenges (Shahid et al., 2018), likely as a result of RBF. Smith et al. (2016) noted that male Black students attending several elite historically White institutions experience racial microaggression in academic and public settings in two forms: (a) being stereotyped and marginalized and (2) experiencing heightened surveillance and direct control by Whites. Likewise, William et al. (2021) reported Black male graduate students experience greater stress than Black female graduate students. The accumulation of such experiences may place Black male students at more risk for experiencing RBT. While RBF was not a variable being considered in the present study, its implications are widespread and deserve attention.

To provide a context for the current study, I begin this literature review with an outline of graduate students' experiences in general. I review the literature relevant to the graduate students of color's experiences followed by research on Black graduate students, and more specifically, Black counseling students, the population of interest in the present study. Due to the few studies found, I include literature on master's- and doctoral-level students. Additionally, within the context of Black students' experiences in college, I

present research on the variables of interest in this study: (a) racial trauma, (b) microaggression, (c) cultural coping behaviors, and (d) resilience. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic, and identified gaps in the current literature, studies conducted across quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods methodologies are reviewed.

Graduate Students

Graduate students have positive and negative experiences in counselor education that can profoundly impact their educational journey. Foss-Kelly and Protivnak (2017) explored the experience of 224 diverse master's students in and outside the classroom setting in counselor education. Foss-Kelly and Protivnak found the challenges and rewards were related to the academic environment; mentoring and advising; personal growth; life role balance; and finances. While the academic work, practical fieldwork, and online were noted as essential fundamentals in the counselor education program, master's students found them to be challenging (Foss-Kelly & Protivnak, 2017). For example, several of the master's students indicated that the coursework and program lacked rigor. However, the fieldwork was a significant aspect of their graduate school experience. The licensing process and finding employment were found to be a concern for the master's counseling students.

Additionally, the challenges of parenting concerns, partnership issues, financial pressures, social connection, and poor advisement were found to be especially difficult for master's level students (Foss-Kelly & Protivnak, 2017). While some of the master's students valued the support received from their faculty, others had difficulty with the

advising from the faculty (Foss-Kelly & Protivnak, 2017). Foss-Kelly and Protivnak found that receiving assistance and encouragement from other graduate peers and mentors, reflection, confidence, and compassion were important aspects of the master's students' experience in counselor education. The findings of the study suggests that the experience of master's level students in counselor education programs are both challenging and rewarding. It also underscores master's students' unique and diverse experience, such that while there may be similarities in one's experience, there may be differences that can make a significant impact on one's overall journey, potential success, and wellness.

Graduate Students of Color

Hipolito-Delgado et al. (2017) explored the experience of post-graduate students of color in counselor education to identify the perceived supports and barriers to completing their degree program. The findings identified the protective factors of diversity experience; support from faculty, friends and family as part of the post-graduate students of color experience (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017). Also, the findings revealed the risk factors of work, family, and school balance; program disconnection; and White dominance to impact post-graduate students of color experiences (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017). The results suggest that graduate students have positive and negative experiences during their educational journey, which can be protective factors and barriers to successfully completing their degrees.

In exploring the experience of master’s level counseling students of color, Baker et al. (2015) found that participants reportedly witnessed a lack of cultural awareness

from peers in their program where derisive or uninformed comments were made in class and during encounters with clients. Baker et al. found that master's students reported they felt there was a lack of representation in that the faculty and student body did not look like them and represent their cultural and ethnic background. Also, some students reported they felt support was lacking and that White students received more support and guidance in the program (Baker et al., 2015). Additionally, the students felt there were unclear or ambiguous standards for performance evaluation, and they needed to work two times harder than their White peers to be considered equal (Baker et al., 2015). Baker et al. noted that the master's students reported a need for advocacy by confronting instance of inequality, bias, and ignorance by educating peers about cultural awareness, speaking up about equality issues and change. Baker et al. found that the master's students experienced tokenism as reflected in their reported feelings of being selected because of their race instead of their ability to work with specific client referrals based on race matching.

In another study among students of color in doctoral programs in counselor education, Baker and Moore (2015) discovered that participants felt stereotyped by peers and faculty and targeted as a token in their program. They also described a need to code-switch and conform to the dominate narrative to be equal to the dominate group of peers. Although the findings from these studies speak to the inequalities and challenges students of color face in counselor education, it points to a potential need for counselor educators in counseling programs to address the inequalities faced by students from different

ethnicity as it relates to assistance, guidance, and advisement to make for a more equitable learning environment.

Black Graduate Students

The negative impact of institutionalized and systemic racism experienced by African American graduate students in academia cannot be denied (Engram, 2020). When considering Black graduate students' experiences, it is suggested in the literature that there is a difference in their experience compared to White students. The early stories of Black students are recounted with experiences of isolation, exclusion, and survival (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2008). Johnson-Bailey et al. (2008) examined the experience of Black students who finished their degrees from a major research university between 1962-2003, specifically related to their relationships with faculty, fellow students, and the institution. They found that Black professors and Black graduate students were essential in providing support and having a positive impact on Black graduate students' experiences at PWI. The findings showed that Black graduate students have a significantly different experience than White graduate students, who experienced a much friendlier campus and classroom environment.

Given the results of Johnson-Bailey et al.'s (2008) study, counselor education programs and counselor educators may benefit from understanding the overall experience of their Black students to consider the changes that would make for a friendlier educational environment. Additionally, when considering Black graduate students' experiences of racial discrimination, the effects can be detrimental to their mental health. Ong and Burrow (2018) found that African American students who experienced more

negative affect and less positive affective reactivity on days racial discrimination happened had high symptoms of depression 1 year later. The findings of this study suggest there may be long-lasting adverse consequences, years after initial occurrences of racial discrimination, that increase African American graduate students' vulnerability to mental health symptoms.

Black Counseling Students. The preponderance of counselor education programs are at PWIs where Black students have reported experiencing RBF. It is noted in the literature that Black counseling students face the challenges of feeling isolated, tokenized, disconnected, misunderstood, disrespected, and not fully supported by faculty (Haskins et al., 2013; Henfield et al., 2013). Haskins et al. (2013) examined the experience of Black students in a master's counseling program at a PWI and found their experiences consisted of (a) feelings of isolation, (b) tokenization, (c) Black counselor's perspectives lacking within coursework, (d) differences between support received by faculty of color and White faculty, and (e) support from Black and White peers assisted them in maneuvering the counseling program. Haskin et al. (2013) findings were consistent with the results of Henfield et al. (2013). In the study, Henfield et al. explored challenges faced doctoral African American students at a PWI in counselor education. The findings of the study revealed that African American doctoral students in counselor education faced the challenges of feeling isolated, disconnected, and lacking of cultural understanding impeded satisfaction with their programs (Henfield et al., 2013).

In an earlier study on doctoral African American counseling students' experiences, Henfield et al. (2011) stated that race-based interactions were additional

burdens for these students as they pursued their degrees. Henfield et al. found individual support in the form of assertiveness (i.e., taking ownership of the situation and making decisions) was a primary means to overcome some of the barriers, along with collective support in the form getting needs met through more experienced African American students, race-based organizations, and personal and professional care from advisors. The findings of Henfield et al. highlight the use of individual and collective supports among African Americans in counselor education despite the challenges faced, which is essential as this relates to the potential use of cultural coping behaviors.

Moreover, when exploring the mentoring experiences of Black female doctoral students in counselor education, Cartwright et al. (2021) found five themes: (a) gender and ethnic match, (b) desired qualities of the mentorship relationship, (c) support, (d) isolating and negative experiences, and (e) coping and meaning making. Cartwright et al. noted that the Black doctoral students had minimal interaction with Black professors in counselor education, which resulted in uncertainty of their career path decision. Black female doctoral students encountered inequalities in opportunities and exposure to mentorship and many challenges not faced by their non-Black counterparts, which potentially can negatively impact completion of their terminal degree (Cartwright et al., 2021). Although doctoral Black female students faced challenges in their counseling program, the study highlighted the specific coping strategies they used to make meaning of such negative encounters. To cope and make meaning of their negative experiences, the Black female doctoral students described they had to work harder than doctoral students who were not Black, conform to the dominant culture, find a voice, and gain

confidence, and figure out the type of counselor educator they desire to be (Cartwright et al., 2021). These studies described the similar stories of Black master's level and doctoral students in the counselor education programs, which is relevant to this study when considering the rationale for selecting the target population.

RBF has been examined across a variety of populations (e.g., Black faculty at PWIs, African American, Mexican American, and Latino/a college students, and Black men). Woods et al. (2021) examined how RBF influenced the role and context among African American and Black students. They noted that the adverse effects of racism and race-related stress could lead to and exacerbate RBF, which relates to how racial/ethnic minorities respond to and experience fighting racism. Their study consisted of 57 graduate students enrolled in counseling, clinical and counseling psychology, and marriage and family therapy graduate programs in the United States. The results showed that Black graduate students encountered RBF in their graduate student roles (Woods et al., 2021). Woods et al. discovered that Black graduate students encountered the most RBF in class. Black men reported significantly more stress than Black women from being students and advisees (Woods et al., 2021). Thus, given the ongoing and persistent race-related stress that Black graduate students have reported, further exploration of their experiences deserves attention. In counseling programs, students of African descent are not immune to race-related stressors that could contribute to RBF and subsequent mental, emotional, and psychological symptoms.

Racial Trauma

Polanco-Roman et al. (2021) indicated that racial and ethnic minorities frequently experience discrimination because of their race or ethnic affiliations. The occurrence of ethnic discrimination in its many forms may lead to trauma for minorities who experience its brutal realities. The everyday experiences of racial trauma or race-based stress have been noted in the literature to have detrimental impacts on racial and ethnic minority individuals. As noted in Chapter 1, "racial trauma" and "race-based stress" are used interchangeably in the literature and was used similarly in this study. *Racial trauma* refers to the events of danger related to real or perceived experiences of racial discrimination (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019). Edwin and Daniels (2022) further described racial trauma as chronic and more challenging than other traumatic experience, with long-term impact leading well into Black students' adulthood. Racial trauma negatively impacts Black students, affecting their college and career outcome through self-efficacy, adaptability, thoughts, decision making, and post-secondary transitions and attainment (Edwin & Daniels, 2022).

The findings on race trauma and race-based stress (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Polanco-Roman et al., 2021; Edwin & Daniels, 2022) not only emphasize the negative impact it has on minority populations, such as Black people, but also provides evidence of a social change issue that justifies a potential need for this study. Racial trauma is a key variable in this study. Racial discrimination may lead to psychological, behavioral, and health ramifications for youth and adults of color (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019). Polanco-Roman et al. (2021) investigated trauma reactions as a possible element

connected to racial and ethnic discrimination and suicide risk of college young adults ages 18-29. The results of this study were noteworthy in that they found a meaningful gender difference in stress sensitivity. Women reported more stress sensitivity than men. Additionally, they found significant differences in racial/ethnic discrimination, in such that Black young adults reported greater frequency of discrimination compared with Asian and Hispanic young adults, but not those who identified as another other race or ethnicity. The result of this study provides support for further examination of Black college students due to the greater frequency and exposure of racial discrimination and trauma among this population. When considering students, Polanco-Roman et al. noted that the findings endorsed the view that frequent racial and ethnic discrimination in institutional settings is related to sensitivity to stress, dissociation, depression, and suicide risk. Polanco-Roman et al.'s findings are significant in that they offer evidence to support a hypothesis in this study, which predicts that greater racial trauma or racial-based stress will lower the resilience of Black graduate students in counseling programs.

Racial Trauma and Black College Students

Some researchers have begun to explore and define racial trauma from the perspective of Black students to understand their perception and the construct, as well as the negative impact of their experiences, and their ability to cope and thrive. Hargons et al. (2022) investigated how Black students at a southeastern PWI defined racial trauma. Twenty-six Black collegians aged 18 to 27 were interviewed and asked to define race-based stress and racial trauma. Black students' definitions and understanding of racial trauma and race-based stress were related. The definition comprised three elements: (a)

temporal (e.g., how one experiences the impact of racism over time), (b) intensity (e.g., the perceived severity of symptoms and racist stressors), and (c) frequency (e.g., the number of racist stressors one has experienced). Consequently, Hargons et al. defined racial trauma from an academic standpoint as the "experience of enduring cognitive, affective, and/or somatic responses to racism, including race-based stress reactions and subsequent race-based stress symptoms, that may manifest based on the intensity and/or frequency of racist stressors a person has experience or witness" (p. 55). Hargon et al. indicated that synthesizing the definitions into the construct of racial trauma, similar to that of Comas-Diaz et al. (2019), required it to include how race-based stress can develop into racial trauma. Thus, both Comas-Diaz et al. and Hargons et al. provide a concise and precise definition of racial trauma and race-based stress that considers Black students' definitions and clarifies an already complex construct.

Racial Trauma and Black Undergraduate Students

While some researchers are exploring Black students' definitions of racial trauma (Hargon et al., 2022), others are examining how race-based stress is experienced. Grier-Reed et al. (2021) examined how undergraduate students who participated in the African American Student Network experienced anti-Blackness by analyzing notes from weekly discussion meetings over 13 years (2005–2006 to 2017–2018). Anti-Blackness refers to the systematic denial of Black people's humanity in the beliefs and practices of people and institutions that marginalize this ethnic group (Comrie et al., 2022). Grier-Reed et al. found that racial trauma was the primary way students experienced anti-Blackness, followed by racial rejection, racial microaggression, and systemic racism. The experience

of racial trauma involved events of danger such as in the news, violence in the form of shootings (on campus and off campus); threats of danger comprising of uprises in racist events; shame and humiliation by being called the n-word, being criminalized or being over-sexualized (Grier-Reed et al., 2021).

How Grier-Reed et al. identify the Black students' experience of anti-Blackness is echoed in William's et al. (2022) description of racial trauma. William et al., from a systemic trauma framework described the effects of racial trauma and psychological and academic ramifications for Black students. William et al. depicted racial trauma as a psychological state resulting from racism, racially motivated violence, or race-related incidents experienced directly and indirectly by Black students. Thus, ongoing racism may lead to psychological pain in the form of trauma response (William et al., 2022). While many Black students may be exposed to racism, not all racist stressor leads to racial trauma; rather, only those that are intense or frequent will likely lead to racial trauma (Hargons et al., 2020). Also, the absence of coping and healing strategies increases the likelihood of race-based stress symptoms progressing to racial trauma (Hargons et al., 2020). There appears to be a potential relationship between racial trauma and one's ability to cope that may buffer the negative impact of such experiences. The mediation relationship between racial trauma and cultural coping behaviors was examined in this study. It was anticipated that greater cultural coping behaviors would predict higher resilience and mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience in Black counseling students.

The psychological, emotional, and physical ramifications of racial trauma are apparent in the literature. When considering the research conducted among undergraduate students, the literature showed the negative effect of racial trauma. Carter et al. (2020) examined the association of race-based traumatic stress and posttraumatic stress disorder to conceptualize trauma. The study consisted of 421 participants from various ethnic backgrounds recruited from undergraduate psychology courses, several community health centers, dentistry, barbershops, and beauty salons. The researchers found that reactions to race-based trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms are significantly related and similar. Carter et al. also found that negative race-based experiences lead to posttraumatic stress disorder-like symptoms and injuries—particularly dissociation, anxiety, and depression. The findings of this study imply that there is a strong relationship between race-based traumatic stress and trauma symptoms that may be relevant in understanding and conceptualizing an individual's response and ability to cope to such adverse race-related incidences, which is applicable to this study. Also, it provides relevancy and support for a potential need for social change in university settings, such as counselor education programs where Black students may encounter these experiences.

The distress that racism and race-based traumatic stress causes may places Black college students a greater risk for mental health issues. Chao et al. (2014) examined perceived racism and the relationship between self-concept (i.e., self-esteem, shyness) and distress among 394 African American undergraduates and graduates at a historically Black university. Chao et al. found that perceived racism changed the relationship

between self-esteem and psychological distress and moderated the association between shyness and psychological distress among African American students. Chao et al. indicated that African American students with higher perceived racism are vulnerable to lower self-esteem, which is associated with higher psychological distress. In contrast, when African American students perceive less racism, they are able to manage the association between self-esteem and distress and maintain less distress irrespective of having either high or low self-esteem (Chao et al., 2014).

Chao et al. (2014) further indicated that low perceived racism could buffer against shyness on psychological distress. Thus, African American students may have greater internal resources (e.g., cultural-related coping) to sustain low psychological distress throughout different levels of shyness when they do not feel inferior, prejudiced, or discriminated against because of being Black (Chao et al., 2014). The psychological distress resulting from perceived racism among Black college students and their use of internal resources provided a context for why this study would be beneficial for enhancing the current literature. The use of internal resources in the form of cultural-related coping behaviors may buffer psychological distress resulting from racial trauma which could be associated with greater resilience. Thus, this study suggests that Black students' internal resources helps lower psychological distress resulting from racism, which aligns to the RQs and aims of this dissertation.

Racial Trauma and Graduate Students

Racial inequalities and racism are persistent problems in university settings, which should be most importance to higher education researchers, policymakers, and

practitioners (Truong et al., 2016). According to Truong and Museus (2012) and Truong et al. (2016), there is a need for more support for students in doctoral programs to navigate and negotiate racist situations in institutions by implementing comprehensive anti-racist policies. Truong et al. investigated doctoral students of color experiences and found that secondhand racism shapes their experiences in graduate programs. They experienced intellectual isolation and circumventing of faculty support, as evidenced by fewer access to mentorship and funding (Truong et al., 2016). Seeking social support and collective advocacy were critical mechanisms doctoral students of color used in coping with racism (Truong et al., 2016). However, when social networks were used as a mechanism for advocacy it might increase racism resulting from the doctoral students becoming direct targets within their educational settings (Truong et al., 2016). The study implies that social support and collective advocacy may positively and negatively affect doctoral students of color in dealing with racism. Further examining collective coping may add to the literature when considering how critical social support and collective advocacy are among doctoral students of color. Examining the racism experienced by Black graduate students in counselor education programs and their use of cultural coping behaviors in the form of social support and collective coping may add to the knowledge in this area and promote social change, as suggested in this study.

Racial Trauma and Black Graduate Students. While few studies have been noted in the literature on racial trauma among graduate students, it is evident that more is needed among this population, specifically among Black students. Supporting and improving Black graduate students' experiences may prove advantageous for counselor

education programs to promote social change and mental wellness. In a mixed research study conducted by R. M. Johnson and Strayhorn (2022), they discovered that Black male doctoral students on campus reported frequent occurrences of racism. R. M. Johnson and Strayhorn also discovered that Black male doctoral students reported steady cross-racial interchange with faculty and peers. Almost 40% of the Black male doctoral students felt they were treated differently at some point in their program because of race. Additionally, Black men perceived graduate school as unwelcoming and unsupportive and frequently encountered racial discrimination, which adversely impacted their confidence, identity, and sense of belonging. The findings revealed differences in gender between male and female students' experiences in counseling-related fields. Thus, it may be essential to consider the gender differences of Black counseling students' experiences relating to racial trauma.

When considering the adverse impact that racial trauma and race-based stress can have on Black graduate students' mental health, there are implications for social issues that counselor education programs should address. Thus, investigating racial trauma and race-based stress in counselor education programs may be warranted to improve Black students' experiences. I did not find any research on racial trauma specifically on Black graduate counseling students. This dissertation may be beneficial to counselor education programs and educators in understanding the experiences of Black counseling students. Also, the results of this dissertation may be valuable to support policy changes to improve the educational climate.

Experience of Microaggression

Microaggression is another form of racial discrimination that may lead to traumatization. As noted in Chapter 1, microaggression is the brief everyday racial verbal messages, behaviors, or environmental signs and symbols that are maliciously and insultingly communicated by perpetrators intentionally and unintentionally towards people of color because of their race or ethnicity, gender, religion, ability or capability, and other attributes (Sue et al., 2007; Torres-Harding et al., 2012; Wong & Jones, 2018). Based on the literature, the experiences of microaggression contribute to psychological distress. Nadal et al. (2019) examined the racial microaggressions, racial trauma, and PSTD symptoms among 254 participants. Nadal et al. found that high amount of racial microaggressions correlated with more traumatic symptoms. The results of Nadal's et al. study indicated that microaggression that occurred in school or work correlated with trauma. When bearing in mind the relationship between racial microaggression and traumatic symptoms, it is also evident that there may be a potential connection to the variable of racial trauma. Both racial trauma and microaggression have negative psychological impacts. Thus, the negative impacts of racial trauma and experience of microaggression make them significant variables to examine in the counseling education programs among Black counseling students to promote social change in higher education. This study may benefit counseling education programs in supporting Black counseling students.

Microaggression and Black Undergraduate Students

Microaggression has been associated with depression symptoms among Black college students. Marks et al. (2021) examined racial microaggression and depressive symptoms of 189 Black college students and found a significant relationship. Specifically, Marks et al. found a significant relationship among six racial microaggression dimensions (i.e., criminality, environmental invalidations, foreigner, invisibility, low-achieving/undesirable culture, and sexualization) and depression. The six racial microaggression dimensions were associated with depressive symptoms among Black college students, which is an important consideration as it relates to their mental health (Marks et al., 2021). Marks et al. also found that average and high ethnic identity moderated the relationship between the low-achieving/undesirable culture dimension of racial microaggression and depressive symptoms. In other words, ethnic identity was a protective factor in lowering levels of low-achieving/undesirable culture and depression symptoms. The findings of this study imply that racial microaggression among Black college students may lead to depressive symptoms, which aids in understanding the adverse impacts of the experience of microaggression.

Microaggression is not only associated with depressive symptoms, but it is also related to anxiety, stress, and trauma. Research conducted among undergraduate Black students reveals the negative psychological impact of microaggression. M. T. Williams et al. (2018) investigated the association between experiences of microaggressions and symptoms of anxiety, stress, and trauma among 201 African American undergraduate students at a big university. M. T. Williams et al. found that African Americans

encountered approximately 70% more general ethnic discrimination and experienced nearly twice as much racial microaggression as European Americans. Furthermore, African American undergraduate students reported experiencing twice as much stress from ethnic discrimination. M. T. Williams et al. discovered that African American female undergraduates experienced more anxiety than their male peers. They noted when they controlled for negative affectivity, the results showed more stress among female participants resulting from discrimination irrespective of the same or fewer microaggressions experienced as male participants. W. A. Smith et al. (2007) maintained that male African American students experience racial microaggression in campus academic, social, and public spaces in many forms. Consequently, there appears to be a difference between men and women in the experience of anxiety and stress resulting from discrimination, which may be essential to consider regarding racial trauma and microaggression. These findings revealed a connection between anxiety, stress, and the ethnic discrimination experienced by African American undergraduate students, which supports examining the relationships of the variables among the target population, graduate students in counseling programs.

Universities and colleges should consider the negative impact of microaggression among Black students to support their educational experience through improving social policies and increasing retention rates. Mills (2020) examined 17 undergraduate Black college students' experiences of environmental racial microaggression who attended a PWI from a Midwestern university and their descriptions of the forms of those racial microaggressions. Mills found that Black undergraduate students described experiencing

six environmental racial microaggressions that included being segregated in residence halls and inequitable university policies; few representations on campus; cultural prejudices in the curriculum; assumptions of criminality; tokenism; and a burden to conform. When considering the environmental racial microaggressions, one would expect that Black college students attending a PWI may be negatively impacted by such experiences. The detrimental impacts of environmental racial microaggressions may call for colleges and universities to improve and implement more anti-racist policy changes.

Microaggression should be taken seriously by higher education institutions because of the emotional and psychological impacts on Black college students, which may affect their overall experience and academic success. Emotional and psychological distress resulting from the experience of microaggression may contribute to Black students not feeling connected or continuing with their academics in higher education. Brezinski et al. (2018) examined the relationship between African American undergraduates, racial microaggressions, and college retention rates. The participants in this study consisted of 53 Black undergraduates from a large PWI in the spring of 2016. Brezinski et al. found that African American undergraduates attending the PWI public urban university experienced racial microaggression frequently. Although the researchers did not find a tied between students' experience and their intention to continue or return for another semester, the frequent encounters with racial microaggression may have contributed to emotional and psychological distress, which may have affected academic success. African American students in the study found themselves in situations with a noticeable absence of people representing their race or ethnicity (Brezinski et al., 2018).

Also, they experienced situations where their race was viewed as dysfunctional and undesirable (Brezinski et al., 2018). The findings of this study suggest that African American undergraduates may have difficulties fitting in at their college campuses. Regarding African American undergraduate students' frequent experience of microaggression, one may expect graduate students to have similar experiences.

Microaggression and Graduate Students in Counseling Related Fields

While there is more literature on undergraduate students' experiences of microaggression in the literature, few documented studies were conducted among graduate students from Black and other diverse backgrounds in counseling or related fields. When considering research conducted among graduate students, in one of the few studies conducted, Wong and Jones (2018) explored microaggressions experienced by students of color to understand the extent and nature of it in one of the most diverse master's of social work (MSW) educational settings. The participants in the study consisted of 43 students. Wong and Jones found that microaggressions were strong and persistent even in settings with great diversity. Also, Wong and Jones found that microinsults and microinvalidations were common and often racially or ethnically targeted. The results of Wong and Jones were comparable to Hollingsworth et al.'s findings (2018). Hollingsworth et al. examined racial microaggressions in social work education among Black students at a PWI. Hollingsworth et al. found that the school of social work is susceptible to subtle and invisible forms of racism. Considering that graduate students experience microaggression in MSW settings, it would be beneficial to examine whether graduate students in counseling programs have similar experiences.

With such findings among students in social work programs, it would be expected that students in counselor education programs would not be immune from exposure to racism and microaggression.

Horsford et al. (2019) explored the experiences of African American women in a clinically focused program who were recent doctoral graduates or had all but dissertation status. Horsford et al. found that racial discrimination difficulties were the experience of African American women in many systems in their academic environments. They entered as outsiders in their programs, such that they reported feeling isolated because of the infrastructure and racist behaviors that persisted throughout the program, which were not experienced by other White students (Horsford et al., 2019). For example, although there were standard practices in the program for faculty-student collaborations, students experienced negative interactions with faculty in the forms of isolation, racism, abuse of power and control, and subtly microaggression (Horsford et al., 2019). The African American women described experiencing various forms of microaggression and being treated differently compared to White students (Horsford et al., 2019). The results of this study suggest that African American women in the clinical doctorate program experienced various forms of microaggression; nonetheless, they displayed enormous levels of resilience and hope.

Microaggression and Counseling Students

Graduate students in counselor education are also negatively impacted by the experience of microaggression. O'Hara and Cook (2018) investigated doctoral-level counseling students' encounters with social class microaggression. Social class

microaggression refers to social class dimensions relating to socioeconomic status that influence beliefs and behaviors (O'Hara & Cook, 2018). The participants in the study consisted of 11 racially diverse doctoral students from across the United States, ranging from the age of 28 to 54 years old. O'Hara and Cook found that social class microaggressions had negatively impacted doctoral counseling students. O'Hara and Cook identified six unique themes that illustrate the impact of these experiences on doctoral-level counseling students: (a) feeling trapped in a no-win situation; (b) experiencing harm, including in relationships, due to the insensitivity of others; (c) being expected to handle work and money like others do; (d) feeling confused; (e) learning how to deal with social class microaggressions; and (f) knowing what needs to change and what they need to do. With the experiences of social class microaggressions, it appears that the doctoral-level counseling students learned adaptive ways to respond to and deal with such occurrences.

In another study, Vaishnav (2021) explored the impact of racial microaggressions on six doctoral students of color in CACREP-accredited counselor education programs. Vaishnav found four themes from the focus group that reflected the participants' experiences. The doctoral students identified their struggle by hiding part of themselves, self-doubt, and struggling with microaggression perpetuated by professors (Vaishnav, 2021). Also, they identified how covert and overt racism was a core of their experience and felt that counselor education as a field perpetuated institutional and systemic racism (Vaishnav, 2021). While going through the programs, the doctoral students reported they had to sacrifice themselves unwillingly by assimilating to the culture of their department

(Vaishnav, 2021). The doctoral students' experiences of racial microaggression kindled a sense of advocacy for their community, families, and the next generation of students (Vaishnav, 2021). The findings of this study highlighted the struggles resulting from racial microaggression of doctoral students of color and the sense of advocacy that was birth through such difficulties.

While these studies highlighted the microaggression experienced by students of color, they do not precisely reflect that of Black students in counseling programs. The studies are the only few research on microaggression found specific to counseling students, which suggests the topic has not been explored extensively enough in the literature, creating a gap. The focus of this dissertation was Black graduate-level counseling students' experience of microaggression; my hope was to add to the literature on this topic among this population.

Cultural Coping Behaviors

The experience of racism can negatively impact some African American students' ability to succeed, and how they cope plays a vital role in mitigating the adverse effects of race-related stress (Greer, 2021). Cultural-specific coping strategies and behaviors have been noted in the literature to have assisted African American adults and college students in managing race-related stress (Lewis-Cole et al., 2006; Greer, 2011; Lewis et al., 2020; Greer, 2021). Understanding the impact of cultural-specific coping strategies on Black graduate students' ability to persist, particularly when challenged by race-related stressors may lead to a greater conception of their resilience. While racism, racial discrimination, racial trauma, and microaggression negatively impact undergraduate and

graduate students, there is something worth noting about how these students cope with such race-related occurrences. Thus, Black graduate students' cultural coping behaviors may provide some insight into their ability to cope and contribute to resilience. Cultural coping behaviors refer to the cultural-specific coping that reflects African Americans' worldview that acknowledges spirituality, harmony, balance, collective group orientation, and rituals embracing the characteristics of individuals of African descent (Utsey et al., 2000). According to Tummala-Narra (2007), cultural attitudes and ideals are significant in nurturing and maintaining resilience after trauma. The cultural attitudes, ideas, and behaviors of Black graduate students in counseling programs may be valuable for understanding what contributes to their resilience. Cultural-specific coping strategies or cultural coping behaviors have been shown to help college students cope with racial trauma and experiences of microaggression.

When considering the cultural coping behaviors, Lewis-Cole and Constantine (2006) investigated African Americans' perceptions of racism-related stress (i.e., individual, institutional, and cultural) and the use of Africultural coping behaviors (i.e., cognitive/emotional debriefing, spiritual-centered, collective, and ritual-centered coping) and religious problem-solving strategies (i.e., self-directed, deferring, and collective). The participants in the study consisted of 284 African American adults from several locations in the northeastern United States, consisting of a historically Black college, an Ivy League university, a national professional conference, a barber- shop, a hair salon, and a church. The results showed that African American adults who perceived greater institutional race-related stress were found to use greater cognitive/emotional debriefing,

spiritual-centered, and collective coping strategies (Lewis-Cole & Constantine 2006). Lewis-Cole and Constantine found that African American women reported significantly higher deferring and collaborative religious problem-solving styles than men. Also, African American men reported higher self-directed religious problem-solving than African American women (Lewis-Cole & Constantine, 2006). Lewis-Cole and Constantine further found that among African women, a significant amount of cultural racism-related stress was associated with using less self-directed religious problem-solving coping.

In contrast, among African American men, a significant amount of cultural racism-related stress, Lewis-Cole and Constantine's (2006) study, was related to the use of more collective coping strategies. Overall, Lewis-Cole and Constantine indicated that the findings revealed that Africultural coping and religious problem-solving strategies are used by African Americans adults to deal with racism-related stress. In this study, the researchers suggested that cultural coping behaviors are significant among African Americans adults dealing with race-related stress. When dealing with racial trauma and microaggression, one would expect Black college students to lean on cultural coping behaviors to manage such race-related occurrences. Thus, it appears that there may be a direct association between the use of cultural coping behaviors of African American and Black students in coping with racial trauma and microaggression.

Cultural Coping and Black College Students

When reviewing the research on Black college students, there appears to be an apparent association between the use of cultural coping behaviors and racial

discrimination. Greer (2011) studied the moderating relationship between culture-specific coping strategies, race, gender discrimination, and psychological symptoms in a sample of 188 African American college women. Greer utilized the Africultural Coping Systems Inventory (ACSI) to investigate culture-specific coping strategies, which is a measurement instrument in this study. Greer found that race and gender-based discrimination correlated with adverse psychological symptoms. African American women reported exposure to slightly higher racism than sexism (Greer, 2011). Also, those coping strategies (i.e., cognitive-emotional debriefing, ritual-centered coping, collective-centered coping, and spiritual-centered coping) were not a significant moderator between race and gender-based discrimination and psychological symptoms (Greer, 2011). Greer noted the results were mixed, and while coping strategies were not found to be a significant moderator between race and gender-based discrimination and psychological symptoms, there were possible reasons for this contradiction. The possible reasons were that women used more cognitive-emotional debriefing than other strategies and used other coping strategies in response to psychological distress from racial discrimination (Greer, 2011).

Other research studies conducted on Black populations cultural coping behaviors and strategies have also yielded mixed results. Greer and Cavalhieri (2019) investigated the coping strategies of 283 African American men recruited from the Southern region of the United States at a large, predominantly White university and a large outpatient medical facility to examine the effects of institutional racism on psychological symptoms. Greer and Cavalhieri found institutional racism to be a positive predictor of all

psychological symptoms (i.e., anxiety, depression, somatization, interpersonal sensitivity, and obsessive-compulsive). Greer (2011) and Greer and Cavalhieri (2019) discovered that racism in the form of racial, gender, and institutional discrimination has adverse psychological symptoms. According to Greer and Cavalhieri, the findings of this study suggested that those who relied less on others for emotional or social support may have experienced mental health issues. The researchers found that problem-oriented coping predicted anxiety (Greer & Cavalhieri, 2019). Also, Greer and Cavalhieri found that spirituality positively predicts interpersonal sensitivity indicating an association between individual racism and ritual-centered coping in that more use of this strategy correlated with increased symptoms severity relating to the frequency of experience of racism. While the results of these studies were mixed, further study is warranted to examine the association between the use of cultural coping behaviors and racism and racial discrimination.

Cultural coping behaviors are undeniably vital in understanding how Black college students navigate race-based stress. In a more recent study, Greer (2021) examined culture-specific coping strategies as potential buffers of race-related stress on the academic self-concept of 201 African American college students. The result revealed that academic self-concept was strongly linked to academic performance (e.g., grade point average), and race-related stress significantly predicts of academic self-concept (Greer, 2021). Greer noted that these findings suggested that racism negatively affected African American students' attitudes about themselves as learners. Also, Greer indicated that academic self-concept might not be only self-driven or internally driven but is

influenced by campus racial climate. The findings revealed a significant effect on gender, such that women yielded higher academic self-concept scores than men (Greer, 2021). Additionally, the finding revealed a meaningful interaction between race-related stress and spirituality. For example, greater use of spirituality as a coping strategy was found to be associated with lower academic self-concept related to race-related stress (Greer, 2021). Such findings are consistent with Greer and Cavalhieri's (2019) previous findings that spirituality had a positive effect on predicting interpersonal sensitivity.

Additional studies in the literature continue to support the need for further exploring the use of cultural coping behaviors among Black college students due to the mixed findings. Shahid et al. (2018) investigated the experiences of Black college women attending PWIs. Specifically, Shahid et al. examined the relationship between campus racial tension and stress, coping style, and the strong Black woman concept. The participants in the study included 129 Black women enrolled at PWIs from ages 18 to 56 years. Shahid et al. also utilized the ACSI as one of the measurement scales in the study. Shahid et al. found that campus racial tension was significant in predicting stress among Black female college students at the PWIs. The findings were mixed on the relationship between perceived racial tension and stress levels and whether culture-specific coping moderated the relationship (Shahid et al., 2018). Shahid et al. stated that participants who reported using greater culture-specific coping had significantly greater stress levels than those who reported less. Also, participants reported using less culture-specific coping as racial tension increased and had greater stress than those who used more. Moreover, Shahid et al. noted that cognitive/emotional debriefing might buffer the relationship

between higher levels of racial tension and stress. While the results were mixed regarding the relationship between perceived racial tension, stress levels, and the use of culture-specific coping, the study provides evidence for further investigation of cultural coping behaviors related to race-related stress. Further examination of cultural coping behaviors may add to the literature, specifically to Black students in counseling programs and their ability to navigate racial trauma and microaggression.

There appear to be various coping mechanisms Black college students use to manage racism-related stress, which supports a need for a greater understanding of these strategies. One such coping strategy mentioned in the literature is the use of social support. Using social support may mitigate the impact of racism, racial discrimination, and racial trauma. Neukrug et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between lifetime exposure to racial discrimination and affect reactivity in response to an acute racial discrimination experience among 239 Black college students at a large PWI in the southern United States from March 2014 to May 2016. Neukrug et al. indicated that the findings of their study provided a greater understanding of how the levels of social support coping can shape the effects that racial discrimination has on the mental health of Black college students. Neukrug et al. did not find evidence of a direct relationship between lifetime racial discrimination and acute affect reactivity. However, they found that more frequent lifetime racial discrimination was significantly associated with acute arousal reactivity (Neukrug et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Neukrug et al. (2022) found that Black college students who used low levels of social support coping may experience a diminished (i.e., numbed or

blunted) arousal response associated with more frequent lifetime racial discrimination. At the same time, Black college students who used in high levels of social support coping may experience a heightened arousal response associated with more frequent lifetime racial discrimination (Neukrug et al., 2022). Neukrug et al. explained that those who used higher social support might have greater alertness to racial discrimination because of their engagement in conversations about their experience, thus, heightening arousal responses. Hence the use of social support coping by Black college students may affect the relationship between lifetime discrimination and affective responses to racial-related experiences (Neukrug et al., 2022). This study implies that social support might be pivotal in Black college students coping with racial discrimination, which may contribute to their resilience. More studies on cultural coping behaviors in response to racial trauma and microaggression among Black graduate students in counselor education programs may enhance the research on this topic.

Resilience

Although the experiences of race-based stress and microaggression can be traumatic for many, the ability of individuals to cope effectively with these occurrences has attributed to their resilience. Resilience, the ability of an individual to endure and bounce back from life challenges (Walsh, 2016), was another key variable in this study when considering how it may be associated with racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors. In the literature, there appears to be an association between these variables, although they have not been examined together. According to Tummala-Narra (2007), a greater understanding of the role that culture and

community play in the recovery and resilience of racially diverse populations requires an understanding of the traumatic events they may suffer. An individual's resilience may be vital to understanding how they face the challenges of race-related occurrences in their life.

Resilience can be demonstrated in many ways when Black people are faced with race-related experiences. Teti et al. (2012) analyzed adversity and resilience in 30 Black men and identified five primary forms of resilience among Black men: (a) perseverance, (b) commitment to learning and growing from hardship, (c) reflection and refocusing to address difficulties, (d) creation of a supportive environment and (e) garnering of support from religion and spirituality. The findings of this study show some similarities between resilience and cultural coping behaviors in that both involve drawing from supportive environments, religion, and spirituality. Hence, examining what contributes to the resilience of Black graduate counseling students provided a greater understanding of how they deal with challenges resulting from racial discrimination, such as racial trauma and microaggression conducted in this study.

Resilience and College Students

Racial socialization messages communicated by parents or caregivers in childhood and adolescence have been noted in the literature to contribute to resilience. Racial socialization messages describe parents' or caregivers' conversations with their children about being Black and the differential treatment one may experience because of their race to foster cultural pride and cope with discrimination (D. L. Brown & Tylka, 2011). D. L. Brown and Tylka (2011) investigated whether racial socialization messages

(i.e., pride reinforcement, coping with antagonism, and appreciation of legacy) preserve resilience when racial discrimination is perceived. The participants in the study comprised 290 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students ages 17 to 34 years who identified as Black/African American and Biracial. Brown and Tylka found that general racial socialization messages moderated racial discrimination and resilience. The students who reported having fewer racial socialization messages and greater racial discrimination presented less resilience. In contrast, the students who reported having greater racial socialization messages and racial discrimination were more resilient.

The racial socialization messages in the cultural context of the experience of Black students helped them cope with racial discrimination and preserve resilience, D. L. Brown and Tylka (2011) found. This study suggests that greater racial socialization messages aid in sustaining resilience among Black college students to cope with racial discrimination. A plethora of research on Black college students and resilience has been conducted among Black undergraduate students. Consequently, the influence of resilience in Black graduate students, specifically, in Black graduate counseling students is not well understood. Reviewing the research on resilience and Black undergraduate students provided a context for the inclusion of this variable in the current study.

Research conducted among Black undergraduate students shows that optimal health functioning is related to resilience. Utsey et al. (2008a) examined the optimal health functioning of people of color, specific to African American undergraduate college students. The study consisted of 215 African American undergraduate college students. Utsey et al. found a significant association between religiosity, racial pride, ego

resilience, and optimism. Notably, the findings showed that religiosity had a significant positive effect on optimism, and racial pride had a significant positive effect on ego resilience. Additionally, the findings showed that ego resilience had a positive relationship on optimism and a positive effect on life satisfaction. Utsey et al. concluded that religion might give African Americans a context to view positive and negative events, and those with greater racial pride were more resilient, increasing their overall well-being. The findings of this study imply that among Black undergraduate students' religiosity and racial pride improved resilience and well-being. It is evident from the results that cultural factors may contribute to resilience and the optimal health of African American students by way of religion and racial pride. The findings are relevant to this dissertation, suggesting a possible relationship between cultural coping behaviors (i.e., religiosity and racial pride) and resilience.

Furthermore, research conducted among Black undergraduates on resilience shows students' various coping strategies used to deal with race-based stress. Utsey et al. (2008b) studied cultural, sociofamilial, and psychological resources in alleviating the harmful effects of stressful life events and race-related stress in African American undergraduate students. Utsey et al. found that the experiences of racism were a more powerful predictor of psychological distress than stressful life events. Also, Utsey et al. discovered that sociofamilial resources suppressed the effect (negatively correlated) on race-related stress, but cultural resources (racial pride and religiosity) did not. Cultural resources in the form of racial pride and religiosity were found to be associated with sociofamilial resources in the form of family adaptability and cohesion (Utsey et at.,

2008b). Cultural coping and sociofamilial resources mitigated the negative impact of race-related stress among undergraduate college students, which should directly increase resilience. It is evident that racism results in psychological distress, and based on the findings, the relationship between cultural and sociofamilial resources may be an important consideration in understanding resilience. The cultural and sociofamilial resources available to Black college students appear to provide some buffers against race-related stress.

When individuals can utilize behaviors and resources to navigate their way through adverse or traumatic events to flourish, they are observed to be resilient (Ungar, 2013). The resilience of college students can be attributed to their ability to flourish within the higher education setting despite the effects of racial trauma and the experience of microaggression. Grier-Reed et al. (2022) examined the relationship between flourishing and posttraumatic growth among Black undergraduate students who reported a history of racial trauma. The study participants comprised 96 undergraduate students at a Midwestern university. Grier-Reed et al. discovered that Black undergraduates who self-reported racial trauma that were able to deepen their connections with others, tap into their inner strength, gain new perspectives and appreciation for life, and connect to spirituality grow were more likely to have reported flourishing. One can surmise from the results of this present study that the ability of Black collegians can flourish in higher education despite racial trauma by utilizing collective coping and use internal strengths as resources.

Resilience may be significant in terms of coping with racial trauma and microaggression in higher education when it related to the belief that Black student have relating to their experiences. Warren and Hale (2020) examined the effects of rational beliefs about academics on grit and resilience among 289 undergraduates at a public institution serving minorities. Warren and Hale found that work habits were positively associated with grit and resilience among undergraduate college students. In addition, Warren and Hale found that male students reported significantly higher level of resilience than female students. There appears to be a difference in resilience levels between male and female students, which may be an essential factor to consider in this study. When considering the coping resources of college students, the findings of this study imply that academic rational beliefs increase grit and resilience among undergraduate students. Warren and Hale's findings are relevant to the current study in that they show how resilience is potentially related to using one's resources to navigate higher education. While there are sufficient studies on the resilience of Black undergraduate students, no studies were found on Black graduate students in counselor education programs.

Summary and Conclusions

The studies cited in this chapter mark the intricacy of the dynamic of racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. An intertwining connection between the variables brings attention to the importance and validation that warrants further investigation. In the literature, there are documented studies on the adverse effects of racial trauma or race-based stress (Polanco-Roman et al., 2021; Carter et al., 2020; Chao

et al., 2014; Truong et al., 2016) and microaggression (Nadal et al., 2019; Marks et al., 2021; M. T. Williams et al., 2018; Brenzinsk et al., 2018; Mills, 2020; Wong & Jones, 2018; O'Hara & Cook, 2018) among college students. While Black college students experience varied forms of race-related incidents that are detrimental, studies show the significance of students using cultural coping strategies and behaviors (Lewis & Constantine, 2006; Greer, 2011; Greer & Cavalhieri, 2019; Greer, 2021; Shahid et al., 2018; Neukrug et al., 2022) in preserving resilience (D. L. Brown & Tylka, 2011; Grier-Reed et al., 2022; Warren & Hale, 2020; Utsey et al., 2008a, 2008b).

Even with the studies conducted in the literature on college students relating to this topic, few are found among Black graduate students, specifically those in counseling programs. An abundance of studies is documented among undergraduate students, which supports the potential benefit of this study. This current quantitative correlational design study addressed this gap by examining if racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors will predict the outcomes of resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. Also, the study examined if cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs.

In the following chapter, I will expound on the proposed quantitative cross-sectional survey methodology to answer the RQs designed to investigate if there is a predictive and mediation relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggressions, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience of Black graduate students in counseling programs. I will also discuss the rationale selecting the methodology;

procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection; instrumentation and operationalization of constructs; data analysis plan; and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In this quantitative descriptive study, I used a correlational design to examine if the predictor variables of (a) racial trauma, (b) experience of microaggression, and (c) cultural coping behaviors predict the outcome of resilience in Black students in counseling programs. Also, I examined if cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and resilience in Black students in counseling programs. In this chapter, I will discuss the research design and rationale, methodology, data analysis plan, and ethical procedures. The discussion of methodology encompasses the population and sampling procedures; recruitment, participation, and data collection procedures; and instrumentation and operationalization of constructs.

Research Design and Rationale

I employed a correlational design to collect data using cross sectional survey research design. Correlational design was appropriate for this dissertation because this was a non-experimental study that aims to describe and measure the association between two or more variables without the researcher's manipulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Warner, 2013). Additionally, correlational research was suitable for this dissertation because it allows researchers to make predictions utilizing statistical tests, such as simple linear or multiple regression (Burkholder et al., 2016). The RQs and hypotheses for this study were as follows:

RQ1: Do racial trauma, the experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors predict resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs?

H_o1: Greater racial trauma and experience of microaggression do not predict lower resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs while greater cultural coping behaviors do not predict higher resilience.

H_a1: Greater racial trauma and experience of microaggression predict lower resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs while greater cultural coping behaviors predict higher resilience.

RQ2: Do cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs?

H_02: Cultural coping behaviors do not mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs.

H_a2: Cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs.

RQ3: Do cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between the experience of microaggressions and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs?

H_03: Cultural coping behaviors do not mediate the relationship between experience of microaggression and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs.

H_a3: Cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between experience of microaggression and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs.

I examined whether greater racial trauma and experience of microaggression (independent variables) predict lower resilience (dependent variable) in Black graduate students in counseling programs. Secondly, this study examined if greater cultural coping behaviors (independent variable) predict higher resilience (dependent variable) in Black graduate students in counseling programs. Thirdly, study investigated if cultural coping behaviors (independent variable) mediate the relationship between racial trauma (independent variable), experience of microaggression (independent variable), and resilience (dependent variable) in Black graduate students in counseling programs.

In a review of the literature, research found on the variables of racial trauma or race-based stress, microaggression, cultural-specific coping, and resilience were done separately in previous quantitative and qualitative studies. This quantitative study expanded the investigation by focusing on the correlational and mediation relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience in Black students in counseling programs to understand their experiences, which allowed for easy replication, comparison of other studies already conducted, and identification of what further research is needed.

Methodology

Population

The target population in this study was master's and doctoral level students enrolled in any counseling education programs, which may be from various disciplines. The target population included students with experience ranging from 1st-year master's to doctoral students attending either a PWI and HBCU, or any public or private

institution. The population of interest was students from the African Black diaspora who identify as being Black, African American, or other ethnic background. For the specific aim of the current study, the term “Black” was inclusive of all people from the African Black diaspora.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

Participants for the study was Black counseling students, age 18 years and older, who were in master's or doctoral program in the United States, and who have had a race-related experiences, such as racial discrimination, racial trauma, or microaggression in the school or community setting. Individuals not meeting the eligibility criteria were excluded from the study. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were utilized to ensure that participants in the study fall within the target population of interest.

Sample Size

Power analysis or sample size calculation was critical for ensuring that a sufficient number of participants were enrolled in a study to answer the question of interest (Salkind, 2010). A priori analysis using G*Power (version 3.1.9.7) was conducted to ensure a sufficient sample size for the study. The G*Power (version 3.1.9.7) analysis indicated that to meet statistical power for multiple linear regression, with three predictor variables, a minimum sample size of 77 participants would be sufficient to produce a medium effect size of .15, with alpha at .05, and power at .80 (Faul et al., 2009). The statistical power of .80 was selected for calculating the sample size because it is the suggested goal that is recommended for calculating the sample size when planning for a study (Warner, 2013). A relatively medium effect size of .15, was selected for an

80% chance of detecting a 15% change of the variance in scores for this study. Also, a conventional alpha of .05 was selected for a reasonably low risk of making a type 1 error, that is the probability of rejecting a true null hypothesis (Warner, 2013). Although the minimum sample size of 77 was recommended after conducting a priori analysis, I over-sampled by 10% to account for surveys with incomplete data. Thus, a minimum sample of at least 85 participants was sought to test the hypotheses. However, I collected data until I obtained at least 77 completed surveys.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment

Once I obtained approval from Walden University's institutional review board to conduct this study, I commenced recruitment of participants from a university research participation pool, colleges or universities across the United States, individual referrals, social media (e.g., LinkedIn and Facebook), and listservs (e.g., Counselor Education and Supervision Network Listserv). The participants for this study were recruited by an invitation letter providing information about the study, how their participation could be of benefit, informed consent, and how to complete the online survey. The invitation letter was shared on social media (see Appendix A), listservs (see Appendix B), posted on campuses, and emailed to program coordinators of counseling programs at colleges or universities in southern parts of the United States for posting at their institutions (see Appendix C). The invitation letter included a direct web link and quick response (QR) code to complete the online consent, questionnaires (see Appendices D–G), and demographic questions (see Appendix H) on Qualtrics. Also, participants were asked to

share the invitation letter with family, friends, classmates, colleagues, or anyone they thought would be appropriate and who fell within the target population.

Participation

Participants who accessed the web link or QR code to the online survey was taken to the informed consent document to complete. They were instructed first to read the electronic consent form carefully. The informed consent notified participants that to be included in the study, they must be 18 years of age or older, enrolled as master's or doctoral level students in a counseling program, identify as Black, African American, or within the African Black Diaspora, and have had a race-related incident such as racial discrimination, racial microaggression, or racial trauma. Also, participants were notified that it will take approximately 20 min to complete the survey and that their participation is voluntary, as there will be no compensation for volunteering. Participants were informed that they could withdraw their participation at any time during the survey. To maintain anonymity participants' names will not be asked or required. The informed consent included information about the study, participants role, privacy, risks, and the Walden University Institutional Review Board and my contact information. After reading the informed consent, participants were asked to continue to the survey if they agreed and consented on Qualtrics.

Data Collection

To collect data for the study, I used Qualtrics. An online survey minimized social desirability bias, and the response effects associated with conducting this study (Groves et al., 2009). Also, using an online survey allowed for quicker data collection and for

ensuring enhanced privacy for participants (Burkholder et al., 2016). Once participants accessed the link provided in the invitation letter, they were directed to read the anonymous survey consent form. After agreeing to participate, the participants filled out the online survey and demographic questions. The online survey consisted of a 99-item survey comprised of the Index of Race-Related Stress-Brief Version (IRRS-B), Racial Microaggression Scale (RMAS), ACSI, Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), and demographic questions. The demographic questions (see Appendix H) asked participants about their age, gender, level of education, current program of study, current college or university, and employment status. After completing the online survey, participants were forwarded to the thank you page.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

Index of Race-Related Stress-Brief Version

The IRRS-B was developed by Utsey (1999) to assess the race-related stress experienced by African Americans because of racism. IRRS-B was suitable to be used in this study to capture the racial trauma or race-based stress experienced by Blacks in the form of cultural, institutional, and individual racism, as this was appropriate to address the RQ and variables in question. The IRRS-B has been documented in the literature to be valuable by researchers in assessing the race-related experiences of African Americans (Cavalhieri & Wilcox, 2022; Greer & Cavalhieri, 2019; Pittman & Kaur, 2018). The developer, Utsey, granted authorization to use this measurement scale in this dissertation.

The IRRS-B comprises 22 items measuring cultural racism, institutional racism, and individual racism that are rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale: 0 (*this never happened*

to me), 1 (*this event happened, but did not bother me*), 2 (*this event happened and I was slightly upset*), 3 (*this event happened and I was upset*), and 4 (*this event happened and I was extremely upset*; Utsey, 1999). Some of the items on the IRRS are "You have been threatened with physical violence by an individual or group of White/non-Blacks"; "You were the victim of a crime, and the police treated you as if you should just accept it as part of being Black"; and "You were passed over for an important project although you were more qualified and competent than the White/non-Black person given the task" (see Appendix D). Additionally, the IRRS-B was normed for 16 to 91 years old African Americans in the Northeast from a private Catholic university, a substance abuse program in an urban center, and the community (Utsey, 1999). The IRRS-B has acceptable reliability and validity. Utsey et al. (1999) stated that Cronbach's alpha for the IRRS-B subscales was .78 for the cultural racism subscale, .69 for the institutional racism subscale, and .78 for the individual racism subscales. Utsey stated that the moderated IRRS-B subscale intercorrelations, the high correlations between the subscales, and the global scale measure suggested that the subscales measured unique features of the same construct of African Americans' experience with racism.

A race-related stress score was obtained for each of the IRR-B racism domains by summing up the scores for each category. A higher score on the racism domains indicates higher race-related stress in that domain. The global racism score was obtained by the totaled scores for each racism category that is converted into z-scores and then totaled.

According to Utsey (1999), the validity of the IRRS-B was demonstrated in a correlation study with similar measures of race-related stress. Also, the Pearson product-

moment correlation was positively and statistically significant between the IRRS-B and its Global Racism, the Racism and Life Experience Scales-Revised, and Group Impact subscales. The subscales were noted to have acceptable internal consistency and reasonable subscale intercorrelation coefficients demonstrating that this measurement scale measures distinct aspects of race-related stress (Utsey, 1999). Cavalhieri and Wilcox (2022) utilized the IRRS-B to investigate the effects of classism and racism on the psychological symptoms of African American men. Ezzedine and Polyrazil (2020) utilized the IRRS-B to inspect the relationship between perceived race-related stress, ethnic discrimination, and coping styles among ethnically diverse students. Moreover, Greer and Spalding (2017) used the IRRS-B to examine moderating relationship between age and effects of racism on psychological symptoms of African American women. Thus, based on the previous studies done, the IRRS-B was an appropriate measurement scale to assess racial trauma or race-related stress resulting from racism.

Racial Microaggression Scale

Torres-Harding et al. (2012a) developed the RMAS to evaluate the perceptions of racial microaggression among people of color. I used the instrument in this study to assess the racial microaggression of the participants, as this was appropriate in capturing their experience and addressing the RQ. The RMAS has been documented in the literature to be valuable by researchers in investigating the experience of microaggression (Hollingsworth et al., 2017). Researchers are granted authorization to reproduce and use the RMAS for non-commercial research and educational purposes from the PsycTESTS and permission has been granted by the developer Torres-Harding.

Moreover, the RMAS consists of a total of 32- items that assess the themes of microaggression. The themes consist of (a) foreigner/not belonging, (b) criminality, (c) sexualization, (d) low-achieving/undesirable culture, (e) invisibility, and (f) environmental invalidation. The respondents are asked to select how often does this happen to them using a Likert-type scale: 0 (*never*), 1 (*a little/rarely*), 2 (*sometimes/a moderate amount*), and 3 (*often/frequently*; Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015). Also, respondents who report microaggression are asked how stressful, upsetting, or bothersome the experience is using a Likert-type scale: 0 (*this has never happened to me*), 0 (*not at all*), 1 (*a little*), 2 (*moderate*), and 3 (*high level*). Sample items on the RMAS in each of the themes include, "Because of my race, other people assume that I am a foreigner," "Other people treat me like a criminal because of my race," "People suggest that I am "exotic" in a sexual way because of my race," "Other people act if they can fully understand my racial identity, even though they are not of my racial background," "Others prefer that I assimilate to the White culture and downplay my racial background," and "When I interact with authority figures, they are usually of a different racial background" (Torres-Harding et al., 2012b; see Appendix E). The RMAS was scored in two parts. The perceived microaggression subscale was commuted by using the (a) part of each item, the first part that assesses participants' perception of how often or frequently they experience a given microaggression (Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015). The second subscale corresponds to the (b) part of each scale item that assesses how bothersome, upsetting, or stressful participants perceived these experiences to be (Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015). The distress subscales were computed by using the (b)

items. For each distress scale, the mean of the (b) items answered on the subscale will be computed (Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015). A higher score in each category indicates a greater experience of microaggression and perceived stressfulness of those experiences.

The experience of microaggression was measured using the subscale of environmental invalidation of the RMAS. The RMAS does not yield a single or total global score; therefore, the environmental invalidation subscale was used to measure the experience of microaggression. Environmental invalidation characterizes the negative messages perceived that result from the lack of presence of individuals from the person's ethnic background in school or work (Torres-Harding et al., 2012a). Torres-Harding and Turner (2015) found that African Americans reported more significant distress after environmental microaggression. Micro-invalidations might be pertinent in comprehending Black individuals' life experiences, stressors, and emotional adjustment (Mercer et al., 2011). Thus, suggesting the relevance of environmental invalidation as a vital dimension to measure in this study.

The RMAS was normed with people of color in university and community settings. Cronbach's alphas on the RMAS were good across the themes: foreigner/not belonging (α = .78), criminality (α = .85), sexualization (α = .83), environmental invalidation (α = .81); low-achieving/undesirable culture (α = .87), invisibility (α = .89), and environmental invalidation (α = .81; Torres Harding et al., 2012a). The RMAS demonstrated good convergent validity, such that the scale had a positive correlation with the Schedule of Racist Events (SRE) inventory that assessed African Americans' adverse life incidences and race-related stressors (Torres Harding et al., 2012a). All the distress

subscales exhibited very good reliabilities of .70 or higher, except for the Foreign Distress subscale measure in the African Americans, which had a Cronbach's α of .69, indicating moderately accepted reliability (Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015). The distress subscales had a positive association and correlation with Appraised Discrimination subscale for the General Ethnic Discrimination Scale and all three subscales of the Ethnic Microaggression Scale for Latinos and Asian Americans (Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015). Additionally, the distress subscales correlated with the original RMAS subscale that measured microaggression experiences (Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015).

Marks et al. (2021) utilized the RMAS to examine racial microaggression and symptoms of depression in Black college students to replicate previous findings and determine if ethnic identity was a moderator. Furthermore, William et al. (2018) utilized the RMAS to examine the connection between microaggression, anxiety, stress, and trauma of undergraduate students who identified as African American. Brezinski et al. (2018) also utilized the RMAS as a measurement scale to investigate racial microaggressions and African American college students' retention rates. Thus, based on previous studies, the RMAS was a measurement scale relevant to understanding the experience of microaggression among the target population of this study.

Africultural Coping Systems Inventory

The ACSI was developed by Ustey et al. (2000) to capture the cultural-specific coping strategies utilized by African Americans in everyday stressful situations. ACSI was appropriate and suitable for this study because it measured one of the variables by assessing the cultural coping behaviors that Black counseling students may employ

during race-related stressful and traumatic events. The ACSI has been documented in the literature to be helpful by other researchers in assessing the cultural-coping strategies used by African Americans to manage everyday stressors (Lewis-Cole & Constantine, 2006; Utsey et al., 2007; Robinson-Wood, 2009; Liao et al., 2020; Greer, 2021). PsycTESTS reproduced the ACSI. Authorization was given to researchers to replicate and utilize the inventory for non-commercial research and educational purposes without written permission from the creator (see Appendix F).

According to Ustey et al. (2000), the items on the ACSI was derived from interviews with African American from various backgrounds, related literature review, and the primary researcher's observation. The ACSI comprises of 30 items that assess coping strategies African Americans use in stressful life situations (Utsey et al., 2000). Individuals completing the ACSI are asked to describe the stressful incidents experienced within the past week or so and to indicate the degree they use cultural-specific coping strategies of cognitive and emotional debriefing, spiritual-centered coping, collective coping, and ritual-centered coping. The ACSI is rated using a 4-point Likert-type: 0 (*does not apply or did not used*), 1 (*used a little*), 2 (*used a lot*), and 3 (*used a great deal*; Utsey et al., 2000). For this study, participants was asked to rate the degree they employed each of the cultural-coping strategies to manage with racial trauma and experiences of microaggression. The ACSI assesses four factors that include the cognitive and emotional debriefing consisting of 11 items (e.g., "sought out people I thought would make me laugh"), spiritual-centered coping consisting of 8 items (e.g.," read passages from a daily mediation book"), collective coping consisting of 8 items (e.g., "got a group of family or

friends together to help with the problem"), and ritual-centered coping consisting of three items (e.g., "Burned incense for strength or guidance in dealing with the problem"; Utsey et al., 2000, p. 203). The ACSI yields an individual subscale score for each of the cultural-coping strategies of cognitive and emotional debriefing, spiritual-centered coping, collective coping, and ritual-centered coping. The higher score on the domain would signify greater utilization of that specific cultural-coping strategies to deal with everyday stressful situations.

Cultural coping behaviors was measured using the subscales of collective coping of the ACSI. The ACSI does not yield a single or total global score; therefore, the collective coping subscale was used to measure cultural coping behaviors. Despite how disjointed the current research on the understanding of collective coping (Kuo, 2013), there is evidence in the literature of its use among culturally diverse populations. Collective coping is the leaning of individuals on their social support systems and group-centered activities to cope (Lewis et al., 2013). Collective coping behaviors are multifaceted stress responses influenced by collective norms, values, and tendencies of individuals (Kuo, 2013). When dealing with cultural racism-related stress, African American men were found to utilize more collective coping strategies, while African American women used greater self-directed religious problem-solving (Lewis & Constantine, 2006). Among Black women, collective coping was found as the primary manner of coping with stress (Robinson-Wood, 2009). Black women leaned on their support network to handle with microaggression (Lewis et al., 2013). The use of social support may have a direct relationship between lifetime discrimination and affective

responses to race-related occurrences of Black college students (Neukrug et al., 2022). Based on the literature, collective coping was a significant element to consider in this study. Collective coping might mediate the relationship between racial trauma, the experience of microaggression, and resilience.

Moreover, the ACSI was normed for African American adults who lived in the northeastern and southeast United States, according to Utsey et al. (2000). The ACSI has acceptable internal consistency reliability with a Cronbach alpha coefficient for the four factors varying from .71 to .80, Utsey added. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for factor 1, cognitive and emotional debriefing, was .80; factor 2, spiritual-centered coping, was .79; factor 3, collective coping, was .71; and factor 4, ritual-centered coping, was .75. The concurrent validity of the ACSI was established by a correlational study from the Ways of Coping Questionnaire created by Folkman and Lazarus (1985), which showed a correlation between the two scales (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985, as cited in Utsey et al., 2000). Utsey et al. cautioned against making interpretations between the ACSI and Ways of Coping Questionnaire, given the Euro-centric epistemology ground of the latter instrument. Shahid et al. (2018) utilized the ASCI as one of the measurement scales in their study to investigate campus racial tension, stress, coping style, and the strong Black woman concept of Black college women attending PWI. Greer (2011) utilized the ACSI to assess the moderating relationship of culture-specific coping strategies, race, and gender discrimination relating to the psychological symptoms of African American college women. The ACSI was suitable for evaluating the cultural coping behaviors of the target population in this dissertation to answer the RQ.

Brief Resilience Scale

B. W. Smith et al. (2008) created the BRS to determine individuals' ability to bounce back from stress. The BRS was appropriate for this study to evaluate participants' ability to recover from race-related stress, such as racial trauma and experience of microaggression, to assess the coping strategies used and their resilience in addressing the RQ. The BRS has been effective in assessing resilience in other studies in the literature (Raghaven & Sandanapitchal, 2019; Shakespeare-Finch & Daley, 2017). The developer of BRS, B. W. Smith et al., granted permission for the use of the instrument in this dissertation.

Moreover, the BRS was normed with two undergraduate student samples and cardiac rehabilitation patients (B. W. Smith et al., 2008). The BRS includes six items that are measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), with a higher scale score suggesting higher levels of resilience (Shakespeare-Finch & Daley, 2017; B. W. Smith et al., 2008). Items on the questionnaire ask individuals to rate their ability to cope (e.g., "I tend to bounce back quickly after a hard time"; see Appendix G). The BRS was scored by adding the value 1 to 5 of each response for all six items, creating a range from 6-30. To obtain a global score, the total score was divided by six questions. The BRS score was interpreted as follows 1.00-2.99 (low resilience), 3.00-4.30 (normal resilience), and 4.31-5.00 (high resilience). The BRS was demonstrated to be a reliable instrument with substantial psychometric properties that had good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .80-.91. Warren and Hale (2020) utilized the BRS as one of the measurement scales to investigate academic

rational beliefs on grit and resilience among undergraduate college students. Moreover, Haktanir et al. (2021) utilized the BRS as one of the measurement scales to investigate the relationship resilience, academic self-concept, and 1st-year college. The BRS presented to be a good measurement scale for assessing the resilience of counseling students who have had racial traumatic and microaggression experiences.

Data Analysis Plan

I used IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29) to clean and analyze the collected data. Descriptive and inferential statistics was conducted. Descriptive statistics refers to the statistics used to summarize information about a sample in a research study (Warner, 2013). The descriptive statistics for this study included frequencies (e.g., number of male and female participants in the sample), mean, and standard deviation (e.g., mean age of the sample, group mean and standard deviation of primary outcomes for the independent and dependent variables; see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Inferential statistics refer to means or correlations based on sample scores in research studies to make inferences beyond the sample (Warner, 2013). For example, the inferential statistic of multiple regression was used to test the hypotheses in this dissertation. Multiple regression allows researchers to learn about the relationship between several predictors or independent variables and an outcome (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Cultural coping behaviors was used as the variable for examining the mediating relationships between racial trauma, experience of microaggressions, and resilience.

Several assumptions must be met for multiple regression. First, there must be a linear relationship, such that the scores on X and Y should each have a univariate normal

distribution shape (Warner, 2013). Second, the assumption of multivariate normality must be met such that all the variables must be normally distributed. Third, there must be no to little multicollinearity, so the predictor variables should not be highly correlated and independent (Warner, 2013). Fourth, there must be no-auto correlation. Last, the assumptions of homoscedasticity must be met such that there are equal variances of Y scores at X variables at each level (Warner, 2013). Once the assumptions for multiple regression were satisfied, a multiple regression analysis was computed to address the first RQ to inspect the correlation between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience. The predictor variables are racial trauma as measured by IRRS-B, environmental invalidation as measure by RMAS, and collective coping as measured by ASCI. The outcome variable is resilience as measured by BRS.

The assumptions for regression must be met for mediation analysis (Warner, 2013). The assumptions of a linear relationship between the variables, multivariate normality, no to little multicollinearity, no-auto correlation, and homoscedasticity must be satisfied. Also, no confounders should be associated with the predictor and outcome variables and the mediator and outcome variables (Celli, 2022). Once the assumptions of mediation were satisfied, to address the second RQ, mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience. Additionally, to address the third RQ, mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether cultural coping behaviors mediate the experience of microaggression and resilience. The predictor variables are racial trauma as measured by IRRS-B and environmental invalidation as measured by RMAS. The mediator variable is

collective coping as measured by ASCI. The outcome variable is resilience as measured by BRS.

Threat to Validity

Threats to Internal Validity

According to Burkholder et al. (2016), quantitative researchers legitimate their research based on the internal and external validity of the study. Internal validity threats are associated with the procedures, treatments, or experiences of participants that can potentially jeopardize a researcher's ability to make accurate inferences about the population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research design was the first possible threat to internal validity. For example, using a correlational design could have threatened the internal validity and confidence of the association between the independent and dependent variables based on outcome scores. According to Burkholder et al., a correlational design does not provide information about the direction of a causal relationship between variables, only the association. The second possible threat to internal validity was the effects of testing. The participants were asked in this study to select their experiences related to racial trauma and microaggression and identify the cultural coping behaviors and resilience used in such incidences, which may have led to biases in their responses to survey questions. The effects of testing may lead to possible changes in participants' responses because they are exposed to the measurement instrument (Bielenia-Grajewska, 2018).

Threats to External Validity

The possible threats to external validity are associated with problems of generalizing the findings of a study with other populations the sample is similar to (Bielenia-Grajewska, 2018; Kalaian & Kasim, 2008). The first threat to the external validity was selection bias. Selection bias relates to selecting participants in a study based on specific characteristics (Burkholder et al., 2016). The use of a non-probability sampling method may have resulted in the potential for selection bias due to possible differences between participants. The threat of selection bias was minimized by generalizing only to the population related to the sample. Also, the second potential threat to external validity was nonresponse effects, which refers to participants who do not respond to all or do not complete the survey (Kalaian & Kasim, 2008). Nonresponse effects were minimized by reposting the invitation letter and recruitment flyer on the listservs and social media platforms. Also, participants with missing questions on the survey were prompted to provide an answer and were allowed to continue to the next question after responding.

Ethical Procedures

Researchers have a responsibility to participants and to heed the ethical guidelines to address potential research issues. Before conducting this study, I obtained permission from the Walden University Institutional Review Board to conduct the study (approval no. 08-08-23-0998048). The participants for the study were recruited from a national university research participation pool, posted flyers at local colleges or universities, individual referrals, social media, and listservs. Participants were informed that

completing the online survey is voluntary, assured privacy, and their consent is required before participating in the study. Participants did not have to provide identifying personal information (e.g., names or contact information). Participants were asked to identify if they had a race-related experience, their race, age range, gender, highest level of education, current program of study, counseling program accreditation, current college or university institution, and employment status. Their identity was not known to me or shared in a manner that would be discernible to others.

Also, I made the participants aware that taking the online survey was entirely voluntary and that they could stop at any time should they choose without penalty. Only individuals who met the inclusion criteria were included in the study. Moreover, prospective participants were made aware of the minimal psychological risks of being triggered by the survey questions about past race-related traumatic experiences before consenting to participate. The anticipated degree of risk from participation in the study does not seem to exceed the experience of everyday life or during a routine physical, psychological examination, or tests. There appeared to be no potential relationship, legal, or economic/professional risk to individuals participating in this study because participants' identities are anonymous, limiting their liability or harm.

Summary

I provided an overview in this chapter of the research design and rationale; methodology; procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection; instrumentation and operationalization of constructs; data analysis plan; and ethical procedures associated with this study. The focus of this quantitative study was to examine

the relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggressions, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience in Black students in counseling education programs. I attempted to answer the RQ: Do racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors correlate with resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs? The hypotheses and null hypotheses were clearly identified. In Chapter 4, I will describe the data collection and analysis process, along with the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The primary intent of this quantitative correlation study was to determine if racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors were significant predictors of resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. Also, this study was intended to examine if cultural coping behaviors mediated the relationship between racial trauma, microaggression, and resilience. This dissertation augments the literature relating to how Black counseling students cope with racial trauma and microaggression through cultural coping behaviors and their resilience. In this chapter, I will describe the data collection process, participant demographics, assumptions, and results of the statistical analyses conducted to test the study's research hypotheses. I hypothesized that greater racial trauma and experience of microaggression would predict lower resilience, while greater cultural coping behaviors would predict higher resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. Also, I hypothesized that cultural coping behaviors would mediate the relationship between racial trauma and experience of microaggression in Black graduate students in counseling programs. The hypotheses led to the construction of the three RQs to examine relationships between the variables:

RQ1: Do racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors predict resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs?

RQ2: Do cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs?

RQ3: Do cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between the experience of microaggressions and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs?

Data Collection

Walden University Institutional Review Board approved this study on August 8, 2023. Upon receiving approval, an anonymous survey was created on Qualtrics that included the informed consent, the demographic questionnaire, and the IRRS-B, RMAS, ACSI, and the BRS. The recruitment of participants began on September 18, 2023. The invitation letter and recruitment flyer were shared with the Walden Participation Poll, American Counseling Association online communities of counseling professionals and students that included Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development Division, Call for Study Participants, Multiracial Multiethnic Counseling Concerns Interest Network. Also, the invitation letter and recruitment flyer were posted on counseling professional and student listservs that included Counselor Education and Supervision Network Listserv, Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, COUNGRADS, and social media platforms on Facebook that included Black Therapist Rock, Dissertation Survey Exchange, and Academic Survey Exchange, and LinkedIn. The invitation letter and flyer had a direct link and QR code for participants to access the consent form and begin the survey. The survey was accessible from September 18, 2023, to July 31, 2024, on Qualtrics during the data collection timeframe. The survey closed on August 1, 2024. The data collection period was extended because I did not foresee the challenges of obtaining the sample size needed during the proposal phase. Throughout

the data collection phase, I actively contacted university coordinators of counseling programs, and professional associations and organizations to share the invitation letter and flyer to reach a sample size of a small population of counseling master's and doctoral scholars.

I received 149 responses, and 69 were removed due to incomplete or missing data and because some participants did not meet the requirements of being Black, African American, or within the African Black Diaspora. A total of 80 remaining responses were used for the data analysis, which exceeded the minimum sample size of 77 needed per the power analysis conducted and discussed in Chapter 3. During the data cleaning, the responses to the demography questions were checked to verify if any responses were missing and if participants met the eligibility requirements. The participants who did not meet the requirements for race were removed. Also, each of the measurement scales, IRRS-B, RMAS, ACSI, and BRS were checked for any missing or unanswered questions. The few cases with missing values on the RMAS, because some of the follow-up questions were not applicable to certain respondents based on their initial responses, were corrected by adding a zero to reflect "this never happened to me."

Results

Sample Demographic Characteristics

Participants provided demographic information, that included age range, gender, racial identification, highest level of education, current program of study, counseling program accreditation, current college or university institution, and employment status. Table 1 includes the demographic characteristics of participants. Most of the respondents

held master's degrees and were enrolled in a CACREP accredited doctoral level counselor education and supervision program at a PWI. They identified as Black or African American women between the age range of 24 and 34, who were employed full time.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Characteristic	n	%
Age		
18–24	9	11.30
25–34	28	35
35-44	17	21.30
45-54	18	22.50
55-64	7	8.80
65 and over	1	1.30
Gender		
Female	66	82.50
Male	12	15
Transgender male	1	1.30
Nonbinary	1	1.30
Racial identification		
African	3	3.80
Black of African American	69	86.30
Black Caribbean or African Caribbean	8	10
Highest level of education		
Bachelor's degree	28	35
Master's degree	42	52.50
Education specialist degree	5	6.30
Doctorate degree	5	6.30
Program of study		
Clinical mental health counseling	33	41.30
Counselor education and supervision	35	43.80
Marriage, couples, and family counseling	1	1.30
School counseling	4	5
Rehabilitation	4	5
Other	3	3.80
Counseling program accreditation		
Enrolled in CACREP program	72	90
Not enrolled in CACREP program	8	10
Current college/university institution		
Historically Black college or university	6	7.50
Predominantly White institution	62	77.50
Other	12	15
Employment status		
Employed full-time	58	72.50
Employed part-time	14	17.50
Not employed	5	6.30
Seeking employment	1	1.30
Retired	2	2.50

Note. CACREP = Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.

The 2017 CACREP Vital Statistics Survey indicated that African American and Black students represented 18.39% of master's students and 25.09% of doctoral students enrolled in CACREP programs (CACREP, 2018). The sample size in this study may have been attributed to the small number of Blacks in counselor education programs. Thus, the population of Black students in counseling programs is dynamic and speaks to the difficulty of recruiting a sample from a small population.

Instrument Scoring and Descriptive Statistics

The instruments used to collect the data were IRRS-B, RMAS, ACSI, and BRS. These standardized instruments were scored as directed by the developers of each measurement scale. The IRRS-B measurement scale global racism score was used to obtain the variable of racial trauma. The IRRS-B has three subscales: cultural racism, institutional racism, and individual racism. The raw scores of the IRRS-B range from 0 to 24 for the institutional and individual racism subscales and from 0 to 40 for the cultural racism subscale, with the higher scores indicating more race-related stress The IRRS-B score was calculated by "deriving a race-related stress score for each of the IRRS-B racism domains by summing the raw scores for all items in each racism category. To obtain a global racism score, the summed scores for each racism category (i.e., each subscale score) was transformed into z-scores and then summed" (Utsey, 1999, p. 153).

The RMAS subscales (i.e., foreigner/not belonging subscale, criminality subscale, sexualization subscale, low achieving/undesirable cultural subscale, invisibility subscale, and environmental invalidation subscale) means were computed to obtain the scores for each (Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015). The RMAS did not yield a global score.

Therefore, the environmental invalidation subscale mean score was used to obtain the variable for the experience of microaggression. The scores of the RMAS for the environmental invalidation ranged from 0 to 3, and higher scores were considered as indicating that respondents had greater frequency of experiences of microaggression.

The ASCI was used to measure the variable of collective coping behaviors. The ACSI scores were obtained by totaling all the items corresponding to each subscale (i.e., cognitive/emotional debriefing coping, spiritual-centered coping, collective coping, and ritual-centered coping) to derive a score for each (Utsey et al., 2000). The ACSI did not yield a global score. Therefore, the subscale of collective coping was used to obtain the variable for cultural coping behaviors. The scores of the collective coping subscale range from 0 to 24 on the ACSI, with higher scores indicating that respondents used greater utilization of that specific cultural-coping strategies to deal with racial trauma and microaggression.

The BRS was used to obtain the variable of resilience. The global score of the BRS was derived by adding the value (1-5) of the responses, which was then divided by the total of questions (6) for a final score. The scores between 1.00-2.99 on the BRS were considered as indicating that the respondent had low resilience, 3.00-4.30 normal resilience, and 4.31-5.00 high resilience (W. A. Smith et al., 2008). The descriptive statistics for each variable are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Independent and Dependent Variables

Measure	*M*	*SD*	Skew statistic	Kurtosis
BRS (resilience)	3.675	.7634	.111	-.592
IRRS-B (racial trauma)	0.000 [a]	2.4313	-.374	.443
RMAS Environmental Invalidation subscale (microaggressions)	2.14	.7279	-1.083	.623
ASCI (collective coping)	13.88	5.030	-.006	-.166

Note. BRS = Brief Resilience Scale; IRRS-B = Index of Race-Related Stress-Brief Version; RMAS = Racial Microaggression Scale; ASCI = Africultural Coping Systems Inventory.

[a] The mean score is reported as a z-score.

Test of Assumptions

I used multiple regression to address all the RQs. The statistical assumptions were evaluated to assess the normality, linearity, outliers, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, and independence of residuals before conducting multiple regression analysis. The total sample size of 80 was sufficient to meet statistical power for multiple linear regression with three predictor variables, per the a priori analysis noted in Chapter 3. I evaluated the descriptives statistics for each continuous variable. The descriptive data for the variables BRS, IRRS-B, environmental invalidation, and collective coping showed the data to be normally distributed with a skewness (-1 to 1) and kurtosis (-2 to 2) within the normal range, not greatly deviating from normality. The probability–probability plot showed dots to be reasonably close to the line for all the variables, indicating the normality of residuals. The Shapiro-Wilk results revealed that the normality assumption was not met.

The data revealed a slightly negatively skewness (see Table 2), which was small for some of the measures and considered to be close enough to normal. Therefore, I decided to move forward acknowledging the assumptions for a normal distribution was met.

I evaluated a scatterplot to determine homoscedasticity between the dependent and predictor variables, indicating that the linearity assumptions have not been violated. The coefficient result showed collinearity tolerance of .839 for IRRS-B, .868 for environmental invalidation, and .936 for collective coping, all to be above the 0.1 thresholds and variance inflation factors of 1.192 for IRRS-B, 1.152 for environmental invalidation, and 1.068 for collective coping, were all not greater than 10 thresholds, which indicated that there is little to no multicollinearity (see Appendix I, Table I3). The Durbin-Watson of 2.008 indicated no auto-correlation (see Appendix I, Table I1). The data showed some approximate normality within the variables, and to have come from a normal distribution to conduct the multiple regression analysis (see Appendix J, Figures J1 and J2).

Research Question 1

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors were significant predictors of resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. The results of the multiple regression analysis showed a statistically nonsignificant relationship between the variables, $F(3, 76) = 1.331$, $p = .271$, $R^2 = .050$ (see Appendix I, Table I2). The R^2 value of (.050) indicated that 5% of the variance of resilience (BRS) was accounted for by racial trauma (IRRS-B), experience of microaggression as measured by environmental

invalidation, and cultural coping behaviors as measured by ACSI collective coping subscale. The model did not predict resilience as the predictor variables were not statistically significant. Appendix I, Table I1 depicts the regression summary and Appendix I, Table I3 presents the coefficient summary.

Research Question 2

A mediation analysis was conducted to determine if cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping subscale would mediate the relationship between racial trauma and. The four step process of Barron and Kenny's (1986) was used to test RQs 2 and 3 to determine if there is a mediation relationship. First, I tested resilience and racial trauma to determine the pathway. The result of linear regression analysis showed no statistically significant relationship between racial trauma and resilience (β = -.001, t = -.028, p = .978; see Appendix I, Table I4). Second, I tested cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping subscale and racial trauma to determine the pathway. The result of linear regression analysis showed a statistically significant relationship between cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping subscale and racial trauma (β = .497, t = 2.184, p = .032; see Appendix I, Table I5).

Third, I tested cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping subscale and resilience to determine the pathway. The result of linear regression analysis showed no statistically significant relationship between cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping subscale and resilience (β = -.003, t = -.197, p = .845; see Appendix I, Table I6). A Sobel test was used to measure the statistically significant of the indirect effects of the mediation after obtaining the all the coefficients needed, Pathway A

= .497 (.227), Pathway B = -.003 (.017), and Pathway C = .001 (.036). The result of the Sobel test revealed a p value of .860 which indicated a statistically nonsignificant mediating relationship between the variables (Preacher & Leonardelli, n.d).

Fourth, a multiple regression analysis was conducted with cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping subscale, and racial trauma predicting resilience. The result of the multiple regression analysis was not statistically significant, with $F(2, 77) = .019$, $p = .981$, $R^2adj = -.025$ (see Appendix I, Tables I7 and I8). The regression analysis revealed statistically nonsignificant predictor of cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping subscale ($\beta = -.003$, $t = -.194$, and $p = .846$) and statistically nonsignificant predictor of racial trauma ($\beta = .001$, $t = .020$, $p = .984$) at 95% confidence interval (see Appendix I, Table I9). The results revealed that cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping subscale did not significantly mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs.

Research Question 3

A mediation analysis was conducted to determine if cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping subscale mediates the relationship between the experience of microaggression as measured by environmental invalidation subscale and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. First, I tested the experience of microaggression as measured by environmental invalidation subscale and resilience to determine the pathway. The result of linear regression analysis showed no statistically significant relationship between the experience of microaggression as measured by

environmental invalidation subscale and resilience (β = .214, t = 1.844, p = .069; see Appendix I, Table I10). Second, I tested the experience of microaggression as measured by environmental invalidation and cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping subscale determine the pathway. The result of linear regression analysis showed a statistically nonsignificant relationship between the experience of microaggression as measured by environmental invalidation subscale and cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping subscale (β = 1.095, t = 1.417, p = .160; see Appendix I, Table I11).

Third, I tested cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping subscale and resilience to determine the pathway. The result of linear regression analysis showed no statistically significant relationship between resilience and cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping subscale (β = -.003, t = -.197, p = .845; see Appendix I, Table I12). A Sobel test was used to measure the statistically significant of the indirect effects of the mediation after obtaining the all the coefficients needed, Pathway A = 1.095 (.773), Pathway B = -.009 (.017), and Pathway C = .224 (.118). The result of the Sobel test revealed a p value of .860 which indicated a statistically nonsignificant mediating relationship between variables (Preacher & Leonardelli, n.d).

Fourth, a multiple regression analysis was conducted with cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping subscale, the experience of microaggression as measured by environmental invalidation subscale predicting resilience. The result of the multiple regression analysis was not statistically significant, with F (2, 77) = .1.807, p = .171, R^2_{adj} = .020 (see Appendix I, Tables I13 and I14). The regression analysis

revealed statistically nonsignificant predictor of cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping subscale (β = -.009, t= -.497, and p = .621) and statistically nonsignificant predictor of the experience of microaggression as measured by environmental invalidation subscale (β = .224, t= 1.890, p = .062) at 95% confidence interval (see Appendix I, Tables I15). The result of finding supports the acceptance of the null hypothesis and rejection of the alternative hypothesis. The results revealed that collective coping does not significantly mediate the relationship between environmental invalidation and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the results of the data collected from 80 Black graduate counseling students who experienced race-related incidents in the forms of racial discrimination, racial microaggression, or racial trauma. The goal of this study was to determine if racial trauma as measured by IRRS-B, experience of microaggression as measured by environmental invalidation, and cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping were significant predictors of resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. Also, the goal was to examine if cultural coping behaviors mediated the relationship between racial trauma, microaggression, and resilience. The data collected revealed that the assumptions were met for a multiple regression analysis. The overall findings showed that racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors were not significant predictors of resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. Also, the findings revealed that cultural coping behaviors were determined not to mediate the relationship between (a) racial trauma, and

(b) the experience of microaggression, and (c) resilience. Thus, the outcome of the three RQs led to the acceptance of the null hypothesis for RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3. In the following chapter, I will discuss the interpretation of the findings, the limitations of this study, recommendations for future research, and implications for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this quantitative correlation study was to determine if racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors were significant predictors of resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. Also, the purpose was to examine if cultural coping behaviors mediated the relationship between racial trauma, the experience of microaggression, and resilience. The study focused on three RQ

RQ1: Do racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors predict resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs?

RQ2: Do cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience?

RQ3: Do cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between the experience of microaggression and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs?

The primary aim of this study was to contribute to the literature relating to how Black counseling students cope with racial trauma and microaggression through cultural coping behaviors and their resilience. The results of this dissertation may potentially assist counseling programs by providing counselor educators with a greater understanding of the experiences of Black students and the cultural relevance of coping behaviors they use to manage the impacts of racial trauma and microaggression. The results also may assist counseling programs in supporting and fostering strength-based

approaches that are culturally relevant to Black students' educational context and needs as they relate to racial trauma and microaggression.

An analysis of each predictor variable showed that racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors were not significant predictors of resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. Also, in assessing the mediating effects between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs, the findings revealed that collective coping does not significantly mediate the relationship between racial trauma, microaggression, and resilience. In this chapter, I will provide an interpretation of the findings of this study and how it compares to other findings in the literature. I will discuss the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research. Last, I will describe the potential impact of social change relevant to this study.

Interpretation of the Findings

Before conducting this study, many assumptions were made based on prior research in the literature. Although these assumptions were made, not all were supported by the findings of this study. The statistics in the literature supported that Black students in higher education encountered more racial discrimination as minorities than any other ethnic group (Lewis et al., 2021; M. T. Williams et al., 2018). The first assumption made was that Black counseling students faced many negative experiences in the form of race-based stress, racial trauma, and microaggression in counselor education programs, which could present as a barrier to completing their degree successfully.

Carter et al. (2020) found negative race-based experiences led to posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms among various ethnic backgrounds of undergraduate psychology students and those in the community. A high amount of racial microaggression was found to correlate with anxiety, stress, trauma, and depressive symptoms among Black college students (M. T. Williams et al., 2018; Marks et al., 2021). Horsford et al. (2019) discovered that African American female students in clinical doctoral programs experienced negative interactions with faculty that included isolation, racism, abuse of power and control, subtle microaggression, and being treated differently compared to White students. In their qualitative study, Haskins et al. (2013) and Henfield et al. (2013) found consistent themes among Black master's and doctoral students in counselor education programs. Black master's students experienced isolation, tokenization, a lack of Black counselors' perspectives within the coursework, differences in support received by faculty of color and White faculty, and support from Black and White peers assisting them in maneuvering the counseling program (Haskins et.al., 2013). African American doctoral students experienced isolation, disconnection, and lack of cultural understanding that impeded their satisfaction with the program (Henfield et al., 2013).

According to Henfield (2011), the race-based experiences of Black students were additional burdens they faced while pursuing their degrees. The second assumption made was that while Black students in counselor education programs experience the additional burden of adverse race-related incidences (e.g., racial trauma and microaggression), their use of cultural coping behaviors, such as individual strategies and collective support may

help them through those situations. Henfield et al. reported that African American students identified individual and collective support as ways to cope and overcome these barriers. They found, assertiveness was identified as an individual support coping strategy (Henfield et al., 2011). Henfield et al. also identified collective support, that is in getting needs met through more experienced African American students, race-based organizations, and personal and professional care from advisors, was another primary coping strategy.

The third assumption made was that the use of cultural coping behaviors by Black students contributed to their resilience when burdened by adverse race-related incidences. Despite the experiences of racial trauma, Black undergraduate students were found to be able to flourish through deepening their connections with others, tapping into their inner strength, gaining new perspectives and appreciation for life, and connecting to spirituality (Grier-Reed et al., 2022). Cultural and sociofamilial resources mitigated the negative impact of race-related stress among undergraduate college students (Utsey et al., 2008b). The prior research in the literature on racial trauma, microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience provided the basis for the assumptions made in this study.

Research Question 1

The results of this current study showed a statistically nonsignificant predictive relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted in that greater racial trauma and experience of microaggression did not predict lower resilience, and greater cultural coping behaviors did not predict higher resilience in Black graduate

students in counseling programs. Although the analysis did not reveal a statistically significant predictive relationship, some associations were observed. For example, as racial trauma scores increased, resilience scores decreased, which was predicted. Additionally, as environmental invalidation (i.e., negative messages perceived that result from the lack of presence of individuals from the person's ethnic background in school or work [Torres-Harding et al., 2012a]) scores increased, it led to an increase in resilience scores, which was contrary to what was predicted. The environmental invalidation subscale relatively speaking, had a stronger positive effect on resilience.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, no documented research has investigated the relationship between racial trauma, microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs, as conducted in this study. However, both racial trauma and microaggression have been noted in the literature to have negative and detrimental impacts on Black graduate students. Previous researchers found that graduate students of color in social work programs commonly and often experienced microinsults and microinvalidations because of their race and ethnicity (Wong & Jones, 2018) and were susceptible to subtle and invisible forms of racism (Hollingsworth et al., 2018).

Specifically, in clinical-focused programs, researchers found that African American women reported feelings of isolation because of the infrastructure and racist behaviors that persisted in their programs (Horsford et al., 2019). Also, covert and overt racism was identified as a core experience felt by doctoral students of color in counselor education, a field that perpetuated institutional and systemic racism (Vaishnav, 2021).

However, researchers found that with the experiences of microaggression, students of color in counselor education learned how to deal with microaggressions (O'Hara & Cook, 2018) and cope through advocating for their community, families, and the next generation of students (Vaishnav, 2021). While the results of my study were insignificant, the finding suggested that Black counseling students who experienced greater microaggressions in the form of environmental invalidation had greater resilience against these adverse incidences. Also, the finding suggests that Black counseling students who experienced greater racial trauma or race-based stress were less resilient against these negative experiences.

While greater cultural coping behaviors measured by collective coping did not predict higher resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs, the results showed that as collective coping score increased, resilience scores slightly decreased. The findings suggest that greater use of collective coping may have some association with lower resilience, which was contrary to what was predicted. While there were mixed findings in the literature on cultural coping behaviors among Black adults and college students, the results expanded the literature on the possible direction of the relationship between collective coping and resilience. In a previous study, Shahid et al. (2018) found that as racial tension increased, Black college women who used less cultural-specific coping had greater stress than those who used more.

Additionally, Lewis-Cole and Constantine (2006) found that African American adults who perceived greater institutional race-related stress used greater cognitive/emotional debriefing, spiritual-centered, and collective coping strategies.

However, while no significant relationships between cultural coping and resilience in this study, the finding does suggest that greater use of collective coping may potentially lead Black students to be less resilient as they experience racial trauma or race-based stress and microaggression. There are no certain explanations for such mixed findings and the lack of research in the literature supports and provides some evidence for the need for additional investigation on this topic.

Research Question 2

Cultural coping behaviors are reportedly critical in helping African American adults and college students deal with and mitigate the adverse effects of race-related stress (Lewis-Cole et al., 2006; Greer, 2011; Lewis et al., 2020; Greer, 2021). Cultural coping behaviors can help Black adults and college students impacted by racial trauma or race-based stress and microaggression to handle these challenges and persist with resiliency, despite their adverse effects. Given the previous research in the literature, I wanted to see whether cultural coping behaviors, as measured by collective coping, would mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience using Baron and Kenny's (1986) four-step approach.

The finding showed that cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping did not significantly mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. There may be some possible explanations. One possible reason for this lack of mediation of collective coping, which is consistent with the limited and mixed findings on this topic in literature, could be that participants used other cultural coping strategies (i.e., cognitive-emotional debriefing,

ritual-centered coping, and spiritual-centered coping) rather than collective coping. Another possible reason is that most of the participants in the study identified as female (n = 66), accounting for 82.5% of the sample, which could explain the lack of mediation of collective coping. In a previous study, after finding that coping strategies (i.e., cognitive-emotional debriefing, ritual-centered coping, collective coping, and spiritual-centered coping) were not a significant moderator between race and gender-based discrimination and psychological symptoms, Greer (2011) noted that the possible reasons for this contradiction were that women used more cognitive-emotional debriefing than other strategies and used other coping strategies in response to psychological distress from racial discrimination.

Research Question 3

In this study I wanted to see whether cultural coping behaviors as measured by the collective coping subscale would mediate the relationship between the experience of microaggression, as measured by environmental invalidation subscale, and resilience using Baron and Kenny's (1986) four-step approach. I found collective coping did not significantly mediate the relationship between the experience of microaggression and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. Nonetheless, while cultural coping behaviors did not mediate the relationship between the experience of and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs, this study has extended the research in the literature on this topic.

There is little research in the literature on this topic, and the findings are mixed, which provides some explanation for the findings of this study. Researchers found that

African American adults who perceived greater institutional race-related stress were found to use greater cognitive/emotional debriefing, spiritual-centered, and collective coping strategies (Lewis-Cole & Constantine, 2006). Greer and Cavalhieri (2019) found that African American men who relied less on others for emotional or social support may have experienced mental health issues. One possible reason for the findings in this study is that participants may use various cultural coping strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of microaggression in its multiple forms (i.e., foreigner/not belonging, criminality, sexualization, low achieving/undesirable culture, invisibility, environmental invalidation).

Overall Analysis

I was prompted to conduct this study because of the limited research in the literature on racial trauma, microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience among Black counseling students. The few research studies in the literature on this topic examined each variable independently, addressing different RQs and populations, but not so together. It was worth examining the variables together because of how they are closely related. With that in mind, the I devised three RQs and corresponding hypotheses. Based on the results of the analysis, all three null hypotheses were accepted. The results of the multiple regression showed a statistically nonsignificant relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggression as measured by environmental invalidation, cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping, and resilience.

The mediation analysis was conducted using the four-step process of Barron and Kenny's (1986), which included conducting a linear regression analysis, a Sobel test to

measure the statistical significance of the indirect effects of the mediation, and multiple regression analysis. The results of the mediation analysis showed that cultural coping behaviors, as measured by collective coping did not significantly mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. Also, the mediation analysis results showed that cultural coping behaviors, as measured by collective coping, did not significantly mediate the relationship between the experience of microaggression, as measured by environmental invalidation, and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. However, the participants in this study demonstrated normal resilience and used collective coping to mitigate the adverse effects of racial trauma and microaggression in the form of environmental invalidation.

In this quantitative study, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and cultural coping behaviors were significant predictors of resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. The study was also conducted to determine if cultural coping behaviors mediate the relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, and resilience. The results showed a statistically nonsignificant predictive relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience. The results revealed that cultural coping behaviors did not significantly mediate the relationship between racial trauma and resilience. Additionally, cultural coping behaviors did not significantly mediate the relationship between the experience of microaggression and resilience.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study. First, a correlational design does not provide information about a causal relationship between variables but looks at their association (Burkholder et al., 2016). Only the relationship of the variables can truly be assessed using a correlational design. Therefore, assessing whether cultural coping behaviors as measured by collective coping caused resilience of Black counseling students was impossible because correlation is not causation. Second, while convenience sampling may have provided more accessible access to potential participants, it may not have obtained a true representation of the population of Black graduate students in counseling programs.

Third, self-reported surveys are limited in that the participants' answers may have been biased, and the accuracy of what was reported was not verified. Participants may not have accurately remembered race-related incidents or may have made errors in completing the survey. Fourth, the survey length limited this study because of the time commitment. The time commitment of approximately 20 min to complete the online study may have swayed busy Black graduate students from participating and finishing the questionnaire. The eligible participants included in this study completed the online survey successfully and responded to all the items.

Fifth, the findings of this study can only be generalized to the sample of 80 participants in this study. The sample size was small compared to the number of Black counseling students in counselor education programs, which may have contributed to the limited findings. Finally, another limitation of the study was that only one subscale of the

RMAS and ASCI were used to measure the experience of microaggression and cultural coping behaviors because neither measurement scale yielded a global score. It may be beneficial to assess the relationship between the other subscales of RMAS (i.e., foreigner/not belonging, criminality, sexualization, low achieving/undesirable culture, invisibility, environmental invalidation) and ASCI (i.e., cognitive-emotional debriefing, ritual-centered coping, collective coping, and spiritual-centered coping) to provide a more in-depth look of the associations of the variables.

Recommendations

Black counseling students encounter various race-related incidences that counselor education programs, educators, and supervisors should pay attention to and be mindful of ways to improve their experiences. Future studies should focus on obtaining a larger sample of population of Black counseling students to examine further their experiences of racial trauma or race-based stress and microaggression and their resilience through the ability to use cultural -specific coping behaviors to buffer these incidents. Additionally, future studies should explore the different forms of microaggression (i.e., foreigner/not belonging, criminality, sexualization, low achieving/undesirable culture, invisibility, environmental invalidation) and cultural-specific coping behaviors (i.e., cognitive-emotional debriefing, ritual-centered coping, collective coping, and spiritual-centered coping) to understand and thoroughly examine the relationships among the variables as it related to resilience among Black counseling students in counseling programs.

Additional research may be beneficial in examining the intersection of gender, age, and cultural-specific coping strategies in relationship to how Black counseling students maintain their resilience despite experiences of racial trauma and microaggression. While most of the participants identified as female in this study, it would be advantageous for future researchers to investigate the experience of Black men in counseling programs as there are fewer men in the counseling profession (Liddon et al., 2018). Researchers have found that Black male graduate students experience greater stress than Black female graduate students, which places them at a higher risk for experiencing RBF (William et al., 2021). RBF is defined as a loss of stamina experienced by marginalized groups while coping with the pressures from the physiological and psychological effects of racial microaggression and racism (W. A. Smith et al., 2007). While RBF was not a variable examined in this study, it would be a suggestion for inclusion in future studies because of its relevance to the research topic. Examining RBF in future studies can be of importance in providing some explanations and impacts of racial trauma and microaggression of Black counseling students relating to their resilience and ability to cope.

Furthermore, it is recommended that future studies on this population should be researched from a qualitative or mixed-method research design to consider other factors. A qualitative or mixed-method research design can further explore the experiences of Black counseling students who have encountered racial trauma or race-based stress and microaggression and used cultural-specific coping behaviors to alleviate the adverse effects of such incidences to maintain resilience. After conducting this study, I have

realized that more could be further explored by interviewing participants about their coping strategies in dealing with racial trauma and microaggression through a qualitative or mixed-method research design, which was not possible through a quantitative approach. This study was the first to investigate the predictive relationship between racial trauma, the experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience, and the mediation relationship between racial trauma, microaggression, and resilience in Black graduate students in counseling programs. While this study included only Black counseling students, it can be expanded to include other minority students in counselor education programs. The recommendations suggested may continue to enhance the literature on this topic.

Implications

This study has potential implications for positive social change as racial inequality and racism persist in university settings (Truong et al., 2016). With the existing gap in the literature on racial trauma and microaggression among Black counseling students, this study can contribute to social change. Considering that Black counseling students have had experiences of racial trauma and microaggression, counselor education programs should further investigate the impact of and what they can do to reduce these occurrences, which inevitably will benefit their program and institution. Addressing racial trauma and microaggression of Black students in counselor education programs in a culturally sensitive manner will not only have the potential to improve their mental health but also ensure the successful completion of their degree and preparedness for the profession.

Additional awareness and support for Black students in counseling programs may be warranted to help them navigate racist situations and incidences. Counselor education programs can implement comprehensive anti-racist policies (Truong & Museus, 2012; Truong et al., 2016) that promote a safer learning environment to foster a positive experience for Black counseling students. Also, counselor education programs can include Black counselors' and students' perspectives and experiences in the counseling curricula to support systemic and positive social change (Haskins et al., 2013).

This study also has implications for counselor educators and supervisors. It brings awareness to counselor educators and supervisors working with Black counseling students about the social and academic environment these students are navigating and the faculty behaviors that have had detrimental impacts on their well-being. The findings in this study can be a teaching tool for counselor educators and supervisors to share with students what the literature reveals on the topic as it relates to multiculturalism. Moreover, counselor educators and supervisors can use the findings to support advocating for and supporting Black counseling students by modeling the essence of what a social change agent is and does. Students who have experienced race-based stress and discrimination are already becoming social change agents in their environment.

There appears to be some importance in the use of cultural-specific coping behaviors among Black counseling students faced with race-based stressed. Counselor educators and supervisors can use this study to inform their practice and approach in supporting Black counseling students to succeed in their programs by promoting and encouraging the use of cultural-specific coping behaviors (i.e., collective coping) to

navigate racial trauma and microaggression (i.e., environmental invalidation). By developing anti-racist policies, counselor education programs can stop the persistent problem of racism. Counselor educators and supervisors can advocate by promoting a safe, friendlier, and supportive learning environment that speaks against discrimination in all its forms for Black counseling students and all students.

Furthermore, this study has implications for Black counseling students. Although, this was not a finding in this study, studies in the literature revealed that the doctoral students' experiences of racial microaggression have kindled a sense of advocacy for their community, families, and the next generation of students (Vaishnav (2021). Additionally, when coping with racism, doctoral students of color have been found to seek social support and collective advocacy (Truong et al., 2016). It is apparent that despite the racism experienced by these students, there is a sense of the importance of advocacy, which may be true for Black counseling students and an area needing further investigation.

Conclusion

Researchers have noted that Black graduate students in counselor education programs face many challenges because of racial trauma or race-based stress and microaggression (Cartwright et al., 2021; Haskins et al., 2013; Henfield et al., 2013; Horsford et al., 2019; Woods et al., 2021) and have used individual and collective coping (Henfield et al., 2011) to mitigate the adverse effects of these experience in maintaining resilience. There was no study in the literature that examines the relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience in

Black students in counselor education programs. The resilience of Black counseling students may be evident in their ability to use collective coping as a source to deal with racial trauma and microaggression (i.e., environmental invalidation).

While the results of this study were not statistically significant, the findings did reveal that participants who have experienced racial trauma and microaggression in the form of environmental invalidation used cultural coping behaviors in the form of collective coping and demonstrated normal resilience in the face of these circumstances. Given the outcome of this study, further research is warranted to examine and explore the in-depth relationship between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience in Black students in counselor education programs. The outcome of this study supports calls for counselor education programs, educators, and supervisors to consider the experiences of Black graduate students and determine where modifications in their policies and practices are needed to promote positive social change.

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Appendix A: Invitation Letter (Social Media)

There is a new study about the relationships between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience of Black graduate students in counseling programs. You are invited to complete a 20 minute anonymous survey.

Seeking volunteers that meet these requirements:

- 18 years of old age or older
- Enrolled as a master's or doctoral level student in a counseling program
- Identify as Black, African American, or within the African Black Diaspora
- Have had a race-related incident, such as racial discrimination, racial microaggression, or racial trauma

This study is part of the doctoral program for Chrismathe Lindsay, a Ph.D. student at Walden University. The survey will be open until the end of October.

Please click here
https://qualtricsxm2mshhgqtw.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eyOoeqdctvck874
or scan the QR code below to view the consent form and begin the survey. Please forward this invitation letter to anyone you know who meets the requirements listed above.

If you have any questions about this dissertation study, please contact Chrismathe Lindsay at chrismathe.lindsay@waldenu.edu.

Sincerely,

Chrismathe Lindsay, Ed.S, LPC, NCC
Doctoral Student, Counselor Education and Supervision
Walden University

Appendix B: Invitation Letter (Listserv)

Greetings,

There is a new study about the relationships between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience of Black graduate students in counseling programs. You are invited to complete a 20 minute anonymous survey.

Seeking volunteers that meet these requirements:

- 18 years of old age or older
- Enrolled as a master's or doctoral level student in a counseling program
- Identify as Black, African American, or within the African Black Diaspora
- Have had a race-related incident, such as racial discrimination, racial microaggression, or racial trauma

This study is part of the doctoral program for Chrismathe Lindsay, a Ph.D. student at Walden University. The survey will be open until the end of October.

Please click here
https://qualtricsxm2mshhgqtw.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eyOoeqdctvck874
or scan the QR code below to view the consent form and begin the survey. Please forward this invitation letter to anyone you know who meets the requirements listed above.

If you have any questions about this dissertation study, please contact Chrismathe Lindsay at chrismathe.lindsay@waldenu.edu.

Sincerely,

Chrismathe Lindsay, Ed.S, LPC, NCC
Doctoral Student, Counselor Education and Supervision
Walden University

Appendix C: Invitation Letter (Flyer for Posting)

SURVEY SEEKING COUNSELING STUDENTS

THE STUDY

There is a new study about the relationships between racial trauma, experience of microaggression, cultural coping behaviors, and resilience of Black graduate students in counseling programs. You are invited to complete a 20 minute anonymous survey.

This study is part of the doctoral program for Chrismathe Lindsay, a Ph.D. student at Walden University. The survey will be open until the end of July.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions about this dissertation study, please contact Chrismathe Lindsay at chrismathe.lindsay@waldenu.edu.

SEEKING VOLUNTEERS THAT MEET THESE REQUIREMENTS:

1. **18 years of age or older**
2. **Enrolled as a master's or doctoral level student in a counseling program**
3. **Identify as Black, African American, or within the African Black Diaspora**
4. **Have had a race-related incident such as racial discrimination, racial microaggression, or racial trauma**

Please click here https://qualtricsxm2mshhgqtw.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eyOoeqdctvck874 or scan the QR code below to view the consent form and begin the survey. Please forward this recruitment flyer to anyone you know who meets the requirements listed above.

Walden IRB Approval # 08-08-23-0998048

Appendix D: Index of Race-Related Stress-Brief Version

Source:
Reprinted from Index of Race-Related Stress Brief Version by Utsey, S. O. (1999). Development and validation of short form of the Index of Race Related Stress-Brief version. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, *32*, 149─167. Reprinted with permission.

Index of Race-Related Stress-Brief Version

This survey questionnaire is intended to sample some of the experiences that Black people have in this country because of their "blackness." There are many experiences that a Black person can have in this country because of his/her race. Some events happen just once, some more often, while others may happen frequently. Below you will find listed some of these experiences; for which you are to indicate those that have happened to you or someone very close to you (i.e. a family member or loved one). It is important to note that a person can be affected by those events that happen to people close to them; this is why you are asked to consider such events as applying to your experiences when you complete this questionnaire. **Please circle the number on the scale (0 to 4) that indicates the reaction you had to the event at the time it happened. Do not leave any items blank**. If an event has happened more than once refer to the first time it happened. **If an event did not happen circle 0 and go on to the next item.**

0 = This never happened to me.
1 = This event happened, but did not bother me.
2 = This event happened & I was slightly upset.
3 = This event happened & I was upset.
4 = This event happened & I was extremely upset.

1. You notice that crimes committed by White people tend to be romanticized, whereas the same crime committed by a Black person is portrayed as savagery, and the Black person who committed it, as an animal.	0	1	2	3	4
2. Sales people/clerks did not say thank you or show other forms of courtesy and respect (i.e. put your things in a bag) when you shopped at some White/non-Black owned businesses.	0	1	2	3	4
3. You notice that when Black people are killed by the police the media informs the public of the Victim's criminal record or negative information in their background, suggesting they got what they deserved.	0	1	2	3	4
4. You have been threatened with physical violence by an individual or group of White/non-Blacks	0	1	2	3	4
5. You have observed that White kids who commit violent crimes are portrayed as "boys being boys", while Black kids who commit similar crimes are wild animals.	0	1	2	3	4
6. You seldom hear or read anything positive about Black people on radio, T.V., newspapers or in history books.	0	1	2	3	4
7. While shopping at a store the sales clerk assumed that you couldn't afford certain items (i.e. you were directed toward the items on sale).	0	1	2	3	4
8. You were the victim of a crime and the police treated you as if you should just accept it as part of being Black.	0	1	2	3	4
9. You were treated with less respect and courtesy than Whites and other non-Blacks while in a	0	1	2	3	4

store, restaurant, or other business establishment.

10. You were passed over for an important project although you were more qualified and competent than the White/non-Black person given the task.	0	1	2	3	4
11. Whites/non-Blacks have stared at you as if you didn't belong in the same place with them; whether it was a restaurant, theater, or other place of business.	0	1	2	3	4
12. You have observed the police treat White/non-Blacks with more respect and dignity than they do Blacks.	0	1	2	3	4
13. You have been subjected to racist jokes by Whites/non-Blacks in positions of authority and you did not protest for fear they might have held it against you.	0	1	2	3	4
14. While shopping at a store, or when attempting to make a purchase you were ignored as if you were not a serious customer or didn't have any money.	0	1	2	3	4
15. You have observed situations where other Blacks were treated harshly or unfairly by Whites/non-Blacks due to their race.	0	1	2	3	4
16. You have heard reports of White people/non-Blacks who have committed crimes, and in an effort to cover up their deeds falsely reported that a Black man was responsible for the crime.	0	1	2	3	4
17. You notice that the media plays up those stories that cast Blacks in negative ways (child abusers, rapists, muggers, etc. [or as savages] Wild Man of 96th St., Wolf Pack, etc.), usually accompanied by a large picture of a Black person looking angry or disturbed.	0	1	2	3	4
18. You have heard racist remarks or comments about Black people spoken with impunity by White public officials or other influential White people.	0	1	2	3	4
19. You have been given more work, or the most undesirable jobs at your place of employment while the White/non-Black of equal or less seniority and credentials is given less work, and more desirable tasks.	0	1	2	3	4
20. You have heard or seen other Black people express the desire to be White or to have White physical characteristics because they disliked being Black or thought it was ugly.	0	1	2	3	4
21. White people or other non-Blacks have treated you as if you were unintelligent and needed things explained to you slowly or numerous times.	0	1	2	3	4
22. You were refused an apartment or other housing; you suspect it was because you are Black.	0	1	2	3	4

Appendix E: Racial Microaggression Scale

Source:
Reprinted from Racial Microaggression Scale by Torres-Harding, S. R. & Turner, T. (2015). Assessing racial microaggression distress in a diverse sample. *Evaluation and the Health Professions, 38 (4),* 464 490. doi:10.1177/0163278714550860. Reprinted with permission.

Test Format:
Racial Microaggression Scale items related to occurrence are rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale (0 = never, 1 = a little/rarely, 2 = sometimes/ moderate amount, 3 = often/frequently). If a respondent positively endorses the item, he or she is also asked to indicate how stressful, upsetting, or bothersome the experience was for them (0= this has never happened to me, 0 = not at all, 1 = a little, 2 = moderate level, 3 = high level).

Items

Foreigner/Not Belonging
1. Because of my race, other people assume that I am a foreigner.
2. Because of my race, people suggest that I am not a "true" American.
4. Other people often ask me where I am from, suggesting that I don't belong.

Criminality
14. Other people treat me like a criminal because of my race.
15. People act like they are scared of me because of my race.
16. Others assume that I will behave aggressively because of my race.
18. I am singled out by police or security people because of my race.

Sexualization
19. People suggest that I am "exotic" in a sexual way because of my race.
20. Other people view me in an overly sexual way because of my race.
21. Other people hold sexual stereotypes about me because of my racial background.

Low-Achieving/Undesirable Culture
22. Other people act if they can fully understand my racial identity, even though they are not of my racial background.
23. Other people act as if all of the people of my race are alike.
28. Others suggest that people of my racial background get unfair benefits.
29. Others assume that people of my background would succeed in life if they simply worked harder.
30. Other people deny that people of my race face extra obstacles when compared to Whites.
32. Other people assume that I am successful because of affirmative action, not because I earned my accomplishments.
35. Others hint that I should work hard to prove that I am not like other people of my race.
36. Others suggest that my racial heritage is dysfunctional or undesirable.
37. Others focus only on the negative aspects of my racial background.

Invisibility
33. Others prefer that I assimilate to the White culture and downplay my racial background.
39. I am mistaken for being a service worker or lower-status worker simply because of my race.
40. I am treated like a second-class citizen because of my race.
41. I receive poorer treatment in restaurants and stores because of my race.
47. Sometimes I feel as if people look past me or don't see me as a real person because of my race.
49. I feel invisible because of my race.
51. I am ignored in school or work environments because of my race.
52. My contributions are dismissed or devalued because of my racial background.

Environmental Invalidations

42. When I interact with authority figures, they are usually of a different racial background.
43. I notice that there are few role models in my racial background in my chosen career.
44. Sometimes I am the only person of my racial background in my class or workplace.
45. Where I work or go to school, I see few people of my racial background.
46. I notice that there are few people of my racial background on the TV and in books and magazines.

Appendix F: Africultural Coping Systems Inventory

PsycTESTS Citation:
Utsey, S. O., Adams, E. P., & Bolden, M. (2000). Africultural Coping Systems Inventory Retrieved from PsycTESTS. https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/t05866-000

Instrument Type:
Inventory/Questionnaire

Test Format:
To complete the Africultural Coping Systems Inventory (ACSI), individuals are asked to briefly describe a stressful situation that they experienced within the past week or so. Then, on a 4-point Likert-type scale (0 = does not apply or did not use, 1 = used a little, 2 = used a lot, and 3 = used a great deal), they are instructed to indicate the extent to which they employed each of the coping behaviors listed on the ACSI.

Source:
Reproduced with permission from Utsey, Shawn O., Adams, Eve P., & Bolden, Mark. (2000). Development and initial validation of the Africultural Coping Systems Inventory. Journal of Black Psychology, Vol 26(2), 194–215. doi: https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0095798400026002005

Africultural Coping Systems Inventory

Items

Cognitive/Emotional Debriefing

5. Tried to forget about the situation
8. To keep from thinking about the situation I found other things to keep me busy
17. Tried to convince myself that it wasn't that bad
19. Spent more time than usual doing group activities
21. Hoped that things would get better with time
23. Spent more time than usual doing things with friends and family
26. Tried to remove myself from the situation
27. Sought out people I thought would make me laugh
28. Got dressed up in my best clothing
29. Attended a social event (dance, party, movie) to reduce stress caused by the situation
40. Found myself watching more comedy shows on TV

Spiritual-Centered Coping

1. Prayed that things would work themselves out
6. Went to church (or other religious meeting) to get help from the group
13. Read a scripture from the Bible (or similar book) for comfort and/or guidance

18. Asked someone to pray for me
22. Read passage from a daily meditation book
30. Asked for blessings from a spiritual or religious person
38. Sung a song to myself to help reduce the stress
41. Left matters in God's hands

Collective Coping

2. Got a group of family or friends together to help with the problem
3. Shared my feelings with a friend or family member
4. Remembered what a parent (or other relative) once said about dealing with these kinds of situations
7. Thought of all the struggles Black people have had to endure and this gave me strength to deal with the situation
11. Sought advice about how to handle the situation from an older person in my family or community
14. Asked for suggestions on how to deal with the situation during a meeting of my organization or club
31. Helped others with their problems
33. Sought emotional support from family and friends

Ritual-Centered Coping

32. Lit a candle for strength or guidance in dealing with the problem
35. Burned incense for strength or guidance in dealing with the problem
38. Used a cross or other object for its special powers in dealing with the problem

Appendix G: Brief Resilience Scale

Source:
Reprinted from Brief Resilience Scale by B.W. Smith, Dalen, J., Wiggins, K., Tooley, E., Christopher, P., & Bernard, J. (2008). The brief resilience scale: Assessing the ability to bounce back. *International Journal of Behavioural Medicine*, 15, 194–200. Reprinted with permission.

Brief Resilience Scale

Please respond to the questions below by selecting one answer per question.

1. I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times.

- ○ 1. Strongly Disagree
- ○ 2. Disagree
- ○ 3. Neutral
- ○ 4. Agree
- ○ 5. Strongly Agree

2. I have a hard time making through stressful events.

- ○ 5. Strongly Disagree
- ○ 4. Disagree
- ○ 3. Neutral
- ○ 2. Agree
- ○ 1. Strongly Agree

3. It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event.

- ○ 1. Strongly Disagree
- ○ 2. Disagree
- ○ 3. Neutral
- ○ 4. Agree
- ○ 5. Strongly Agree

4. It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens.

- ○ 5. Strongly Disagree
- ○ 4. Disagree
- ○ 3. Neutral
- ○ 2. Agree
- ○ 1. Strongly Agree

5. I usually come through difficult times with little trouble.

- ⭘ 1. Strongly Disagree
- ⭘ 2. Disagree
- ⭘ 3. Neutral
- ⭘ 4. Agree
- ⭘ 5. Strongly Agree

6. I tend to take a long time to get over setbacks in my life.

- ⭘ 5. Strongly Disagree
- ⭘ 4. Disagree
- ⭘ 3. Neutral
- ⭘ 2. Agree
- ⭘ 1. Strongly Agree

Appendix H: Demographic Questionnaire

1. Which best describes your experience? Select one.

- ○ Have had a race-related incident, such as racial discrimination, racial microaggression, or racial trauma
- ○ Have not had a race-related incident, such as racial discrimination, racial microaggression, or racial trauma

2.Which best describes your age? Select One.

- ○ Under 18
- ○ 18 to 24
- ○ 25 to 34
- ○ 35 to 44
- ○ 45 to 54
- ○ 55 to 64
- ○ 65 and over

3. With which gender do you most identify? Select one.

- ○ Female
- ○ Male
- ○ Transgender Female
- ○ Transgender Male
- ○ Gender Variant/Non-conforming
- ○ Non-binary
- ○ Other

4. Which of the following best describes you? Select all that apply.

- ○ African
- ○ Asian
- ○ Black or African American
- ○ Black Caribbean or African Caribbean
- ○ Hispanic or Latino
- ○ Native American or Alaska Native
- ○ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ○ White or Caucasian
- ○ Other

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed? Select one.

- ○ Bachelor's Degree
- ○ Master's Degree
- ○ Education Specialist Degree
- ○ Doctorate Degree
- ○ Professional Degree

6. Which best describes your current program of study? Select one

- ○ Clinical Mental Health Counseling
- ○ Counselor Education and Supervision
- ○ Marriage, Couples, and Family Counseling
- ○ School Counseling
- ○ Rehabilitation Counseling
- ○ Other

7. Which best describes your counseling program's accreditation?

- ○ Enrolled in a CACREP Program
- ○ Not Enrolled in a CACREP Program

8. Which best describes your current college or university institution? Select one.

- ○ Historically Black College or University (HBCU)
- ○ Predominately White Institution (PWI)
- ○ Other

9. Which best describes your current employment status? Select one.

- ○ Employed Full-Time
- ○ Employed Part-Time
- ○ Not Employed
- ○ Seeking Employment
- ○ Retired

Appendix I: Tables

Table I1

Model Summary: Independent Variables and Brief Resilience

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.223[a]	.050	.012	.758733050500	2.008

a. Predictors: (Constant), Collective Coping, Environmental Subscale, GlobalIRRSB
b. Dependent Variable: Brief Resilience Scale

Table I2

ANOVA: Independent Variables and Brief Resilience

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.299	3	.766	1.331	.271[b]
	Residual	43.751	76	.576		
	Total	46.050	79			

a. Dependent Variable: Brief Resilience Scale
b. Predictors: (Constant), Collective Coping, Environmental Subscale, GlobalIRRSB

Table I3

Coefficients: Independent Variables and Brief Resilience

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.226	.359		8.998	<.001	2.512	3.940		
	GlobalIRRSB	-.024	.038	-.078	-.638	.525	-.101	.052	.839	1.192
	EnvironmentalSubscale	.250	.126	.239	1.988	.050	.000	.501	.868	1.152
	CollectiveCoping	-.006	.018	-.041	-.358	.721	-.041	.029	.936	1.068

a. Dependent Variable: BriefResilienceScale

Table I4

Coefficients: Independent Variable and Brief Resilience

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.675	.086		42.780	<.001
	GlobalIRRSB	-.001	.036	-.003	-.028	.978

a. Dependent Variable: Brief Resilience Scale

Table I5

Coefficients: Mediation and Independent Variable

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	13.875	.549		25.254	<.001
	GlobalIRRSB	.497	.227	.240	2.184	.032

a. Dependent Variable: Collective Coping

Table I6

Coefficients: Mediation and Dependent Variable

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.722	.253		14.688	<.001
	CollectiveCoping	-.003	.017	-.022	-.197	.845

a. Dependent Variable: Brief Resilience Scale

Table I7

Model Summary: Mediation, Independent, and Dependent Variable

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.022[a]	.001	-.025	.773144740255	1.970

a. Predictors: (Constant), Collective Coping, GlobalIRRSB
b. Dependent Variable: Brief Resilience Scale

Table I8

ANOVA: Mediation, Independent, and Dependent Variable

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.023	2	.012	.019	.981[b]
	Residual	46.027	77	.598		
	Total	46.050	79			

a. Dependent Variable: Brief Resilience Scale
b. Predictors: (Constant), Collective Coping, GlobalIRRSB

Table I9

Coefficients: Mediation, Independent, and Dependent Variable

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.723	.262		14.218	<.001	3.202	4.244		
	GlobalIRRSB	.001	.037	.002	.020	.984	-.073	.074	.942	1.061
	CollectiveCoping	-.003	.018	-.023	-.194	.846	-.039	.032	.942	1.061

a. Dependent Variable: Brief Resilience Scale

Table I10

Coefficients: Independent and Dependent Variable

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.216	.263		12.232	<.001
	Environmental Subscale	.214	.116	.204	1.844	.069

a. Dependent Variable: Brief Resilience Scale

Table I11

Coefficients: Independent and Mediation Variable

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	11.529	1.747		6.599	<.001
	Environmental Subscale	1.095	.773	.158	1.417	.160

a. Dependent Variable: Collective Coping

Table I12

Coefficients: Mediation and Dependent Variable

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.722	.253		14.688	<.001
	Collective Coping	-.003	.017	-.022	-.197	.845

a. Dependent Variable: Brief Resilience Scale

Table I13

Model Summary: Independent Variables and Brief Resilience

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.212[a]	.045	.020	.755808571549	1.990

a. Predictors: (Constant), Environmental Subscale, Collective Coping
b. Dependent Variable: Brief Resilience Scale

Table I14

ANOVA: Independent Variables and Brief Resilience

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.064	2	1.032	1.807	.171[b]
	Residual	43.986	77	.571		
	Total	46.050	79			

a. Dependent Variable: Brief Resilience Scale
b. Predictors: (Constant), Environmental Subscale, Collective Coping

Table I15

Coefficients: Mediation Variable, Independent Variable, and Brief Resilience

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.314	.330		10.048	<.001	2.657	3.970		
	EnvironmentalSubscale	.224	.118	.213	1.890	.062	-.012	.459	.975	1.026
	CollectiveCoping	-.009	.017	-.056	-.497	.621	-.043	.026	.975	1.026

a. Dependent Variable: Brief Resilience Scale

Appendix J: Figures

Figure J1

Normal Probability–Probability Plot for Research Question 1

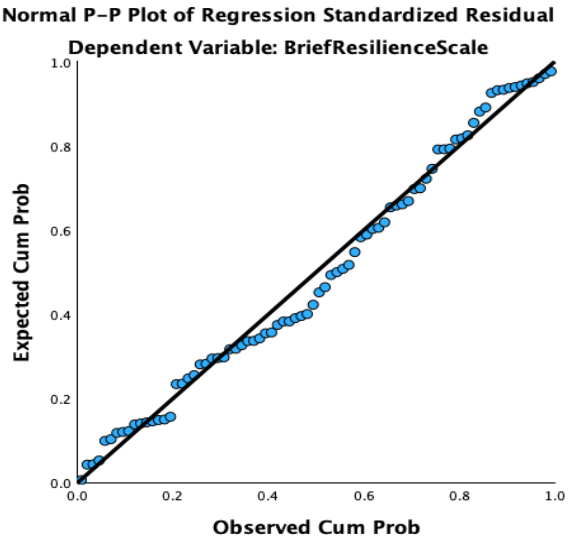

Figure J2

Scatterplot of Residuals Versus Predicted Values for Research Question 1