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Higher Education: Racial Battle Fatigue

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college and university faculty members. Many minority faculty members are concentrated at the community college level, with fewer working at the university level. But efforts are being made to increase minority faculty members because they are important for creating a diverse college environment, and many minority faculty members have made significant contributions to restructuring college curricula and creating new pedagogies.

Cultural Pluralism and Multiculturalism in Higher Education

Within higher education, historically Black colleges and tribal colleges were designed specifically to address the postsecondary educational needs of minorities. Cheney University, founded in 1837, is recognized as the first HBCU. The first tribal college, Navajo Community College (currently called Diné College), was started in 1968. In the United States, there are currently 32 federally recognized tribal colleges and universities and 106 HBCUs.

Rather than isolating the minority experience, many people are contending that the racial landscape of the entire system of higher education must become more multicultural. During the 1960s and 1970s, minority scholars and students began to highlight how postsecondary institutions and college curricula created Anglocentric campuses that were biased in defining what constitutes history and knowledge. As a result, multiculturalism was infused throughout higher education curricula. Many postsecondary institutions are now embracing majors, minors, certificates, and individual courses that focus on groups such as African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latin Americans. These programs and courses move the curriculum away from Anglocentric perspectives and provide students with different lenses for exploring college course material and wider social life.

Outside of the classroom, minority students face many other challenges in their experiences in higher education. Racially diverse and inclusive campus climates continue to be a concern. Institutional use of minorities for sports mascots remains a source of racial tension. Some believe that the use of humans as mascots creates discriminatory campus climates, whereas others believe that these mascots are simply images used to increase school spirit.

To improve retention of minority students, many campuses are instituting measures to enhance diversity. Many schools have developed requirements that

students of all races take diversity courses for graduation. Also, colleges have created offices of minority student affairs to assist students in their transition to and success in college. Recently, the National Campus Diversity Project researched minority inclusion in higher education and identified the most successful tools for achieving diverse and inclusive college campuses. To support and retain minority students, the report recommended funding for diversity programs, transformation of curriculum, academic support programs for minority students, and continual assessment of campus climate.

Laura Chambers

See also Affirmative Action in Education; African American Studies; Asian American Studies; Biomedicine, African Americans and; Educational Performance and Attainment; Educational Stratification; Fraternities and Sororities; *Grutter v. Bollinger*; Latina/o Studies; Higher Education: Racial Battle Fatigue; Model Minority; Native American Education; Pipeline; Pluralism; *United States v. Fordice*

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HIGHER EDUCATION: RACIAL BATTLE FATIGUE

Contemporary multiracial and multiethnic institutions of higher education are indeed microcosms of the broader U.S. society, which is still undergoing profound

sociopolitical and demographic restructuring from predominantly and historically White to unprecedented levels of racial/ethnic diversity within its institutions, schools, and communities.

The system of legal segregation in the United States that was institutionalized in the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case ensured that most colleges and universities remained essentially all-White until the 1960s. During the latter half of the 1960s, unprecedented numbers of African American students gained admittance to historically White campuses under the impetus of both nonviolent protests in the South and more violent urban unrest in the North. Equally important in the demographic change from all-White to increasing numbers of racially/ethnically underrepresented students was the U.S. Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954.

Social scientists often refer to the *Brown* case for its impact on racial/ethnic “integration” and “inclusion,” but it also represents a theoretical paradox. Although *Brown* had a significant impact in breaking down racial segregation, it did not always have an impact on negative racial ideologies and reactions among White students and faculty members about the presence of Blacks and other people of color. As a result, today’s historically White campus racial culture may nevertheless include an ideology of reactionary racism toward people of color that promotes *Plessy*-like environments on post-*Brown* campuses.

Among students of color, the ongoing impact of subtle and overt discrimination may create a kind of racial battle fatigue. This entry describes campus race relations in this context.

Understanding Student Perceptions

Student perceptions of the institutional environment are influenced by interconnected factors—an institution’s historical legacy of exclusion, its numerical representation of underrepresented racial/ethnic groups within the institution, and the racist behaviors and psychological climate observed inside and outside of the classroom. The historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion involves resistance to desegregation, the mission of the institution, the policies that are in place, and the rituals and traditions that have benefited White students prior to and since the arrival of students of color.

Despite the increasing numbers of students of color in historically White colleges and universities, the administration, faculty, and student body remain

predominantly White. The numerical representation of students of color is one factor that continues to fuel stereotypes and racist ideologies among some White students and faculty members, creating the psychological and behavioral dimensions of the institutional environment.

The psychological dimension considers the individual views of group relations, the college’s overall responses to diversity, the perceptions of discrimination or racial conflict, and the attitudes toward different racial/ethnic backgrounds. In contrast, the behavioral dimension of the institutional climate considers (a) the actual ways in which social interaction occurs, (b) the interaction between and among students from various racial/ethnic backgrounds, and (c) the temperament of intergroup relations on campus.

Both these psychological and behavioral dimensions are of primary importance. On today’s college campuses, the complex racial ideologies that students from diverse ethnic groups bring with them and the cross-ethnic conflicts associated with such ideologies can erode campus race relations and a sense of community. Although many believe that race and ethnicity are no longer relevant—the color-blind viewpoint—campuses are nevertheless witnessing a growth of reactionary racism among some White students. Reactionary racism is a negative reactionary sentiment that social changes demanded by people of color have “gone too far.” This racial ideology shapes the campus racial environment along with the various racial microaggressions and discrimination that students of color may face inside and outside of the classroom.

Racial microaggressions include racial slights, recurrent indignities and irritations, unfair treatment, stigmatization, hypersurveillance, contentious classrooms, and personal threats or attacks on a student’s well-being. As a result of chronic racial microaggressions, many people of color perceive the campus environment as extremely stressful, exhausting, and diminishing to their sense of control, comfort, and meaning while eliciting feelings of loss, ambiguity, strain, frustration, and injustice. When racially oppressed groups are in situations where they experience environmental stressors as mundane events, the ramifications are as much psychological and emotional as they are physiological. Therefore, the most common aspect of campus race relations for students of color, according to Chester Pierce, is one of mundane, extreme environmental stress, which creates the conditions that lead to racial battle fatigue.

Understanding Racial Battle Fatigue

Racial battle fatigue addresses the physiological, psychological, and behavioral strain exacted on racially marginalized and stigmatized groups and the amount of energy they expend coping with and fighting against racism. To be sure, the historically White campus is just one of the many lingering environmental conditions that produce racial battle fatigue for far too many people of color. Racial battle fatigue has three major stress responses: (a) psychosocial, (b) physiological, and (c) behavioral. These responses are not separate but rather intertwined; it is now widely recognized that personalities, emotions, and thoughts both reflect and influence physical condition. Among many interesting manifestations of this recognition is understanding the adverse effects of extreme emotional disturbances. Put in the vernacular, stress can

make people sick, and a critical shift in medicine has been the recognition that many of the damaging diseases of slow accumulation can be either caused or made far worse by race-related stress. This kind of stress response may be linked to the mundane, extreme racial microaggressions found in the campus racial climate.

The conditions that cause psychological racial battle fatigue can range from frustration to fear, and the body may respond to racial insults as if it were under a physical attack. Therefore, racial microaggressions found in the campus racial climate may be physiologically coded as violent attacks or acts of aggression. Very few clinicians or campus counselors are trained to appropriately recognize the sources that lead many students of color to display a range of physiological conditions such as constant headaches and frequent illness.

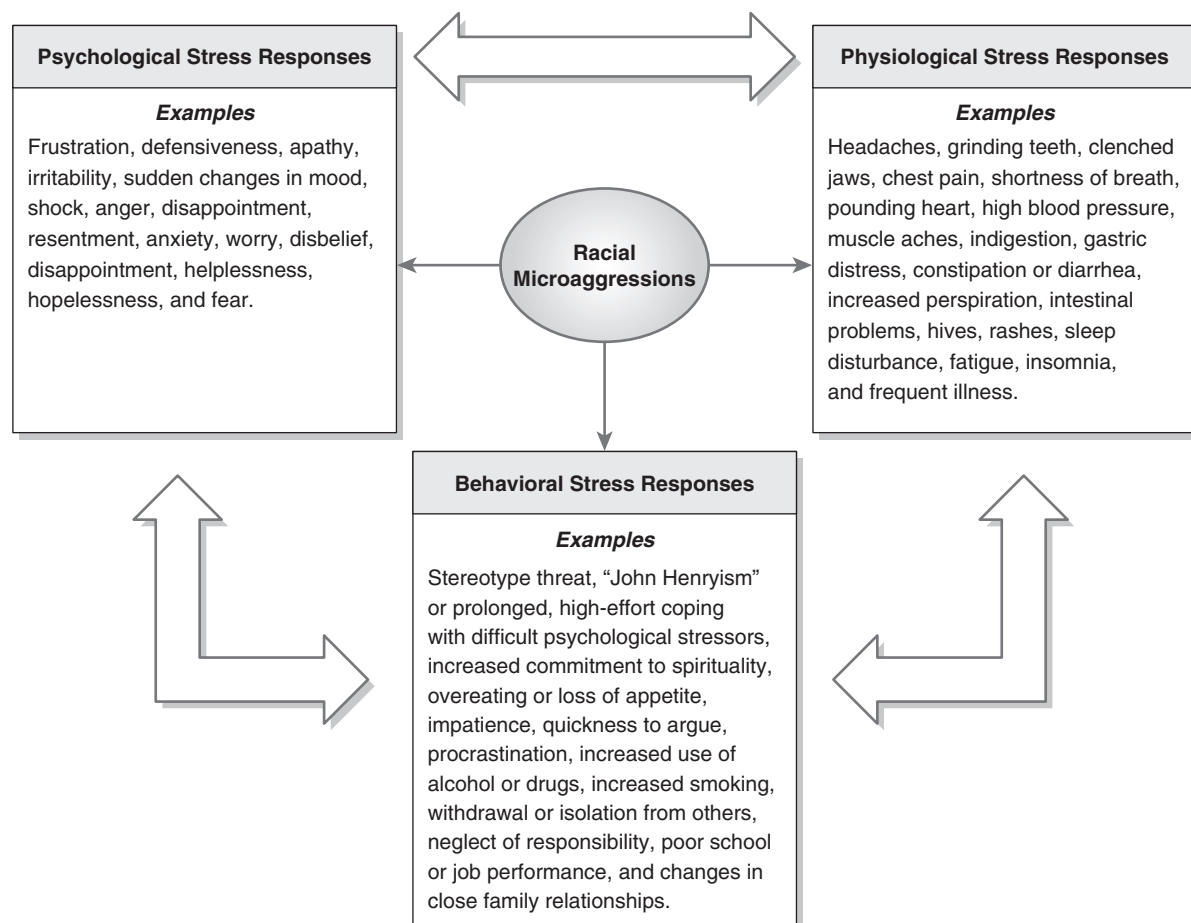


Figure 1 Causes and Stress Reactions to Racial Battle Fatigue

Microaggressive insults can diminish self-confidence, drain personal and family coping resources, suppress the body's immune system, and deflect important time and energy away from what students of color are really in higher education to do—to achieve academically and professionally. How postsecondary institutions, and the United States in general, choose to address this racial dilemma during the 21st century will determine how the current racial crisis in higher education, and in the society at large, will be handled.

William A. Smith

See also *Brown v. Board of Education*; Color Blindness; Discrimination; Educational Performance and Attainment; Educational Stratification; Fraternities and Sororities; Higher Education; Institutional Discrimination; Model Minority; Native American Education; Pipeline; *Plessy v. Ferguson*; Prejudice

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HIP-HOP

Hip-hop started in the Bronx, New York, as a genre of music based on "DJ-ing," "B-boying," graffiti writing, and "MC-ing." Over time, hip-hop artists addressed concerns pertinent to inner-city inhabitants such as urban poverty and racism in the form of police brutality and racial profiling. Despite its potential for empowerment and emancipation, there are several criticisms leveled against the genre, with the main ones being that it glorifies violence and is sexist and misogynistic. Although these are legitimate critiques, in general hip-hop music and culture offer marginalized and oppressed individuals the space to tell their sometimes horrific stories about urban life, often demonized or unrecognized by mainstream society. This entry looks at the history of the genre.

The Bronx

Hip-hop originated in the South Bronx during the 1970s. At this time, in the Bronx as well as in major cities across the nation, deindustrialization and urban