Exploring Religiosity and the Reflective Perspectives of Microaggressions Endured by Students and Educators from Non-Dominant Racial Groups in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences of African American/Black and Native American students and educators on university campuses. This auto ethnographic paper addresses the role religion plays in student support and the enrollment crisis endured by college administrators when equity is not clearly defined, nor practiced, to support educators from non-dominant racial groups. As universities become more diverse, scholars and practitioners may want to be more cognizant of how educators and learners from non-dominant racial groups, particularly African American/Blacks and other races in academe, experience university settings in conjunction with religiosity. Explications of the role religion plays in the experience of students and educators from this traditionally marginalized group may help college campuses better devise strategies for recruitment and retention.

INTRODUCTION

Equity has become a popular term in the higher education space, yet its application and practice within institutions vary dramatically. Variations in definition, policy, and practices have continued to increase the gap in demographic disparities when creating strategies to address enrollment, retention, completion, and graduate employment rates of people from non-dominant racial groups such as African Americans/Blacks and Native Americans. In addition to these structural inequalities endured by students from traditionally disenfranchised groups, it appears that educators from non-dominant racial groups also experience micro-assaults, micro-invalidation, and other microaggressions. Furthermore, female educators are experiencing a shift from *glass ceiling* to what is now known as *glass cliff*. The glass cliff theory is a new phenomenon regarding how women are selected for promotion when there is a high risk of failure (Smith, 2015) while focused primarily on gender diversity in leadership in public management and organization research. Yet less is known about the organizational circumstances under which women from non-dominant racial groups attain leadership positions that have a high probability of failure, particularly in higher education, nor do people seem to comprehend that these experiences are regarded as microaggressions targeting women from non-dominant racial groups.

For this paper, the authors, all of whom are from non-dominant racial groups, utilize the term *non-dominant* racial groups in lieu of the term *minority* due to the negative connotations some associate with the term *minority*. Non-dominant groups or *minority* groups are defined by an ascribed status by the dominant group (privileged, wealthy, etc..) as being a category of people whose physical appearance or cultural characteristics set them apart from the dominant group and receive different and unequal treatment (Dunn, 2015). *Microaggressions*, for the purpose of this paper and scope of autoethnographic research, are"subtle, daily, and covert racial slights committed against members of racialized groups" (Williams et al., 2021). This is an expansion of the seminal description of the construct of microaggression completed by Harvard psychiatrist Chester Pierce who laid the foundation for other qualitative, quantitative, and theoretical works since 1970.

This paper offers narratives from three contributing authors about their lived experiences with microaggressions, religiosity, and the glass cliff. Furthermore, the paper will exemplify higher education

administrators' and policy makers' understanding of what African American/Black as well as Native American students and educators contend with regarding racial inequity in higher education. By presenting narratives, it is the authors' expressed hope and intention that while these lived experiences cannot be generalized, the stories will provide an opportunity to demonstrate empathy while educating others. Moreover, the thick descriptions provided in the narratives may introduce readers to seminal work on the construct of microaggressions, allowing viewers to determine if the lived experiences discussed possess contextual transferability. These narratives also provide specific strategies to address structural inequalities in the higher education sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Racism and sexism are deeply engrained in our society, yet persistently misunderstood as a biological construct rather than at the granular level of a socio-cultural one. Diversity and implicit bias trainings, which are attempts to create safe spaces aimed to expose people to the negative associations and stereotypes we hold and unconsciously express (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013), have failed to change mindsets related to the genesis of racism and sexism in the educational setting. The deictic nature of conversation around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is a primary problem with different variations of the meaning and meaningfulness linked to the context in which these terms are discussed. In higher education, Caucasian/White administrators tend to initiate conversations to address the stressors and harmful effects of microaggressions on students and educators from non-dominant racial groups. However, these administrators often have not experienced microaggressions nor the glass cliff; therefore, the foundation of these initiatives lacks the depth of lived experiences needed to contextualize the training. In other words, while some of these academic administrators may have good intentions, sometimes their dearth of experience with the related topics seems to impede their ability to adequately capture the essence of the concepts they are striving to teach. They don't have the experience to relate to the educators they are leading, particularly those who are African American/Black or Native American.

The expansion of the seminal description of the construct of microaggression completed by Harvard psychiatrist Chester Pierce who laid the foundation for other qualitative, quantitative, and theoretical works since 1970, has its extended application to the workplace and school (Williams et al., 2021). Therefore, use of the term microaggression in this paper will be expanded to describe *racial* microaggressions as established using the development of three scales: Racial & Ethnic Microaggression Scale (Nadal, 2011), Racial Microaggressions Scale (Torres-Harding et al., 2012), and Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale for Black Women (Lewis & Neville, 2015). These scales provide several contextualized dimensions and factors of racial microaggressions that three individuals from non-dominant racial groups encountered, as the narratives present. More specifically, the narratives are intricately aligned and support these quantitative studies that revisited the original taxonomic structured, identified, deconstructed, and categorized microaggressions into dimensions and factors developed from these scales by researchers.

Pathological stereotypes and biases from dominant group members based on forms of oppression reinforce and reflect the position of privilege. Seeing "Whiteness" in the origins of race in the United States is a conundrum that White administrators in higher education face. False classifications as a social construct later called "races" began between the 16th and 17th centuries with colonization and the expansion of slave trade from Africa by Africans of people, regardless of skin color (Black and White). Back then religion was used to justify classifying African American/Black people and other people who were not Caucasian as "pagan and soulless." An examination of Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 by Dr. Warren Billings (1970), assistant professor of history at Louisiana State University, revealed that White and Black indentured servants were united regarding their freedom upon completing their "terms of service." Yet Caucasian/White Virginia lawmakers sought to make a legal distinction between "White" and "Black" people which led to Congress codifying White racial advantage into law with the passing of the

Naturalization Act of 1790, limiting U.S. citizenship by naturalization to "free White persons," which were mostly poor White men who served their terms as indentured servants. Hence, religion and racism have become both synonymous and antonymous as they relate to the oppressive and discriminatory behaviors experienced by African Americans/Blacks. As a result, this ethnic group finds religion as a method of coping with sexism and racism.

In fact, Caucasian/White Americans who previously ignored these issues, began to reevaluate law enforcement and education in the context of history, literature, and legacies as they now had access to this information which had been excluded from school curriculum. Advanced technology has provided access to information that revealed if you were of non-Western European heritage, you were as vilified as African American/Black. This reality was particularly prevalent during COVID-19, as many people were confined to their homes watching television or surfing the Worldwide Web. These multi-racial incidents have awakened the reality and acknowledgement of "Whiteness in America" in many Caucasian people that were not considered pre-COVID. Once enlightened many people realized it was imperative that more African American/Black voices, as well as voices from other non-dominant racial groups, were heard through the sharing of lived experiences in the context of race, gender, religion, and education.

The White dominance in our educational systems is potentially why the context of DEI trainings failed to address the mindset behind the established infrastructure of empowering one alleged racial group over another and creating multiple systems that perpetuate this (Darling, 2021). A meta-analysis of 492 studies (87,418 participants) on the effectiveness of implicit bias training revealed that participants indicated weak effects on their unconscious bias, suggesting that short-term changes using brief, single-session manipulations produced trivial changes in behavior (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013) at the individual or multi-systemic level. One of these systems that perpetuate racism is religion.

The contributing authors, who are of African American and/or Native American decent, have shared lived experiences of sexism as well as racial inequity in law enforcement, religious, and educational settings. This auto ethnographic study is reflective of Drs. White-Goyzueta, Gates-Mayweathers, and Nance-West Christian, college, and career backgrounds that have inspired them to conduct research in one or more of these settings. Feeling the harms of marginalization, such as racism and/or sexism, in their own lives, the authors seek to provide rich, thought-provoking scenarios, interviews, and recommendations to readers who will empathize, through critical reflection, the many ways in which racism and/or sexism have hurt students and educators from non-dominant racial groups and genders. Racism and sexism also affect Caucasian/White people as the threat of the defunding of higher education DEI programs in states like Florida (Diaz, 2023) have become a threat across the country. Moreover, racism and sexism may have precluded many Caucasian/White organizational members from fully embracing or appreciating the unique perspectives of their counterparts from other races and genders as well as the value added by these traditionally disenfranchised groups.

METHOD

This research utilized qualitative research methods (Cresswell, 2003) to gather in-depth interviews on the lived experiences of three scholars from African American and Native American descent. The women who have served as both student and faculty at predominately Caucasian campuses. Drs. Denise Gates-Mayweathers, Odelet Nance-West and Karen White-Goyzueta, provide narratives reflecting on their lived experiences or the experiences of people they have interviewed. This substantive content consisted of lived experiences in the context of sexism, racial discrimination, religion, and higher education. Each of the contributing authors has worked alongside and/or as administrators, faculty, and students in predominantly Caucasian/White educational settings. Their reflective perspectives on the experiences of African American/Black as well as Native American students and educators in the context of navigating tumultuous

college and career journeys while employing their religious beliefs in the context of ethnic discrimination have been documented.

These narratives reflect student interviews and describe the difficulty African American /Black and/or Native American students and educators have experienced while using religion for a coping mechanism as they attempt to advance in their respective academic and/or professional journeys in predominately Caucasian/White educational settings. The use of *autoethnography* is a helpful research method for scholars in education conducting socio-cultural studies to engage individuals in examining the relationship between autoethnography and the practical implications of the findings to inform change (Starr, 2010). The authors do not seek to generalize their experiences to an entire race nor gender. However, the thick descriptions emerging from their shared lived experiences may help others determine if enough evidence exists to promote transferability (Creswell, 2013), if people identify with the lived experiences presented in this paper.

The aim of this autoethnographic study is to use the lived experiences of these three women to better understand microaggressions and their place within a continuum of race-related offenses and sexism within the context of higher education as measured by each of the scales. The dimensions discussed are Workplace and School Microaggression (feeling ignored or unwelcome in an academic and professional setting) developed by Nadal's (2011) Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale, Invisibility (feeling devalued or ignored) and Sexualization (oversexualization or eroticized) by Torres-Harding et al.'s (2012) Racial Microaggression Scale. Factors discussed are Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification (focused on appearance and sexual objectification) and Strong Black Woman Stereotype (being seen as sassy, independent, and assertive) as developed by Lewis & Neville's (2015) Gendered Racial Microaggression Scale for Black Women.

Reflective Perspectives: Interviews and Narratives

Dr. Denise Gates-Mayweathers has enjoyed working with MBA students, undergraduate students, and youth center students for many years. A prolific researcher and author, her first opportunity to formally educate learners emerged when a pastor contacted her undergraduate university, looking for someone to direct his youth center. Dr. Gates was excited to discover that her college advisor had recommended her for this prospective assignment even though he had already helped her obtain employment with a different organization. Nevertheless, she went to the interview and secured the leadership role on the spot. She landed the position, in part, because she'd made a name for herself through years of volunteerism. In the evenings after leaving her full-time, white-collar job at a large company, she'd travel to a nearby city to volunteer with various programs, often helping inner-city youth and adults. She quickly gained the trust and respect of her community. This was probably why the pastor, who knew Dr. Gates had a demanding schedule, promised to work around her other responsibilities. The church leaders were adamant that they wanted her to lead their youth center. Coming from a diverse family comprised of African Americans, Caucasian Americans, Native Americans, and Puerto Ricans, Dr. Gates was accustomed to communicating across cultures, and she welcomed the challenge of leading heterogeneous groups. The leadership role offered invaluable experience that has served her well in her career.

In the capacity as youth center director, Dr. Gates was charged with the task of helping to keep at-risk youth off the streets. Her plan was to motivate and inspire students by having them work on a community newspaper while simultaneously teaching them life skills. The goal was to provide an alternative to the illicit activities that were so prevalent in their respective communities. The program was strategically placed in a high-crime area with a goal of having the greatest possible impact on the community. Armed with the knowledge that youth could easily succumb to a life of crime in that neighborhood, the local pastor envisioned something better for the students. This reality compelled a local church to connect with youth by offering them safer spaces to convene and work on a shared goal. They needed an alternative to a life of

crime. Consequently, the church founded a youth program and hired Dr. Gates to direct it. While the program was owned by a church, participants did not have to be members of the church to attend. However, the participants had access to the pastor and church members who offered support on a regular basis. The community relied on the church as a support mechanism.

The youth program Dr. Gates directed enabled youth, mostly high school students, to come to the center for support in addition to working on a community newspaper and other goals. Dr. Gates recruited youth from schools, churches, and other community events. This work allowed Dr. Gates to collaborate with others to promote positive social change in the community. This directorship rendered Dr. Gates uniquely qualified for a second leadership role directing a leadership academy in another location. During her tenure as director of two youth programs and educator, Dr. Gates touched the lives of hundreds of students, not including students she assisted at the Violence Intervention Project, a third youth program.

In addition to her own leadership and guidance, Dr. Gates enlisted the expertise of other professionals to help train students at the initial youth center. Two or three times a month, she had professionals who held a variety of roles in the community conduct in-services or mini seminars with youth. Her objective was to partner with individuals who had high moral standards in conjunction with a calling on their lives to help others. These mentors tended to be Christians, utilizing their professional skills to build community and enact their faith. The students gained insight about a plethora of topics such as life skills, writing, printing, advertising, sales, college life, interpersonal dynamics, etc. Many of these guest speakers offered lessons from their own lives and the consequences of their decisions as a strategy to compel youth to make healthy life choices. Moreover, the students went on field trips to local universities to learn about college life and career choices. Ultimately, the church-sponsored program expanded to provide the students with community-based services to include psychological, academic, and spiritual support.

Years after the conclusion of Dr. Gates's role in the first youth program, one of the participants contacted Dr. Gates and thanked her for being an inspiration. This participant was on the precipice of earning her doctorate, and she wanted Dr. Gates to attend her dissertation defense. In a recorded statement to Dr. Gates days before her dissertation defense, the student had the following to say:

> Dr. Gates, I remember starting in high school with your organization, and you were walking us through the steps of reporting, and we were really involved. I can remember a lady in the church who came to the meeting. She was involved in a sexual harassment case, and you were putting out her story… It was everything to me. I was amazed by all of it. Like, this is what I wanted to do. I'm going to be a writer. This is gonna be my life. I ended up going to [name of school], and I have a degree in [name of degree]. I thought I was gonna work at a magazine…[I ended up working for two magazines]…You had one kid taking pictures…I wish I had realized then how much this would mean for me later in life.

This church-sponsored youth program played a vital role in deterring youth from engaging in violence and inspiring more positive outcomes. It was a crucial part of their respective journeys as the program set the standard for what was expected of the youth during adulthood.

The students were being socialized (Gates, 2009; 2023) to be responsible citizens and productive members of society. Research by Dr. Gates (2006) revealed that youth who were active in church-sponsored programs were more inclined to be active in church as adults. The students who were engaged with Dr. Gates' program were provided with tools designed to help them thrive in life or to at least have a better shot at success. She was essentially socializing students as socialization has been a prominent theme in Dr. Gates' career (Gates, 2002, 2009, 2023). This calling is what urged Dr. Gates to devote time to presenting her research to churches all over the United States, South Asia, Africa, etc., educating leaders about member retention as well as the socialization of church members / youth participants. Overall, the youth programs were designed to be a deterrent to crime and unhealthy lifestyle choices, and they each appear to have

attained that goal. In this way, Dr. Gates' programs were a support mechanism for students and youth in general.

In other instances, students relied on church support for assistance with grievances. A college student completing an internship had a story that was indicative of sexism, and she relied heavily on her church for support. An accountant from a nonprofit where the student was an intern complained when the accountant gave the unlisted address to a man against whom a female intern in his workplace had a restraining order. The accountant went and befriended the student's abuser and then began to come back to the student-intern and repeat offensive comments from her abuser. On occasion he'd question the student about her abuser, and he tried to cultivate a relationship with the student himself, which was deemed highly inappropriate. The student's encounter with sexism created a hostile communication climate.

The accountant knew information about the student-intern because he worked with her. He signed and issued her paychecks. He was privy to confidential information about the student-intern because of his administrative duties, responsibilities that gave him regular access to the board of directors. The problem with this was that the accountant was so obsessed with the student-intern that he appeared to be living vicariously through her abuser, desperately seeking to ascertain details about her private life. He inquired about the student's interactions with others. Even when the student made it clear to the accountant that she wanted no contact with her abuser after unsolicited and unwanted calls to the student's job from her abuser and the abuser's friend, the accountant still maintained ties with the student's abuser. Perhaps the Caucasian accountant and the student, who was from a non-dominant racial group, both needed to hone their organizational communication skills and learn how to combat barriers to communicating across cultures (Gates, 1998; 1999; 2001a; 2001b). Or perhaps the culprit was a lack of emotional intelligence.

The accountant could not comprehend how hurtful his conduct was to the student. The student-intern wanted nothing to do with her abuser, but her colleague kept helping him gain access to her. The accountant continued to cultivate a friendship with the abuser, sharing privileged information about the student with a man against whom she had a restraining order. The accountant knew the student was afraid of her stalker, but the accountant failed to show any consideration for the rights and feelings of the student. The accountant appeared egocentric when he assumed he knew what was best for the student, but his actions contributed to stress and mental anguish, an outcome supported in research by Gates (2010; 2023). What the accountant may not have realized was that after he befriended the student's abuser, the abuser's stalking intensified. Eventually, the abuser commenced to park his car across the street from the woman's home, a location that had been previously unknown to her abuser until after her colleague started divulging private details about her life. Later the abuser walked up to the woman at her second job after having befriended her colleague from her previous job. Ultimately, her colleague's eagerness to become acquainted with her abuser permitted the abuser to ascertain information about her that jeopardized her safety. The accountant may have had good intentions, but we all know the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Years later the accountant was exposed for his role in the date-rape of a woman during his youth, a woman he had befriended years prior to the start of his job as an accountant. The accountant and the student-intern's abuser had gotten acquainted at a support group for sex addicts. The student-employee couldn't comprehend why the accountant was so insensitive. He wasn't trying to be hurtful. He simply lacked the emotional intelligence to comprehend why his actions were offensive. Perhaps his history of sexual abuse caused him to identify with his colleague's abuser, helping a stalker gain greater access to a student-intern.

The student-intern couldn't comprehend how the sordid details of the accountant's background could be overlooked. How had he obtained a job with the organization? Was he not vetted? Had anybody bothered to do a background check? It turned out that the accountant's family had been funding the program, and it's likely that nobody conducted a thorough investigation into the accountant's background. He held a leadership role in the organization, and he controlled much of the spending. Maybe the accountant's

criminal records were sealed because his offenses transpired during his youth. Nevertheless, the accountant exhibited conduct during the student's internship that was problematic. (Firing the accountant wasn't an immediate resolution because people don't tend to terminate the family that is footing all of the organization's bills.) However, the student-intern didn't have a close enough relationship with her college advisor to seek help from him with such a sensitive matter. Plus, the accountant who was much older than the student had attended the same university, and he was part of the fabric of that community. Therefore, the student needed to be strategic in efforts to obtain support. The student-intern had decided that approaching her academic advisor was risky, particularly because students and leaders from her campus had described her academic advisor as a racist. The student wasn't confident that she could go to her advisor for help with the accountant. She had recalled student groups holding meetings about her academic advisor's offensive conduct on campus, so going to him for guidance with such a delicate matter wasn't an option. Her campus had even held protests targeting offensive faculty with a history of marginalizing students, and her advisor's name frequently made the list. Her advisor was allegedly known for sexism as well as anti-Black rhetoric or actions. In lieu of getting help from the campus or her boss when it came to the accountant, the student relied on her faith, family, and church friends for support. She augmented her skills with strategies to manage interactions with the accountant before she ultimately resigned to accept another job.

The accountant had no concept of the magnitude of his workplace betrayal (Gates, 2023). When the accountant was told that the student had a restraining order against the man and that she was afraid of him after he had assaulted her, a reasonable response may have been for the accountant to help protect the woman. The student did not expect the accountant to display an unbridled devotion to keeping her safe, but she hoped that he would honor the sanctity of his role at the church working in Human Resources by keeping information confidential. He disclosed details about the student's life that he should have been precluded from sharing as a function of his role, and he posed questions that were indicative of a personal agenda, not his need to do his job. The accountant ignored the fact that the student felt concerned for her safety, which was why her abuser had been barred from contacting her. She believed she was in imminent danger. The accountant was wrong to discuss any information about the woman with her abuser. He jeopardized her safety by telling her abuser where she lived and by giving him subsequent information about her. The accountant had no idea that his conduct was construed as inappropriate and offensive because he appeared to have normalized abusive conduct. He did not recognize abuse against women when he saw it even after others tried to convey concern to him. The accountant socialized with other sex addicts and rapists, so he regarded their conduct as normal. Even after women alerted him to possible danger, he still could not fathom why they would be afraid. Perhaps his own lack of fear clouded his judgement when it came to the fear in others.

The student-intern enlisted the help of her church when dealing with the accountant. Her church evidently had a history with the accountant, and they were well aware of his challenges with women. They tried to support and inform the student of her viable options when managing interactions with the accountant, especially given that a member of their congregation had accused the accountant during his youth of date-rape. The remorseful accountant had been in an accountability program with the accuser from his youth. After years of counseling, the survivor of abuse had reconciled with the accountant. She had forgiven him and declared him rehabilitated. The church asserted that if they thought he remained a danger to society, they would have alerted someone.

In a comparable situation, a college student complained of her Caucasian professor conversing with her about conversations he'd had with an African American man who once had a romantic interest in her. The Caucasian professor made sexually harassing remarks among other offenses. The Caucasian professor referenced the student's past suitor who had a disturbing history of gun violence. The student was not interested in the suitor, but the professor insisted on making unsolicited, inappropriate remarks, sexual in nature, to the student. The professor kept the student's male-stalker abreast of information about the student, including what she wore to campus, who she was dating, where she applied for jobs among other

personal information. The student knew this because the professor casually told her he was doing it. The professor was in violation of the student's rights as she had not authorized the professor to divulge information about her to the stalker. This circumstance was particularly troublesome because it had already been established that the student wanted nothing to do with the stalker. Consequently, where the student applied for jobs was part of her studentrecord as prospective employers contacted the university to verify her vitae, and this information was noneof her stalker's business. The stalker was a professor from a prominent university, and he did not have a legitimate academic reason to obtain information about the student.

Both male professors were in violationof a federal law that protects students, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The stalker-professor was calling the student's current university unlawfully, trying to acquire information about herafter she refused to talk to him. He also had his friend, a third professor from a third university, call the student's university trying to ascertain information about her. The student was repulsed by the stalker professor and desired no subsequent communication. Because she feared ongoing marginalization from professors on campus, the student relied on her congregation and religious leaders for guidance. She enlisted the help of her church pastor and other community members when her campus failed her. Her cousin, who was an educator at another prominent university, offered support.

Women reflected on the sexism inherent in their organizational experiences at the university level, and those encounters appeared to have shaped how they experienced off-campus activities, such as internships. In these situations, female faculty and students relied on their church connections and religious affiliations to assist them in solidifying plans to deal with university situations that couldn't immediately be addressed on campus due to their sensitive nature or the perceived lack of support from university faculty and/or staff.

Microaggressions manifested as blatant disregard for the rights of female students. The sharing of confidential information was perceived as a microaggression; however, other more egregious acts of abuse against female students and faculty have transpired over the years. The offending professor who informed the student's unwanted suitor where she was applying for jobs gave the harasser unnecessary information that potentially empowered him to unfairly manipulate her candidacy for employment as well as her career. The sharing of confidential information also jeopardized the student's safety by revealing her prospective locations to a possible intruder. On the surface, the offense of sharing information may seem trivial; however, when examining the complexity of the matter, a student's safety is at stake. Transgressions such as this one warrant support and reinforcements for students who have been wronged. Students identified in the present paper relied on churches as well as family support when dealing with microaggressions, sexual harassment or stress resulting from campus activities, which was consistent with research by Gates (2023). Microaggressions, sexism, sexual harassment, and workplace safety were themes that emerged in the lived experiences of student stories articulated in this paper.

In addition to sexism, some of the narratives articulated so far were indicative of an issue with workplace safety, which was a salient theme in research by Dr. Denise Gates (2023b). Women tended to broach the topic of safety, but men also have been known to encounter workplace violence. One way to inspire greater workplace safety was to have policies in place that were designed to help ensure the safety of all organizational members. People can learn how to maintain positive communication climates in the workplace and to demonstrate respect for others (Gates, 2009, 2021, 2023). Basic respect and consideration for the safety of people in the workplace, including college campuses, can help organizational members maintain healthy interactions (Gates, 2023a; 2023b; 2021a; 2021b; 2019; 2001a; 2001b; 2008; 2009; 2010). Organizational members with high emotional intelligence seem to master the art of managing relationships more skillfully than those lacking emotional intelligence. Individuals with high emotional intelligence may be more adept at being mindful of issues involving safety, and they perhaps could be better equipped to avoid sexism as well as microaggressions. However, anyone can be socialized to display consideration for others, and practically anyone can learn how to keep themselves and others safe (Gates, 2023a; 2023b; 2003a; 2003b; 2002a; 2002b; 2001b). The goal for organizations must be to create cultures that promote

healthy climates for all organizational members, cultures devoid of microaggressions, sexism, and sexual harassment. Subsequent research can investigate the connection between the utilization of microaggressions and the level of emotional intelligence.

Dr. Odelet Nance-West has worked for over two decades as an administrator, researcher, and instructor. Her research and scholarly publications examined the pre-college and college experience for African American students, the intersection of the church, and the educational process of students from non-dominant racial groups. Dr. Nance-West's collegiate administration career provides a wealth of experience in developing and managing programs at distinguished higher education institutions. Her research investigated the role of religion in the lives of Black Christian college students attending Caucasian/White institutions.

Dr. Nane-West's personal journey as a Christian college administrator and researcher inspired her initial investigation. She found that the voice of Christians in public higher education has often been stifled, ignored, and often ridiculed. Therefore, it was her intention to let the stories of five African American Christian first-year students at a predominantly Caucasian/White institution be heard and recognized. Her research was influenced by her personal experience serving as a church youth leader, community girls' group supervisor, and professional working at the Boys & Girls Clubs and at the college level. However, Dr. West's experience as the faculty advisor for a university Gospel Choir allowed her to observe the complexity of faith and the educational experience. As the faculty advisor, she had the opportunity to interact with a large group of African American Christian students. Each year, she recognized that their religious belief was the common denominator which bonded the students as a support group. Several of her students stated that the Gospel Choir and their religious beliefs had been major factors contributing to their retention at the university.

Dr. Nance-West's (2014) research revealed how the students interviewed were eager to discuss their spiritual lives. Their comments prompted an investigation into the role of religion and the intersection of academic achievement and student retention. Interviews of youth who attended church and employed their religious beliefs to strengthen themselves while attending colleges were utilized to ascertain the role religion played in the academic success of African American students. Her qualitative study examined the role of religion in the lives of five African American Christian students at a predominantly Caucasian/White institution (PWI). The stories of these students revealed how spirituality and religion informed their first-year journey through the college experience. Through the case study approach, they shared confessions of their challenges, fears, and successes. Within the narratives, they described their religious backgrounds, academic histories, and college experiences at a predominantly Caucasian/White institution.

In her research, Dr. Nance-West documented the reflective statements of a student who received a scholarship from his church to attend college. Shawn listed the scholarship he received from his church as a support factor that helped him "make itthrough college," compensating for the lack of support from his parents and family members. In addition, his pastor often made encouraging comments during his sermons that provided Shawn with strength and courage for endurance. "When I had no support from my family and my accounts were closed at the bank because of the money I owed [the school], the message I received in song and ministry told me to keepgoing and don't give up."

The students who attended services said they depended on words of encouragement to cope with the stresses of college. Research indicated that church attendance decreases during the first year of college (Astin et al., 2003; Astin & Oseguera, 2004). According to the submitted time logs from the students in this study, their church attendance declined, but students remained confident that church leaders would continue to be a

source of support. This suggests that while students may not have come to church each Sunday, they realized that they could rely on the church as a support system when they needed it. Research by Denise Gates (2006) revealed that church support enhanced the likelihood that churches could retain connections with peoplewho felt supported. Gates (2006) revealed that churches retained members for a variety of reasons:

1. Family connections to church
2. Agreement or loyalty with church values, doctrine, and leadership
3. Biblically-based sermons and teachings
4. Involvement with church activities and programs
5. Fellowship with church members, pastors, and community, especially if it involved food
6. A welcoming atmosphere
7. Spiritual or personal growth and accountability
8. Quality of interaction and impact on community
9. Community outreach, prayer, and support

Ultimately church support can have a lasting influence on a student's well being (Gates, 2006).

Gwendolyn felt guilty for attending fewer church services during her first year of college. The guilt she experienced stemmed from her belief that church attendance is essential for a person of Christian faith. She also acknowledged that the church had played a vital role in her decision to attend college, and although it may not have many resources, it had supported her in important ways. Gwendolyn remarked:

> My church has been extremely supportive of me. My pastor is always encouraging me just to keep going.She has her bachelor's and master's degrees. I think she wants her Ph.D. She is always very supportive. . . .My church has not been able to support me as much financially as a larger church might have, but they do things like buy school supplies.

There were several messages at the participants' churches that related to students' educational journey: Students should be diligent and work hard, giving everything to God, including their academics. During worship and youth services, students were frequently advised to be passionate about their faith and to commit their lives entirely to God even as they matriculate through systems of higher education. Many references were made pertaining to a college education. As one pastor stated:

> You can get a college education. It's not your teacher's fault if you are not getting a good grade. Enough is enough. Are you tired of the bill collectors calling? Are you tired of the teacher calling and getting below average grades? You must think your way out. If you don't know what to do saturate yourself with prayerand He will answer.

This type of acknowledgement was frequently imparted in the students' churches. At another church a minister prayed:

> The Lord is with us in this place, and we pray for a prayer of protection for our college students while they are in school. Keep them, Lord. Help them while they are on their jobs and while they are out and about on campus.

This prayer was just one way in which the churches expressed their support to students who were in college. One church devoted an entire service to recognize both undergraduate students and graduate students. The ministers often alluded to the fact that the students needed to depend upon their faith in Christ while they attended the university. In fact, during one of the college recognition services, the pastor uttered, "Can a person receive the degree outside of Christ? No, we could not do it without Christ. We should allow Christ to go through the test of going to college with us."

Timothy noted that his current pastor and assistant pastor provided him emotional and spiritual support:

> The pastor has been a help to me this year. The assistant pastor at the church is a Filipino guy. He hasblessed me this year. He is like a mentor but yet he is like a brother. My church gives me a lot of support. There are a lot of college students who attend the church.

All the students indicated that they preferred to utilize their mentors at their church rather than speak to someone at the college when problems arose. Talking to church mentors in lieu of conversing with academic advisors was also a salient theme that emerged in the narrative shared previously by Dr. Denise Gates. Students appreciated the comfort and convenience of talking to church mentors when given a choice. Timothy admitted that it was easier to discuss issues with those who could "pray for you" than with those at the college. Tim explained:

> I had more spiritual mentors than people I can talk to at school; I was reading in the Word, Mark, Chapter10: 'How hard will it be for a missionary to get to heaven? He said, whoever leaves mother, fatherland for the Gospel's sake, I will add unto them.' So, when I didn't have the support of my family —my church family became that support.

Although the students did not attend their home churches often, the support they received from the members and leaders was important. All the students except Marcus periodically attended services at their home churches. Due to transportation difficulties, Marcus indicated that he was not able to attend church service throughout his first year; therefore, he relied upon the student organizations, such as the gospel choir on campus, for spiritual strength and coping with his challenging college experience.

Clearly support was a prevailing factor when selecting a university to attend. Students choose an institution based on various factors that may include financial support, location, majors, academic reputation, or family influence. Research has concluded that although Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) may have provided the much-needed support, some of these students were unable to attend HBCUs due to locations and financial factors (Astin, 1993a; Fleming 1984; Furr & Elling, 2002). The students in this study stated that they chose this Midwestern, urban institution because of its reputation for academic excellence, location, and cost.

Amanda found her acceptance into the urban university a "blessing":

> I fell in love with the campus the first time I visited. It's weird, but yeah. I visited my junior year [in high school], I believe, Operation Snowball, one of the programs I was with, and we did various college tours,and we came here. My friend and I snuck away from our tour group, and we explored the school and lovedit here. It was in the wintertime, and we loved it. I loved the campus. I loved the location. I wanted to gohere. And God blessed. I got accepted here and I went here.

Unlike Amanda, Gwendolyn, Shawn, Timothy, and Marcus insisted that their main reason for attending the urban institution was convenience. Marcus and Timothy wanted to stay close to home. Gwendolyn had a desire to attend a HBCU, but she commented that "it just did not work out." Shawn decided to attend the urban institution despite the negative comments received from family and friends who thought that the institution was too large and practiced racial discrimination. Shawn was told by neighbors in education that the institution was a "research-based institution that did not do a good job in preparing teaching majors." Shawn revealed that he took all of the remarks in stride, but he had decided to attend the college because it was the first school to accept him:

> Everybody was telling me all during my senior year don't go to that school. Someone told me, you don't want to go there because you want to be a teacher, you don't want to be a doctor or nurse or psychologist or lawyer or something like that. Don't go there, they won't help you with your career and they will give you a hard time. But I wanted to try it out for myself.

Timothy admitted that during his senior year he had thought about going to a seminary or to a Christian institution, but he believed that the urban institution offered more choices for him to enter a business program. Furthermore, he explained the calling upon his life and his choice to attend the urban campus in the city in which he was raised:

Last year, I was working at a bank in high school. I was on the, thinking 'bout going to other institutions. I was on the computer at work and I heard a still small voice say go to Midwestern University [the study school] and stay on campus. I thought about going to theology school, but there is some reason the Lord is keeping me here.

All the students except Shawn remained committed to the fact that God had sent them to this urban campus. By the end of the second semester, Shawn stated, "The Lord wants me to be at another campus." Shawn's attitude about the campus changed immediately after he reported receiving several failing grades on exams. As the academic year progressed, he became extremely dissatisfied with his experience at the college experience. Retention and the success of first year students at predominantly Caucasian/White institutions are affected by the student's ability to adjust to the academic demands and the social environments of their respective institutions (Astin, 1993a, 1993b; Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis, & Thomas, 1999). According to the literature, African American/Black students have difficulty negotiating the transition from high school to college. Research suggests that predominantly African American/Black, urban high schools do not adequately prepare students for the rigors of the college curriculum. Since urban high schools are challenged with inadequate resources, unqualified teachers, and lower curriculum standards, urban students have difficulty being competitive at large PWIs. Shawn, who was the salutatorian at his high school, remarked: "College is different than high school. It is much different. In high school, I didn't have to really study a lot. Now there is so much work that I have to study all the time." Preparation is key, and finding a supportive university that was compatible with his needs was Shawn's primary goal.

Like Shawn, Marcus was an honor student in an urban high school and found the transition to college extremely difficult:

My schoolwork this first year was really hard. In high school I didn't study as much and still got straight A's. In college the school is, like, very, very challenging. So that was probably the hardest thing I had to deal with at this college.

On the other hand, Timothy stated that the coursework was a challenge. He also admitted to his lack of motivation. His strong spiritual beliefs lead him to express:

I need to start pressing more with my schoolwork and stop procrastinating. I really, I feel like the Holy Ghost is stopping me from being a procrastinator. I know that I got to get out this habit this lateness stuff. Oh, I got straight Bs in philosophy, ethics, uh, what did I have, oh, intro to business, and, um, math, and that was it, but if I wasn't lazy then I would have done better.

All of the students admitted that they lacked the preparation for coursework, which resulted in fervent prayers to God for mercy. The time logs revealed the insufficient number of hours students allocated to studying and class assignments. Gwendolyn talked about the grade mentality and using God:

I would think most Black people have general knowledge of the Bible and general knowledge of Christ and I believe that they believe in God it's like, but I think that they use him as what I like to call it sugar daddy. They don't want to live holy; they don't want to do what is necessary, what's considered to live a holy life. But when they need something, when their mother has cancer, or, you know, they need God to get them, you know, they knew they been messing around all the year long, all semester long, and they should've gotten a C, but Lord just let me get a B, you know, and think

that's just a lot of people including me.

Research shows that relationships and interactions with faculty members have increased the success rate of academic achievement for African American students (McEwen et al., 1997; Nettles, Theony, & Gosman, 1986). Amanda provided an example, describing her adjustment to an upper-level math course, calculus. She explained that she was unfamiliar with the teaching strategies the professor used as it was unlike what she experienced in high school. There, she did not have a math assignment every night nor did she have a teaching assistant (TA). Therefore, as prompted by a family member, she visited the professor during office hours, scheduled appointments with the teaching assistant, and attended tutorial sessions offered by both the academic support office and the math department:

> I passed calculus. I believe with God nothing is impossible anymore. Oh my God, calculus, I bled it and just cried and worked like I never worked before for a class. I went to my TA's office almost all the time. I was the one of the only ones who went and here at this campus the classes are very, very huge. And they usually think of you as a number and not a name, so my cousin went to Midwestern University and she told me that when I came here to make sure that I had a name and not a number. So I immediately started talking to all of my teachers, regardless if they had office hours or not. I was talking to them after class, sit down and talk with them and get to know them on a personal basis. I went to her office almost all the time and labored and just worked and God worked it out. I got a C, but I was OK with that. I was proud of that C.

Shawn and Marcus had similar problems with other courses, but they both found managing their time and visiting professors during their office hours were essential. All of the students in the study acknowledged that study skills strategies were not adequately taught at the high school level, and all of them expressed feeling unprepared for the college experience—as might have been predicted from the literature (Allen, 1991; Fleming, 1984). However, Marcus did learn how to adjust to the college curriculum. He described his weekly routine of studying:

> I learned quickly that I had to manage my study time. I was a social person in high school, and I wanted to be a social person in college. So I set aside at least 2 to 3 hours a day to study. Even when everyone else went to sleep, I studied. Some people did not have to study as hard as I did. In order for me to make it through my classes, I made a decision that I would have no social time until I still studied and did some homework.

The students in this study submitted time logs that reflected their daily schedules, and the logs showed that the students spent an average of 20-30 hours a week studying.

In summary, all of the students stated that they had to adapt to the challenging academic curriculum by increasing the number of hours they studied. They stated that they were able to cope with the transition through consistently focusing on their purpose and meaning for attending college. Their religious beliefs influenced their purpose for attending the institution. The students relied heavily on their religious beliefs to cope with Workplace and School Microaggression (feeling ignored or unwelcome in an academic and professional setting) developed by Nadal's (2011) Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale and Invisibility (feeling devalued or ignored) developed by Torres-Harding et al.'s (2012) Racial Microaggression Scale.

Dr. Karen White-Goyzueta's lived experiences include her roles of being an African American single mother of four sons, a college and university student, law enforcement personnel, and an educator while facing many microaggressions and racial discrimination from people who were Caucasian/White and African American/Black. As she reflects on her lived experiences, seeking the pursuit of truth-finding, healing, and redemptive practices, she began to expose herself to Christian beliefs of suffering for Christ's

sake. Dr. White-Goyzueta realized that for her, Jesus Christ provided the psychological knowledge she needed to pursue the peace that only her faith in Christ could give while facing the many assaults against her person because of racial discrimination.

As a law enforcement and higher education professional, Dr. White-Goyzueta saw the connection between inequity in education and economic mobility, especially for under-represented marginalized subgroups and special populations, that were the root cause of violence. She believes Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) play a crucial role with regards to fostering an equity-centered experiential learning environment where educators, employers, and learners can collaborate on the intentional process of developing forward thinking, culturally competent and value-driven future scholars, and professionals. As an African American woman, Dr. White-Goyzueta promoted and supported the highly collaborative approaches taken by educators to examine ways of reducing social, racial, gender, economic, and ecological injustices while cultivating and sustaining peaceful relationships.

As an educator, her philosophy on advocacy, social justice, integrity, and critical reflection within the context of higher education is grounded in fairness while ensuring that all have an opportunity for their voices to be heard. Dr. White-Goyzueta posits that equity is reflected in the intentional design of learning spaces, and her belief is that we are all learners. She encourages and leads individuals within her sphere of influence into respectful, evidence-based, culturally responsive discourse. And although she has rarely experienced equity-centered safe learning spaces among her peers, Dr. White-Goyzueta makes every effort to create this type of environment as a leader.

As a single mother of four sons and an African American/Black female police officer, Dr. White-Goyzueta always had to make major decisions to keep her sons safe. In the summer of 1997, she moved from New York City as a Police Officer in the Brooklyn North Narcotics Division to Roswell, GA to begin employment as a Police Officer with the Alpharetta Police Department. One of the most important reasons for leaving New York was because her two older sons, Rob and Quinn had to fight Italians and Hispanic boys during the trip home from school almost every day. They lived in the Bronx, which was comprised predominantly of Italians and Hispanics. More specifically they resided around East Tremont and Mohegan avenues. It frustrated her so much that she could not be present for her sons as a Police Officer and protect them from the race-based insults and fights they encountered daily. The Caucasian/White boys would join forces to jump Dr. White-Goyzueta's African American/Black sons. This tag-team effort was infuriating. What troubled Dr. White-Goyzueta most was that when these Caucasian/White boys needed help, they called the police, yet, they were chasing down the very children of those officers who were sworn to serve and protect them.

With her children in imminent danger daily due to these attacks, Dr. White-Goyzueta decided to apply for employment with a police department in the southern part of the United State where she anticipated her children could thrive. She believed that her sons could enjoy their youth and grow up safely. Or so she thought. She told her sons they would have a better life in Georgia, and she anticipated greater safety living near more African Americans. Unfortunately, that was not the case. After being employed with the Alpharetta police department, she did a little bit of research and found out that a cold case was reopened in 1992 regarding a black man being dragged down the streets of Forsyth County and then lynched. This was information she did not share with her sons. Since the initial racially-charged incident happened many years ago, she hoped that the racial issues would not be a concern in Alpharetta.

The day before she was scheduled to ride with her Field Training Officer, Dr. White-Goyzueta decided to take her four sons, ages 4 to 14, to Alpharetta to see where their mom would be working. After showing her sons the police department, they went to have lunch. Dr. White-Goyzueta took them to a restaurant on

Haynes Bridge for lunch. They stood at the front entrance where the sign on the podium read "please wait to be seated." As she looked around the restaurant, she noticed that there were only Caucasian/White customers and servers in the restaurant. As a New Yorker, she had no issue with any other ethnic group. New York City was truly a melting pot, so she just waited there with her sons like the sign instructed. As they waited, Dr. White-Goyzueta realized that none of the available servers were coming to acknowledge or seat them. After standing in the entrance of this small diner, some customers started to stare at them with disdain. Finally, after standing there for more than ten minutes, seeing the faces, and not being acknowledged by the servers, Dr. White-Goyzueta took her youngest son's hand and walked with her sons out of the restaurant.

It was evident that her older sons understood what had just taken place. Their mom, who is a cop, and her sons were subjected to what appeared to be racism by people in the very city she had sworn to serve and protect.It seemed that Caucasian/White people were unwilling to serve them while at the restaurant like they did everybody else. Dr. White-Goyzueta tried desperately to make light of the situation with her older two sons as they drove back to Roswell to find somewhere else to eat, but the damage was done. This racialmicroaggression experienced by Dr. White-Goyzueta and her sons was an instance of Invisibility (feeling devalued or ignored) developed by Torres-Harding et al.'s (2012) Racial Microaggression Scale.

The next day, her Field Training Officer (FTO), who was white, took Dr. White-Goyzueta into the same restaurant. This time she was walking in as a uniformed Alpharetta police officer. The Caucasian/White server immediately led them to a table, took their order, and served them refreshments in less than ten minutes. She was so angry but did not say a word. How could she? The possibility of losing her job or creating an awkward scene in front of her FTO was at the forefront of her mind.

The next time Dr. White-Goyzueta went to the restaurant, she brought her sons in the patrol car and wore her uniform. What happened? They served them just as quickly as they did when she was with her FTO. So, in uniform, Dr. White-Goyzueta was respected and so were her children. Out of uniform, they were treated as if they didn't exist. It became evident that there was a lack of diversity in the city. In 1997, there were only five African Americans and one Hispanic employed as officers for Alpharetta Police Department. Although the police department was trying to move the city forward into racial equity, it had a long way to go.

In the context of higher education, racial inequity was no different than in the law enforcement sector. From 2002 to 2022, Dr. White-Goyzueta was employed with several higher education institutions (HEIs) within the for-profit and non-profit sectors in Florida, Texas, and Indiana. Most HEIs employed predominantly Caucasians staff and faculty, with very little to no diversity in roles at the executive management level. Her journey from being a New York City Police Officer and Alpharetta Police Department Sergeant, to a student, bible study teacher, education administrator, then finally an instructor with the lived experiences of ethnic discrimination brought a unique perspective on educational leadership, religion, and social emotional critique of racism together.

As a single mother starting college, Dr. White-Goyzueta's first experience at a Christian college set the stage for her college journey. The educators at this college reflected the "Love of God" in the way they treated all students regardless of ethnicity, religion, or gender. This lived experience increased her faith in God and believers who walked in truth to serve all the students who came to them at the college for assistance with navigating their journey. Therefore, when she faced inequities moving forward to obtain her bachelor, master, and doctorate, Dr. White-Goyzueta was prepared to embrace the reality of individual and organizational cultures that would become potential barriers to her success.

While employed in the higher education sector, Dr. White-Goyzueta was promoted very quickly to leadership positions that had a high risk of failure. Although she was successful in her roles to include Dean,

Vice Chancellor, and Vice President in meeting and/or exceed expectations, the Caucasian/White administrators found a way to force her out of these positions. Most often it was Caucasian/White female or male administrators that created a hostile work environment which could be considered "forced resignation" or termination by means of a reduction in force. In most cases, the places in which Dr. White-Goyzueta experienced microaggression, the administrators in power were Caucasian/White. However, African American/Black administrators in positions of power displayed micro-aggressive behaviors towards her from time to time as well.

In each case, Dr. White-Goyzueta was depicted as being "too aggressive" or as she exerted herself as the formal leader of a division, her tone was characterized by her Caucasian/White colleagues as being "too harsh." One of the incidents Dr. White-Goyzueta experienced was related to her body shape and the way she looked in her clothing. Very graphic details were expressed about her body, and she was told to buy larger clothes to conceal her shape or wear shoes with lower heels as to look "more professional," although there had never been any issues with the clothes she wore to work in previous professional settings. All of these were instances of Workplace and School Microaggression (feeling ignored or unwelcome in an academic and professional setting) developed by Nadal's (2011) Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale and Invisibility (feeling devalued or ignored) developed by Torres-Harding et al.'s (2012) Racial Microaggression Scale. In addition, she experienced microaggression in the form of Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification (focused on appearance and sexual objectification) and Strong Black Woman Stereotype (being seen as sassy, independent, and assertive) as developed by Lewis & Neville's (2015) Gendered Racial Microaggression Scale for Black Women.

Therefore, as Dr. White-Goyzueta pursued her doctorate, she reflected on these patterns of micro-aggressive behaviors faced in her career journey. She theorized that the leadership style might also be a factor to investigate as it related to the success of African American educators and students in higher education. Dr. White-Goyzueta decided it was best to focus on a specific leadership style and its impact on college performance rather than ethnicity. During her first residency, Dr. White-Goyzueta told the dean of the college that she wanted to conduct her research on Authentic Leadership instead of Servant Leadership. His words to her were, "You might want to reconsider that since every other doctoral student was focusing on Servant Leadership." Dr. White-Goyzueta told him that was the very reason why she chose Authentic Leadership. In her mind, "otherness" should be reflected in more than just the color of one's skin. Therefore, her doctoral research focused on the descriptive analysis of Authentic Leadership, School Culture and College Performance as measured by student retention and graduate employment outcomes.

In Dr. White-Goyzueta's research, she posited that leadership influences teachers' job satisfaction which in turn improves the likelihood of an increase in student retention and graduate employment (White, 2015). Yet criteria such as leadership style are only considered important if a specific style is identified and clearly shown to improve student achievement. The purpose of the quantitative, descriptive pilot study was to examine if a descriptive relationship existed between authentic leadership and college performance at accredited two-year, for-profit career colleges in the United States (White, 2015). The theoretical framework that informed her research was authentic leadership as a new leadership style. The measurements used to collect data were the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) and archival data for 2012-2013 IPEDS college performance as measured by student retention and graduate employment rates. The sample consisted of 24 campus managers (n=24) from accredited two-year, for-profit colleges in United States. Descriptive analyses on the mean, minimum and maximum, median as well as mode were performed; percentages were also provided.

The descriptive statistics for college performance rates revealed that 95.83% (student retention) and 65.22% (graduate employment) of the institutions were greater than the established benchmark at the institutional level where the total ALQ scores for campus managers were greater than the midpoint (3.00). Findings from

her adjunct analysis on school culture in the context of authentic leadership were presented. While Dr. White-Goyzueta's pilot study only revealed descriptive relationships among the variables, further research on context-specific leadership to improve college performance was recommended.

As mentioned above, when Dr. White-Goyzueta was employed at one of the colleges, she found that there were some African American administrators who became a willful proxy for Caucasian/White administrators who appeared to be racist. The African American/ Black leaders were oppressing people of their own ethnicity. In fact, she would assert that these individuals could be considered a modern day "house slave" as they sit in prominent positions of authority as one of few African Americans/Blacks in these roles while preventing other African Americans/Blacks from experiencing the same opportunities. It was reminiscent of African American/Black on African American/Black crime. In Bell's (2018) research titled "Ascending the Ivory Tower," one of the five themes that arose from the experiences of Black administrators in HEIs was that institutionalized cronyism and elitism hindered promotion of African American/Black administrators. In other words, when an African American/Black professional made it to the ivory tower, they expressed elitism which in turn, made it more difficult for their ethnic colleagues to share that space. In similar fashion, women from non-dominant racial groups experienced a *glass cliff* wherein they were employed for or promoted to executive leadership positions when there was a high risk of failure such as during crisis or downturn. These women essentially were in situations where failure was almost imminent.

In conclusion, some African Americans in executive management positions reflected leadership styles that were self-centered and egotistical in nature. They did not reflect a desire to build or mentor their ethnic colleagues towards the same executive status. Based on Dr. White-Goyzueta's research on Authentic Leadership, she discovered that this leadership style had a positive impact on the mindset, skills, knowledge, and ability of faculty and staff in changing the DEI conversations and practices. Authentic leadership appeared to have a positive effect on culture, performance, and sustainable change in higher education settings. In the Journal of Nuclear Medicine and Technology, Johnson (2019) stated that recent research on authenticity in leadership and as a leadership style has revealed a significant impact on positive workplace indicators, including job performance, collaboration, and staff retention. Dr. White-Goyzueta believed that the authenticity of the leader matters more than title and is an essential key to having meaningful relationships, reducing instances of microaggression (racial or otherwise), and safe spaces for conversation without retaliation. Truth and acknowledgment are critical to building mutual respect and connection across divisions and stakeholders. Authentic leaders create the space for authentic conversations on common ground to occur.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

To summarize, this autoethnographic study utilized the lived experiences of three educators of African American and/or Native American descent to align and support the empirical evidence on the expanded contextualization of *microaggression* seminal work by Lewis & Neville (2015), Nadal (2011), and Torres-Harding et al. (2012). The Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale (Nadal, 2011), Racial Microaggression Scale (Torres-Harding et al., 2012), Gendered Racial Microaggression Scale for Black Women (Lewis & Neville's, 2015) provide invaluable insight into identifying, quantifying, and rectifying the deictic conversations of microaggression, specifically racial, and the maltreatment that exists on a continuum of discriminatory action. The categories of Workplace and School Microaggression, Invisibility, Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification and Strong Black Woman Stereotype discussed in this paper are representative of a coherent framework identified by the authors to facilitate consideration of new data and themes that have emerged in the last decade on microaggression and the use of religion as a coping mechanism.

Dr. Nance-West's study suggests that spirituality and religion along with family, peers, and the church were critical in the first year among the sample of college students interviewed (Nance-West, 2014). Implications for college administrators, faculty, campus ministries, and churches are to find equity-centered spaces all to demonstrate ethical behaviors towards each other as they address struggles endured by African Americans/Blacks in higher education. Based on Dr. White-Goyzueta's (2015) research, accumulated evidence, or lack thereof, in the literature points to a need for subsequent research to determine what factors drive individuals beyond moral judgments to enact actual ethical behaviors. Dr. White-Goyzueta suggests that leaders set the tone for this important work, and it behooves the researchers to continue to conduct studies on authentic leadership and its impact on establishing academic cultures reflective of equity-centered practices starting with administration.

Finally, the partnerships among churches and colleges should be established to strengthen support systems for Christian college students as well as college students in general. Through observations, interview, participant journal entries, and narratives, this autoethnographic study augments the body of literature recognizing the first-year experiences of African American/Black and/or Native American college students as well as African American / Black and/or Native American educators. Future research could seek to determine if other students and educators from non-dominant groups encounter marginalization at the university level.

To ensure the success of African American /Black and/or Native American students and educators, higher education administrators must recognize that microaggressions and glass cliff situations are not solely about economics for those who are frequently marginalized and oppressed because of racism and sexism. Racism and sexism should be viewed in the context of a power hierarchy. Meaning, those who are in positions of power, regardless of race and/or gender, are in control of all ethnic groups within their sphere of influence. Events such as the killings of George Floyd and other unarmed African American/Black victims and the pandemic that led to attacks against Asians and Jews can draw multiracial participation and protests. This violence and racial prejudice demonstrated by individuals and systems is truly about power. Therefore, those who want to remain in power, can hide behind racism as well as sexism and deflect from the real issue of institutional power, leadership style, and social class by focusing on the momentum generated by racism (and sexism), which is a social construct created after the Naturalization Act of 1790.

To unlearn discriminatory behaviors and begin to heal from the effects of racism, sexism, and other forms of marginalization, individuals must examine their own biases, prejudices, and assumptions in historical context. They must be mindful of the paradigms from which they operate. This can only happen through the proper socialization as articulated by Dr. Denise Gates-May weathers (2009, 2023a) as well as education, introspection, and exposure to diverse experiences and perspectives that lead to shared language and common ground. Common ground based on unity of mindsets is needed to promote equitable, brave, and safe spaces for students and educators from non-dominant racial groups in higher education. This is the foundational work that must take place, and it will require higher education administrators to:

1. Present learning content and competency-based education that is relevant to their lives, cultural challenges, and local communities.
2. Provide opportunities for Community-based Participatory Research (Andrews et al., 2019) and Youth Participatory Action Research (Cammarota, 2017) to co-create safe spaces for discussing cultural differences using project-based assignments and activities.
3. Participate in the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Institutionalization (Cumming et al., 2023) survey created by City University of New York Brooklyn College (BMCC) and the University of Florida to assess the institution's DEI practices and policies.
4. Eliminate financial barriers for non-dominant learners by creating authentic transparency about the cost of college.

5. Establish non-dominant educator mentoring and fellowship programs to strengthen tenure and promotion opportunities.

6. Make promotion of African American/Black educators about the skillset more than skin color which would serve authentic equitable approaches to inclusive C-suite organizational development.

7. Provide a series of unlearning racism and anti-bias trainings focused on delinking stereotypes from identities and absolute truths. The training should consist of an intense focus on both an intellectual and emotional level framed in the context of historical facts to defuse myths about systems that perpetuate oppression and Caucasian/White privilege.

This foundational work requires a strong commitment to the intentional and empathetic redesign of infrastructures and systems that many non-dominant students and educators encounter as barriers to their college and career journeys.

The contributing authors of this paper have shared their lived experiences (or the lived experiences of those they have interviewed) in hopes of inspiring many who want to also contribute to sustainable change through personal growth, reduce microaggressions in their sphere of influence, and create a more inclusive mindset. Reading about the experiences of marginalized groups is a powerful step forward in making the invisible microaggressions, microinsults, microinvalidations, and glass cliff situations visible. Higher education administrators must lead their teams by challenging the stereotypes, calling attention to the unintentional microinsults, and asking everyone to rethink or rephrase their comments. This is what an authentic leader does as they exhibit self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency, and a strong moral code (White, 2015).

Leadership styles make a difference when unlearning micro-aggressive behaviors as these assaults, often employed by people in power, constitute abuse and unethical conduct. Future research could examine the lived experiences of other professionals who have started the process of unlearning bias that tends to render many organizational members marginalized. These efforts to unlearn marginalizing conduct may take individuals on a journey to explore the ways in which they were socialized. Then organizational members may want to become more intentional about their socialization so as to acquire skill sets endorsed by progressive organizations striving to eradicate traumatic workplace betrayals manifesting as racism, sexism, pay disparities, safety concerns, sexual harassment, fraudulent complaints, etc., according to research by Gates (2009, 2023a; 2023b).

ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION MODEL BY DR. DENISE GATES
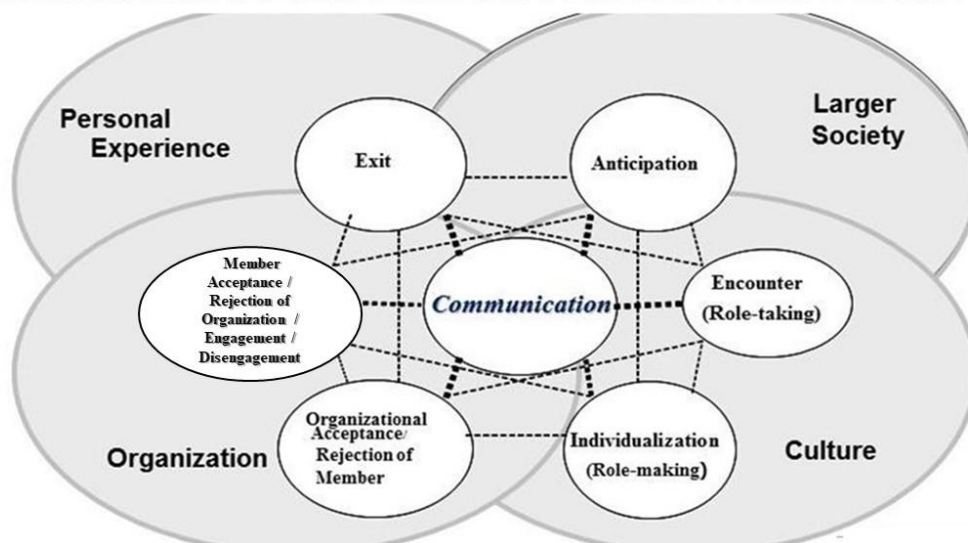
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Leaders may also want to review extant research on the organizational socialization of organizational members, identifying strategies to promote positive social change (Gates, 2023a; 2023b). Extrapolating from the research of Gates (2009; 2023a; 2023b), leaders may require a paradigm shift in the ways in which they comprehend organizational socialization, or they may want to revisit the strategies utilized to socialize individuals in higher education so that all cultural groups have equal access to organizational success. Organizational members want equality, and the tactics delineated in this paper may help start the process or at least spur thinking about the possibilities.

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