**TITLE PAGE**

# GENDERED RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS AND WELL-BEING AMONG BLACK FEMALE GRADUATE STUDENTS: THE ROLES OF THE ADVISORY WORKING ALLIANCE AND SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

by

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of Radford University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Psychology in the Department of Psychology

May 2022



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**ABSTRACT**

Graduate students may experience several challenges en route to attaining their degrees, such as financial constraints, psychological distress, and intense academic demands. For Black women in graduate school, these challenges may be exacerbated by experiences of gendered racial microaggressions. When faced with adversity, graduate students are likely to seek support and direction from their faculty advisor. Therefore, based on intersectionality and gendered racism theoretical frameworks, the present study was conducted to examine if the advisory working alliance and social connectedness may moderate the relationship between experiencing gendered racial microaggressions and well-being among Black women in graduate school. A total of 185 Black women graduate students completed an online survey. Using Hayes' (2013) PROCESS computational tool to examine moderation hypotheses, the results from simple effects indicated that there was a significantly negative relationship between frequency of gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction for participants at a higher level of mainstream society social connectedness. Additionally, the negative relationship between stress appraisal of gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction was significant at a higher level of mainstream society social connectedness. Lastly, the negative association between frequency of gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction was significant only at a lower level of advisory working alliance apprenticeship.

*Keywords*: Black women, well-being, graduate school, gendered racial microaggressions, advisory working alliance, social connectedness

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I have to thank my loving family for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout this tumultuous journey. I would not be in this position if it weren't for you all believing in me and seeing this moment before I could. To my mother – literally the greatest – THANK YOU! As much as it hurt me to be so far away from home, you were always in my corner to remind me of my purpose and encourage me to keep moving forward. To my dad, I cannot thank you enough for planting the seed. Thank you for teaching me compassion and understanding, and never allowing me to forget the power and importance of prayer. To my grandmothers, Debbie and Theresa, thank you for your guidance and wellness checks! I wish I had the words to explain how necessary and rejuvenating it was to hear from you both. I feel overwhelmed with gratitude for my village. Thank you to Denaya, my Godfather, Aunt Tiff Tiff, Puddie, Aunt Cent, Aunt Tina, and Aunt Linda. To my siblings, thank you for the laughs and being the inspiration I needed during difficult times. I hope to continue making you all proud. I am immensely grateful for everyone's texts, calls, Facebook messages, prayers, and LOVE. To Andrea the angel, this is for you. To my late Grandma E, I did it!

To my tribe, thank you! Dayna, Indya, Kayla, Nisha, Rodney, Chris, Stefan, Dominique, and Cheek, y'all truly kept me sane. Dayna, as you know, it has been a long journey. Your support and understanding have been my saving grace on too many occasions to count. To Indya and Nisha, thank you for your loyalty and encouragement. I literally cannot wait until we can get oysters and celebrate me being an official grown-up. Kayla and Stefan, thank you for ALWAYS being down for a good time in Charlotte when I needed it the most!

To Spring ’13, add me to the list of doctors on the line! I am so blessed and thankful to have 38 sisters for eternity. Each of you inspire me more than you could imagine. Additional and special thanks to my prophyte, and fellow Lucky 32, Dr. Jackson, for embracing me with open arms and providing so much insight about how to navigate academia and the field of psychology itself. You have been a pivotal resource for me over the past 4 years and I hope to pay it forward. Thank you for demonstrating sisterhood and allowing me to ask 100 million questions.

TO HARRIS, FAIRES, & BULLOCK, LLC – WOW! WE DID IT! I am so thankful for our bond. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you for inside jokes I literally cannot repeat here, Friday nights eating wings at Riley’s, and introducing me to river floating (who knew I was a nature girl?). I adore you both and I cannot imagine these years without either of you; thank you for challenging me, seeing me, and motivating me. The Standard Deviations always and forever.

To my incredible committee, thank you for your support and patience throughout this journey! To Drs. Cohn and Hastings, I am eternally grateful for your support and feedback. Thank you for believing in me and this project. Thank you to Dr. Tsai for your guidance and leadership. I have learned a great deal as your advisee. I appreciate you sharing your brilliance with me.

Lastly, to all the Black women in graduate school: keep moving forward. Know that I see you, I understand you, and I believe in you.

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# CHAPTER 1

# OVERVIEW

## Perceived Racial Discrimination, Microaggressions, and Well-Being

Racial discrimination, a manifestation of racism, has been characterized by Carter (2005) as either intentional or accidental avoidance between dominant and non-dominant racial group members. It is well documented in the literature that experiences of perceived racial discrimination (PRD) negatively impact one's physical health (Berger & Sarnyai, 2015; Carter et al., 2017; Fuller-Rowell et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2018; Sanders-Phillips et al., 2014; Szanton et al., 2012) and psychological well-being (Pieterse et al., 2011). Results from a meta-analysis conducted by Pieterse and colleagues (2011) indicated that exposure to racial discrimination negatively impacted the mental health of Black Americans. In fact, findings revealed that the greater the exposure was to racial discrimination and appraised stressfulness of the situation, there was increased likelihood of endorsing mental health issues (e.g., depression, anxiety). Pieterse and colleagues (2011) conducted a meta-analysis on the impact of racism on health outcomes using 66 studies from 1996 to 2011, and their results indicated the negative mental health outcomes associated with PRD are consistent and empirically documented.

Although outcomes associated with PRD seem to remain stable, literature suggests there are differences between old-fashioned and modern depictions of racism (Virtanen & Huddy, 1998). For example, modern examples of racism may manifest as microaggressions (Pierce, 1974). Sue and colleagues (2007) defined microaggressions as "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group" (p. 72). Microaggressions may be perpetrated

subtly and/or unintentionally (Sue et al., 2008). Experiencing microaggressions has been associated with anxiety (Blume et al., 2012), psychological distress (Sue et al., 2008), depressive symptoms (Nadal et al., 2014), and traumatic stress symptoms (Moody & Lewis, 2019). Collectively these findings indicate that experiencing microaggressions may lead to poor mental health outcomes.

Although research is limited, coping with race-based stress may manifest differently for Black men and women. Brown and colleagues (2011) found that Black women were more likely to utilize religion, instrumental support (i.e., seeking help/advice from others about what to do), and emotional support when faced with race-related stressors, whereas men were more likely to endorse substance use and humor. Perhaps differences in coping may be attributed to the fact that Black women's experiences are connected to their intersecting racial and gender identities (Lewis et al., 2016). For example, Brodish and colleagues (2011) found gender differences when investigating the relationship between PRD and health behaviors among Black youth. Specifically, authors found that more cumulative PRD during adolescence was associated with more exercise for women in young adulthood. Authors suggested these findings may be explained by Black women's susceptibility to being victims of sexism and thus perceiving more weight-based discrimination, therefore exercising more frequently to combat this concern. It is evident that further investigation is necessary to extend the literature regarding how experiences of PRD and microaggressions may impact Black women specifically, whose experiences may be shaped by the intersection of racism and sexism.

**Intersectionality**

There are multiple ways to conceptualize Black women's experiences of oppression; for example, race and gender are intersecting constructs and simultaneously influence Black women's experiences (Thomas et al., 2008). According to Crenshaw (1989), *intersectionality* refers to a framework that acknowledges that race, class, and gender simultaneously impact Black women's experiences. Intersectionality posits that these variables cannot be investigated independently because they are intersecting categories. Moreover, Essed (1991) noted that racist perceptions of gender roles contribute to the oppression Black women experience. Rooted in Black feminist scholarship (Collins, 1990), *gendered racism* refers to the unique experiences of Black women who are members of multiple marginalized groups (Essed, 1991). It is important to investigate these experiences through an intersectional lens because race and gender simultaneously impact Black women's experiences.

**Black Women's Experiences of Gendered Racism**

Using Sue and colleagues' (2007) work on microaggressions as a foundation, Lewis and colleagues (2016) explored the manifestation of gendered racial microaggressions experienced by Black women. Authors uncovered three core themes of gendered racial microaggressions: (a) Projected Stereotypes, (b) Silenced and Marginalized, and (c) Assumptions about Style and Beauty (Lewis et al., 2016). The first theme was characterized by socially constructed views of Black women as well as stereotypes that may sexualize them based on race and gender. The second theme highlighted experiences in professional (e.g., school, work) and other social settings in which Black women felt their authority was questioned and/or their contributions were minimized or ignored. The last theme targeted experiences where assumptions were made

about participants' identities as Black women. Specifically, they were reduced to their appearance, body type, or communication style (e.g., assumptions about being loud). These findings echo Essed's (1991) conclusion that Black women's experiences are unique and directly influenced by society's stereotypes of Black womanhood.

Emerging literature has indicated that experiencing gendered racial microaggressions may contribute to poor mental health outcomes among Black women (Carr et al., 2014; Everett et al., 2010; Jackson et al., 2001; Lewis et al., 2017; Moody & Lewis, 2019; Perry et al., 2012). For example, Dale and Safren (2019) found that higher levels of gendered racial microaggressions predicted higher posttraumatic cognitions among a sample of Black women living with HIV. Additionally, hierarchical multiple linear regression analyses indicated that only gendered racial microaggressions uniquely contributed to total PTSD symptoms and total posttraumatic cognitions. Moody and Lewis (2019) also found a significant positive relationship between experiences of gendered racial microaggressions and traumatic stress symptoms. Moreover, Carr and colleagues (2014) found that exposure to racist events was a unique and significant positive predictor of depressive symptoms among a sample of Black women seeking mental health treatment. Clearly the impact of gendered racial microaggressions is substantial. Collectively, these findings underscore the potentially detrimental impact of gendered racial microaggressions on Black women's well-being and psychological functioning.

**Black Women's Experiences in Higher Education**

Although studies investigating Black women's experiences include samples ranging from community members (e.g., Carr et al., 2014) to college students (e.g., Lewis

et al., 2013), none have quantitatively targeted graduate students specifically. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; 2019), Black women represent a growing demographic in higher education. Specifically, NCES reported that 70% of the Black post-baccalaureate students in 2016 were female. This suggests that Black women may be pursuing graduate-level degrees at a higher rate than their male counterparts, which magnifies the need to explore their experiences.

Johnson-Bailey and colleagues (2009) used five factors to organize the social experiences of Black graduate students: (a) White professor discrimination, (b) enforced social isolation, (c) underestimation of academic ability, (d) White student discrimination, and (e) forced representation for the race. Black women have endorsed struggling to connect interpersonally with faculty (Alexander & Bodenhorn, 2015; Vakalahi et al., 2014) as well as receiving poorer grades than their peers (Robinson, 2013). While these experiences may be isolated to graduate school, their effects may be longstanding and damaging to the career trajectory of Black women navigating academia. For example, it is possible that a poor advisory working alliance may jeopardize a student's chances of acquiring a strong reference letter for a job or fellowship. Experiences of social isolation have been identified as a challenge for Black female graduate students as well (Shavers & Moore, 2019; Vakalahi et al., 2014), which may partially be attributed to misperceptions by others, such as being characterized as argumentative for speaking up (Robinson, 2013).

Representation may also impact Black women's experiences of isolation. Although Black women's presence in academia has increased over the years, this population is still underrepresented (NCES, 2019). This underrepresentation may also

cause students to feel like they need to serve as a representative for their race (Maton et al., 2011). Black women have endorsed feeling obligated to speak up and/or educate others about racism, diversity, and how marginalized identities influence one's experiences (Robinson, 2013). While inclusivity should remain a priority, finding respectable and fair approaches to achieving this should also be prioritized.

Literature suggests Black women may combat underestimation of their academic ability by overworking. Black women's commitment to excelling in their studies and defying stereotypes may contribute to burnout and exhaustion (Shavers & Moore, 2014). Among a sample of Black female doctoral students, Shavers and Moore (2014) uncovered prove-them-wrong-syndrome, defined as participants' determination and desire to be perceived as focused, competent, and hard working. Participants endorsed emotional and psychological fatigue as a result of working so hard. It is apparent that Black women navigating academia are aware of existing stereotypes and are willing to exhaust themselves both physically and psychologically to defy them.

It is likely that the harmful effects of gendered racial microaggressions may exacerbate graduate students' known experiences of depression and anxiety (Clark et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2019). However, psychosocial resources may buffer this relationship (Perry et al., 2012). Since Black women are likely to cope with gendered racial microaggressions by leaning on their social support network, one source of social support in graduate school may be one's academic advisor.

**Advisory Working Alliance as a Moderator**

Schlosser and Gelso (2001) defined the advisory working alliance as "the portion of the relationship that reflects the connection between advisor and advisee that is made

during work toward common goals" (p. 158). Graduate students' relationships with their advisors plays a critical role in their professional development. According to Schlosser and Gelso (2001), there are three key components of the advisory working alliance: (a) rapport, which is the degree to which an advisor and advisee connect interpersonally, (b) apprenticeship, the degree to which an advisee is an apprentice of an advisor, and (c) identification-individuation, which is the degree to which an advisee identifies with or seeks to be different from an advisor. It is possible that Black women in graduate school may seek support from their academic advisor following experiences of gendered racial microaggressions. In the present study, advisory working alliance is expected to moderate the association between gendered racial microaggressions and well-being. Empirically, Wei and colleagues (2012) found that the advisory working alliance was negatively associated with psychological distress among a sample of East Asian international graduate students. In addition, Mason (2012) found that students who reported a positive relationship with their advisors also reported feeling more motivated to continue their studies and more satisfied with their program. These findings suggest that a positive, healthy advisory working alliance may contribute to better psychological functioning and performance among graduate students. Although one's academic advisor seems to be a key source of social support, this may not be the only source of support for racial/ethnic minority students. Additional sources of support may come from one's ethnic community and mainstream society (Yoon et al., 2012).

**Social Connectedness as a Moderator**

Social connectedness refers to how close an individual feels to others (Costen et al., 2013; Lee & Robbins, 1995). However, according to Yoon and colleagues (2012),

measuring global social connectedness for racial/ethnic minorities may be inappropriate due to experiences of marginalization from mainstream society. For racial/ethnic minorities, individuals may experience connectedness to their ethnic community as well as mainstream society. Yoon and colleagues (2012) defined ethnic community social connectedness as the subjective sense of closeness and belonging to one's ethnic community. Social connectedness to mainstream society, however, refers to one's global sense of belongingness in the world (Lee & Robbins, 1995). In the present study, social connectedness (i.e., ethnic community, mainstream society) was expected to moderate the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction.

Notably, there is inconsistency in the literature regarding how social connectedness to one's ethnic community and mainstream society may influence the relationship between experiences of oppression and well-being (e.g., Chae et al., 2011; Szymanski & Lewis, 2016; Yap et al., 2011). For example, Morrison and Hopkins (2019) suggested that failure to utilize Africultural coping strategies may be more likely among individuals with lower ethnic community connectedness, ultimately leading to more psychological distress. Perhaps it is also possible that low ethnic community connectedness may manifest as feeling rejected by the Black community, therefore limiting resources and reducing social support. In contrast, according to Yoon and colleagues (2012), individuals with higher levels of ethnic community connectedness are more likely to experience a sense of belonging and acceptance with others from their ethnic community. This may be particularly salient for Black women in graduate school who endorse leaning on their communities for support (Alexander & Bodenhorn, 2015; Shavers & Moore, 2014; Vakalahi et al., 2014). Findings from Shavers and Moore (2014)

indicated that Black women may also view earning their doctorate as a means to giving back to their community, supporting the notion that connection to one's ethnic group may be an important variable to consider in the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction among this population.

It is possible that connection to mainstream society enhances belonging. Perhaps Black women with higher mainstream social connectedness attribute experiences of gendered racial microaggressions to the perpetrator only, not society-at-large. This may minimize the negative impact of gendered racial microaggressions on one's well-being because the situation is isolated from one's everyday experiences. However, the limited existing literature suggests connection to mainstream society may be a vulnerability factor for Black individuals. For example, Banks and Kohn-Wood (2007) found that the relationship between perceived discrimination and depressive symptoms was strongest among Black individuals who focused on blending in with American society. It is possible that individuals with higher connectedness to mainstream society are less prepared to cope with gendered racial microaggressions because they are unexpected. These findings suggest that the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and mainstream social connectedness is inconclusive. The present study provided empirical support regarding the association between these variables among Black women in graduate school.

**The Present Study**

The focus of the present study was to examine if the advisory working alliance and social connectedness moderate the relationship between gendered racial

microaggressions and well-being among Black female graduate students. The following moderation hypotheses were investigated:

1. *Hypothesis 1:* Advisory working alliance was expected to moderate the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. Specifically, for Black female graduate student participants with lower advisory working alliance, there would be a negative association between gendered racial microaggressions and well-being. However, for participants with greater advisory working alliance, it was expected that the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction would not be significant after controlling for perceived general stress.
2. *Hypothesis 2:* Ethnic community social connectedness was expected to moderate the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. Specifically, for Black female graduate students with lower ethnic community social connectedness, there would be a negative association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. However, for participants with higher ethnic community social connectedness, it was expected that the association between well-being and gendered racial microaggressions would not be significant after controlling for perceived general stress.
3. *Hypothesis 3:* Mainstream society social connectedness was expected to moderate the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. Specifically, for Black female graduate students with lower mainstream society social connectedness, there would be a negative

association between gendered racial microaggressions and well-being. However, for participants with higher mainstream society social connectedness, it was expected that the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction would not be significant after controlling for perceived general stress.

## Method

### *Power Analysis*

A power analysis was conducted using G*Power software 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009) to determine the proper sample size needed for a small, medium, or large effect size. For a power of .80 with an alpha level of .05, the results suggested that at least 550 participants would be required to achieve a small effect, at least 77 participants would be required for a medium effect, and at least 37 participants would be required for a large effect. The present study aimed for recruiting approximately 200 participants for achieving small to medium effect.

### *Participants*

Potential participants were recruited using the researcher's professional and personal networks and social media (e.g., listservs, Twitter, Facebook). Initially, 802 individuals accessed the survey on Qualtrics. However, 235 participants were not qualified to participate in this study because they identified as male or non-female. Additionally, nine participants were not enrolled or currently in a graduate program outside of the United States, 12 participants were aged below 18 years old or declined to report their age, and 116 participants did not self-identify as Black. Moreover, 82 participants stopped responding after demographics questions, 30 participants did not

answer any item on a particular measure, and 133 participants incorrectly responded to the validity check item. After removing invalid participants, a total of 185 participants were left for the subsequent analyses.

Participants' mean age was 30.74 years old (*SD* = 7.11, range = 20 to 67 years). Approximately 139 (75%) participants identified as African-American, 22 (12%) identified as Caribbean, 18 (10%) identified as African, and six (3%) manually entered their ethnicity (e.g., bicultural, Latina). Regarding sexual orientation, eight (4%) identified as gay, 14 (8%) as lesbian, 34 (18%) as bisexual, 123 (67%) as heterosexual, and six (3%) identified as other (e.g., queer, pansexual). Additionally, 79 (43%) participants identified as middle class, followed by 39 (21%) as lower middle class, 38 (21%) as upper middle class, 13 (7%) as lower class, and four (2%) as upper class. Prior to attending graduate school, 53 (29%) participants completed their bachelor's degrees at Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCU), 116 (63%) at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI), five (3%) at Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), and nine (5%) at Minority Serving Institutions (MSI). Most participants, specifically 79 (43%), were enrolled in master's programs and 104 (56%) were doctoral students. Regarding participants' graduate institutions, 33 (18%) studied at an HBCU, 129 (70%) at a PWI, seven (4%) at an HSI, and 12 (7%) at an MSI. Participants also reported the number of years they have been enrolled in their current graduate program. On average, students were enrolled in their current program for 2.94 years (*SD* = 1.70, range = 1.17 to 10.92 years). The average time reported working with a current advisor was 2.5 years (*SD* = 1.41, range = 1.08 to 7.5 years). A summary of participants' primary majors is outlined in Table 1.

### *Procedure*

Approval was obtained from the researcher's university Institutional Review Board. Participants were recruited online using social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), professional networks and listservs (e.g., American Psychological Association), and the researcher's personal networks. Potential participants were eligible for the study if they (a) were at least 18 years old, (b) self-identified as a Black woman, (c) were currently enrolled in a graduate program in the United States, and (d) worked closely with an academic advisor. Participants were asked to complete the survey online via Qualtrics. Upon following the survey link, participants were presented with an electronic informed consent statement outlining the purpose of the study, the estimated time needed to complete the study (i.e., 20 minutes), potential risks and benefits of participation, information about entering the raffle, and a reminder that participation is strictly voluntary. Participants agreed to proceed by clicking a blue arrow at the end of the consent agreement. Identifying information and participants' IP addresses were not collected in this study. National mental health resources (e.g., National Suicide Prevention Hotline) were provided in the debriefing section of the survey. Participants were also given the contact information of the current researcher and her advisor. Following the completion of the online survey, participants were presented with debriefing information and encouraged to contact their university counseling centers or the National Suicide Prevention Hotline for assistance if experiencing distress. Lastly, participants were asked if they would like to be entered into a drawing to win one of seven $10 VISA gift cards. If the participant chose "yes," they were redirected to a new

Qualtrics survey and asked to provide their name and email address. If the participant selected “no,” they were presented with an exit screen and thanked for their participation.

## Measures

### *Demographics*

Participants reported their age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity (e.g., African-American, Caribbean, African), the classification of their undergraduate institution (e.g., PWI, MSI), the classification of their graduate institution (e.g., HBCU, PWI), their current graduate program degree-type (e.g., master’s, doctorate), length of time enrolled in their current program, length of time working with their current primary advisor, socioeconomic status (SES), and the college of their primary major (e.g., College of Arts and Sciences).

### *Gendered Racial Microaggressions*

The 26-item Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale (GRM; Lewis & Neville, 2015) was used to measure gendered racial microaggressions. The GRM measures frequency (GRMF) and stress appraisal (GRMA). Sample items include “I have been told that I am too independent” and “someone has challenged my authority in a work, school, or other professional setting.” Participants were asked to identify the lifetime frequency of various experiences on a 6-point Likert scale from 0 (“never”) to 5 (“once a week or more”). Participants were also asked to identify how stressful those experiences were for them on a 6-point Likert scale from 0 (“this never happened to me”) to 5 (“extremely stressful”). Higher scores indicate increased frequency or more perceived stress. Construct validity was supported by a significant positive relationship between the GRM and the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (Nadal, 2011) as well as the Schedule

of Sexist Events (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995). This scale was validated among several samples of Black women (Lewis & Neville, 2015). The GRM has also demonstrated strong reliability, with Cronbach's alpha ratings ranging from .93 (Lewis & Neville, 2015) to .95 (Dale & Safren, 2019) for appraisal and .92 (Dale & Safren, 2019; Lewis & Nevile, 2015) for frequency. For the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .94 for appraisal (GRMA) and .95 for frequency (GRMF).

***Social Connectedness***

The Social Connectedness in Ethnic Community (SCEC) and Social Connectedness in Mainstream Society scales (SCMS; Yoon et al., 2012) were used to measure participants' sense of closeness within their ethnic community and mainstream society respectively. The SCEC and SCMS contain five parallel items, with phrases in the SCEC changed to reflect a specific ethnic community. Sample items include "I feel connected to U.S. society" (SCMS) and "I feel like I fit into the _____ community" (SCEC) where participants insert their ethnic background (e.g., Caribbean, African) in the blanks. Each measure uses a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). Higher total scores suggest higher levels of social connectedness. Construct validity was supported by a significant positive relationship between the SCEC and enculturation, and the SCMS with acculturation (Yoon et al., 2012) among Mexican American students. Liao and colleagues (2016) reported Cronbach's alphas of .94 for the SCEC and .93 for the SCMS among Black American individuals. For the present study, Cronbach's alphas were .95 and .96 for the SCEC and SCMS respectively.

***Advisory Working Alliance***

The advisory working alliance was measured using the Advisory Working Alliance Inventory (AWAI; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). The AWAI (30 items) measures the graduate advising relationship from the student's perspective. The AWAI contains three subscales, including (a) rapport, in which a sample item is "my advisor welcomes my input into our discussions," (b) apprenticeship, a sample item is "my advisor facilitates my professional development through networking," and (c) identification-individuation, in which a sample item is "I tend to see things differently from my advisor" (reverse-scored item). Each measure uses a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree," 3 = "neutral," 5 = "strongly agree"). For the purpose of this study, subscale and total scores were used to capture the student's perception of the advisory working alliance. A higher score suggests a more positive working alliance. Construct validity was supported by a significant positive relationship between the AWAI and the Counselor Rating Form-Short Version (Corrigan & Schmidt, 1983). Schlosser and Gelso (2001) reported Cronbach's alphas among a sample of psychology doctoral students from various racial/ethnic backgrounds ranging from .90 to .95 for the AWAI total score. For the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .95 for the AWAI total score, .94 for the rapport subscale, .91 for the apprenticeship subscale, and .67 for the identification-individuation subscale.

### *Life Satisfaction*

Well-being was measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985). The SWLS is a five-item measure intended to evaluate a person's overall degree of life satisfaction without assessing individual constructs such as physical health or affect. The SWLS uses a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7

("strongly agree"). Sample items include "The conditions of my life are excellent" and "I am satisfied with my life." Higher scores suggest higher levels of life satisfaction, while lower scores indicate degree of dissatisfaction. Construct validity was support by a positive relationship with the positive affect subscale of the Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn, 1969) and a negative relationship with the negative affect subscale (Bradburn, 1969). Utsey and colleagues (2000) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .82 among Black college students. For the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .87.

### *Perceived Stress*

Perceived general stress was measured using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen et al., 1983). The PSS (10 items) used in the present study is an abridged version of the 14-item PSS, which measures the degree to which situations in one's life over the last month were appraised as stressful. The PSS uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 ("never") to 4 ("very often"). Sample items include "In the last month, how often have you felt things were going your way?" (reverse-scored item) and "In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?" Total scores were used to represent overall general stress. Higher scores suggest higher levels of stress. Construct validity was supported by a positive relationship between the PSS and College Student Life-Event Scale (Levine & Perkins, 1980), which measures stressful life events. Greer and Brown (2011) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .70 among Black college students. For the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .80.

## Preliminary Analyses

First, missing data was analyzed at the item level. Results showed 3.7% for GRMF, 4.8% for GRMA, .5% for SCMS, .5% for SCEC, 0% for SWLS, 1% for AWAI,

and .5% for PSS. The Expectation-Maximization algorithm (Schafer & Graham, 2002) in SPSS was utilized to impute the missing data (<5% on all measures in this study). Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alphas, and zero-order correlations were calculated for the main variables (see Table 2).

Additional preliminary analyses were conducted to determine if well-being varied as a function of any demographic variables. Analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to examine whether well-being varied as a function of sexual orientation, ethnicity, SES, major, graduate program level, undergraduate institution classification, and graduate institution classification. The results indicated that there were no significant differences for sexual orientation ($F$[4, 180] = .47, $p$ > .05), ethnicity ($F$[3, 181] = .89, $p$ > .05), major ($F$[13, 171] = 1.12, $p$ > .05), graduate institution classification ($F$[4, 180] = 2.15, $p$ > .05), or graduate program level ($F$[2, 182] = .84, $p$ > .05). However, significant differences were revealed for SES ($F$[5, 168] = 3.92, $p$ < .01) and undergraduate institution classification ($F$[4, 180] = 2.51, $p$ < .05). Correlation analyses were conducted to investigate whether age, length of time in the program, and length of time working with current advisor were associated with well-being. The results indicated that there was no significant association between age and life satisfaction ($r$ = .001, $p$ > .05), or between length of time in the program and life satisfaction ($r$ = .048, $p$ > .05), or between length of time working with current advisor and life satisfaction ($r$ = .051, $p$ > .05).

Existing research indicated that perceived stress is negatively associated with life satisfaction among African American students (Barnes & Lightsey, 2005), thus it was included as a covariate. In the present study, correlation analyses revealed a significant relationship between perceived stress and life satisfaction ($r$ = -.35, $p$ < .01). While

SWLS varied as a function of some demographic variables (i.e., SES, undergraduate institution classification), there are no existing empirical studies that provide evidence for Black women in graduate school. Therefore, the present study only included PSS as a covariate for later analyses.

The subsequent moderation analyses were conducted using Hayes' (2013) PROCESS computational tool in SPSS. A simple effect analysis was conducted when a significant interaction effect was revealed. This study used the pick-a-point procedure (Hayes, 2013) through probing the interaction with the moderator at a high (+1 *SD*) level versus at a low (-1 *SD*) level from the mean of the moderator variables (i.e., AWAI, SCEC, and SCMS).

**Results**

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the advisory working alliance would moderate the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction after controlling for perceived stress. Length of time with primary advisor was also included as a covariate. According to Schlosser and colleagues (2003), perceptions of the advisory working alliance can change over time. Students who endorsed positive relationships with their advisors consistently reported that their relationship improved over time, while individuals who reported negative relationships stated the relationships grew more distant or got worse. Moreover, results from Bloom and colleagues' (2007) qualitative study on helpful characteristics of advisors revealed that (a) care for students and their success, (b) accessibility, (c) guidance tailored to each student, (d) serving as a role model, and (e) proactively integrating students into the profession were the most desirable. These findings suggest that experiences over time may have a significant impact on a student's

perception of the advisory alliance. Results from the present study indicated a significant moderation effect of AWAI-A on the association between GRMF and SWLS (*B* = .53, *SE* = .17, 95% CI [0.19, 0.86], $\Delta R^2$ = .12), but not for AWAI-R (*B* = 0.09, *SE* = .16, 95% CI [-0.24, 0.41]), AWAI-I (*B* = -0.002, *SE* = .16, 95% CI [-0.31, 0.31]) or AWAI (*B* = .32, *SE* = .19, 95% CI [-0.06, 0.70]). In particular, results from simple effects indicated that the negative association between GRMF and SWLS was significant for individuals at a lower level of advisory working alliance apprenticeship (*B* = -0.77, *SE* = .20, 95% CI [-1.16, -0.37]). However, the association between GRMF and SWLS was not significant for individuals at a higher level of AWAI-A (*B* = 0.10, *SE* = .19, 95% CI [-0.28, 0.48]) (see Figure 5). Additionally, the AWAI did not moderate the relationship between GRMA and SWLS. Specifically, the two-way interactions were not significant for GRMA x AWA on SWLS (*B* = .14, *SE* = .20, 95% CI [-0.26, 0.53]), GRMA x AWAI-A on SWLS (*B* = .12, *SE* = .16, 95% CI [-0.20, 0.44]), GRMA x AWAI-R on SWLS (*B* = .06, *SE* = .19, 95% CI [-0.32, 0.45]), or GRMA x AWAI-I on SWLS (*B* = 0.16, *SE* = .18, 95% CI [-0.20, 0.52]).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that SCEC would moderate the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction after controlling for perceived stress. Results indicated the GRMA x SCEC on SWLS was not significant (*B* = -.03, *SE* = .07, 95% CI [-0.17, 0.10]). Moreover, GRMF x SCEC on SWLS was not significant (*B* = -.02, *SE* = .07, 95% CI [-0.15, 0.11]). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. Participants' ethnic community social connectedness did not moderate the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction.

Lastly, Hypothesis 3 predicted that SCMS would moderate the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction after controlling for perceived stress. The results revealed that the two-way interaction of GRMF x SCMS on SWLS was significant (*B* = -0.09, *SE* = .04, 95% CI [-0.17, -0.00], $\Delta R^2$ = .02). Specifically, simple effect results revealed that the negative relationship between GRMF and SWLS was significant for individuals at a higher level of SCMS (*B* = -.38, *SE* = .11, 95% CI [-0.60, -.0.16]). However, the association between GRMF and SWLS was not significant for individuals at a lower level of SCMS (*B* = -0.05, *SE* = .12, 95% CI [-0.30, 0.16]) (see Figure 6). Additionally, the results revealed that the two-way interaction of GRMA x SCMS on SWLS was significant (*B* = -0.16, *SE* = .04, 95% CI [-0.25, -0.08], $\Delta R^2$ = .06). Specifically, there was a significantly negative relationship between GRMA and SWLS among participants at a higher level of SCMS (*B* = -0.38, *SE* = .12, 95% CI [-0.63, -0.13]). However, the association between GRMA and SWLS was not significant for individuals at a lower level of SCMS (*B* = 0.18, *SE* = .12, 95% CI [-0.05, 0.41]) (see Figure 7).

**Discussion**

The purpose of the present study was to apply intersectionality and gendered racism theoretical frameworks to investigate if the advisory working alliance and social connectedness moderated the relationship between experiences of gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction among Black women in graduate school. Hypothesis 1 was partially supported; specifically, AWAI-A moderated the relationship between GRMF and SWLS. The results from the simple effect analysis revealed that for Black women in graduate school with a lower level of AWAI-A, there was a negative

association between GRMF and SWLS. However, the association between GRMF and SWLS was not significant for Black women in graduate school with higher AWAI-A. It is possible that low apprenticeship within the advisory working alliance, such as failure to facilitate networking and/or limited availability, extends existing marginalization experienced by Black women in graduate school when they encounter adversity (e.g., gendered racial microaggressions; Alexander & Bodenhorn, 2015; Dortch, 2016; Ellis, 2001; Green et al., 2018; Shavers & Moore, 2019; Vakalahi et al., 2014), which might reduce one's life satisfaction. According to Schlosser and Gelso (2001), AWAI-A scores may represent levels of instructional connection, and those with higher scores are likely to view meetings with their advisor as productive. It is likely that successful meetings streamline their progress within their program. In contrast, failure to develop a productive working relationship with one's advisor can hinder program progress and contribute to program difficulties (Dortch, 2016; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). Individuals with lower AWAI-A may feel stuck and therefore experience reduced satisfaction with life.

Conversely, higher advisory working alliance-apprenticeship (e.g., receiving help from the advisor to establish a timetable for tasks of graduate training, being involved in their advisor's research projects) may reduce the damage associated with the frequency of gendered racial microaggressions on one's life satisfaction. It is possible that being invited to collaborate on research projects, for example, redirects Black women's focus to professional/academic tasks as opposed to experiences of gendered racial microaggressions, ultimately reducing the harmful impact of gendered racial microaggressions on their life satisfaction. Moreover, higher levels of AWAI-A may provide clarity about how the advisee can achieve their career goals, which may reduce

the negative impact of gendered racial microaggressions on their life satisfaction thus far. In fact, according to Schlosser and colleagues' (2003) study, discussing career aspirations has been identified as a positive component of the advising relationship.

Notably, results of moderation analyses indicated that the advisory working alliance did not moderate the relationship between stress appraisal of gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. This finding revealed that the negative relationship between GRMA and SWLS is not significantly influenced by the advisory working alliance. Perhaps the socialization experiences of Black women contribute to internalizing the "Strong Black Woman" stereotype (Lewis & Neville, 2015; Thomas et al., 2008; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). This stereotype suggests that Black women should be strong, resilient, and able to withstand abnormal levels of stress with limited support. By internalizing this stereotype, Black women may develop skewed beliefs about what qualifies as overwhelming, ultimately becoming desensitized to experiences of gendered racial microaggressions.

Moreover, AWAI-R did not moderate the relationship between GRMF and SWLS or GRMA and SWLS. Perhaps interpersonal advisory support may not be enough to buffer the impact of GRMF. It is also likely that general support and encouragement (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001) are not sufficient in the face of gendered racial microaggressions. Perhaps characteristics not assessed by the AWAI-R, such as trust (Alexander & Bodenhorn, 2015; Posselt, 2018) or shared identity (Lewis et al., 2013) would influence this relationship differently.

Additionally, AWAI-I did not moderate the relationship between GRMF and SWLS or GRMA and SWLS, which was consistent with expectations. It is likely that

AWAI-I does not provide practical or psychological resources that may be helpful when navigating gendered racial microaggressions. Results indicated that the degree to which the advisee wants to be like their advisor (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001) does not affect the relationship between experiencing gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction for Black female graduate students.

The second hypothesis predicted that SCEC would moderate the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and SWLS. It was hypothesized that for Black female graduate students with lower SCEC, there would be a negative association between GRM and SWLS. Interestingly, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. These results were consistent with Szymanski and Lewis' findings (2016) that racial identity centrality did not moderate the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and psychological distress. In the present study, the negative relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction was not significant for Black women with lower SCEC. Notably, the present study's findings did not align with results from Liao and colleagues' (2015) study that determined ethnic community connectedness weakened the association between perceived racial microaggressions and anxiety symptoms among Black individuals. Results from the present study were also inconsistent with findings from Chae and colleagues' study (2011), which revealed that high racial group identification moderated the impact of perceived racial discrimination on psychological distress. Clearly the relationship between GRM, SCEC, and SWLS among Black individuals is inconclusive. Existing literature has acknowledged the complicated relationship between racial identity, perceived racial discrimination, and psychological distress among Black individuals (Sellers et al., 2003). It is possible that inconsistencies

in the literature regarding how the studied variables (i.e., life satisfaction, gendered racial microaggressions, ethnic community social connectedness) are defined and measured contribute to this relationship. Pieterse and colleagues (2011) underscored that operationalization of variables impacts study design and results, thus contributing to obscurity in the literature regarding the relationship between SCEC, GRM, and SWLS. For example, while various studies have investigated the frequency of microaggressions, others targeted stress appraisal, which complicates comparisons among studies. Furthermore, the outcome variables include, but are not limited to, trauma symptoms (e.g., Moody & Lewis, 2019), depression (e.g., Carr et al., 2014), or general distress (e.g., Pieterse et al., 2013), making it difficult to draw a consensus about the impact of gendered racial microaggressions. Lastly, Black women's ethnic community social connectedness may be influenced by the fact that perpetrators could be members of their ethnic group. In this case, social support may not be generalized to one's entire ethnic community, ultimately reducing this variable's positive impact on well-being.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that SCMS would moderate the association between GRM and SWLS. It was expected that there would be a significantly negative relationship between GRM and SWLS among Black women in graduate school with lower SCMS. Surprisingly, findings from the present study indicated that the negative relationship between gendered racial microaggressions (i.e., frequency and stress appraisal) and life satisfaction was significant for Black women in graduate school with higher mainstream society social connectedness. Black women who reported higher belongingness to U.S. mainstream society were more vulnerable to the harmful effects of gendered racism. Perhaps Black women who feel connected to American mainstream society experience

more psychological injury after experiencing gendered racial microaggressions because the social rejection is unexpected (Moor et al., 2010). It is likely that individuals with higher SCMS do not anticipate discriminatory behaviors to be directed toward them, which likely reduces their preparedness for experiencing gendered racial microaggressions. These findings are consistent with existing literature (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007) suggesting that Black individuals who identify closely with mainstream society may be more vulnerable to the negative impact of GRM. According to Banks and Kohn-Wood (2007), individuals who prioritized connecting with mainstream society were more likely to endorse depressive symptoms in the face of racial discrimination.

### *Contributions*

The present study contributes to the literature in several ways. Most notably, this is the first study to provide empirical evidence examining potential moderating effects of the advisory working alliance and social connectedness on the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction among Black women in graduate school. Findings from the present study extend the literature about the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions, social connectedness, and life satisfaction. Moreover, the present study addresses the gap in the literature regarding Black women in graduate school and their experiences.

Results of the present study also contribute to research about Black women's intersecting identities and the influence of gendered racial microaggressions on life satisfaction. The present study investigated Black women's experiences from an intersectional framework, rather than assessing the role of race or gender alone. Findings from the present study indicated that gendered racial microaggressions negatively impact

the life satisfaction of Black women in graduate school, emphasized the importance of apprenticeship within the advisory working alliance, and revealed the harmful impact of higher levels of connectedness to mainstream society.

### *Implications*

Faculty may consider collaborating with Black women advisees to enhance AWAI-A. It is possible that AWAI-A facilitates instructional connection, which may reduce the negative impact of gendered racial microaggressions on life satisfaction. These findings are consistent with Rice and colleagues (2016), who found that advisory working alliance apprenticeship was inversely related to stress. Results of the present study indicate that AWAI-A is a pivotal component of the association between GRM and SWLS among Black women in graduate school, such that lower AWAI-A may exacerbate distress.

Mental health providers working with Black women in graduate school may want to assess the roles of SCMS and SCEC if this population endorses experiences of gendered racial microaggressions. Perhaps Black women who endorse stronger SCMS may be more vulnerable to the harmful effects of gendered racial microaggressions. Clinicians can provide psychoeducation about the negative outcomes associated with experiencing gendered racial microaggressions. Additionally, clinicians can facilitate an emotionally safe environment for this population to process their experiences and validate their concerns.

Clinicians working with Black women in graduate school may also consider assessing apprenticeship within the advisory working alliance. Results of the present study indicate that individuals with lower AWAI-A are susceptible to poorer life

satisfaction in the face of gendered racial microaggressions. Individuals with lower advisory working alliance apprenticeship may endorse academic challenges and psychological distress (Rice et al., 2016; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001; Schlosser et al., 2003). Existing literature indicates the advisory working alliance plays an important role in graduate students' well-being such that a stronger alliance is negatively associated with psychological distress (Liu et al., 2019; Wei et al., 2012). Clinicians working with Black women in graduate school should be prepared to evaluate this aspect of the advisory working alliance if a client endorses poor life satisfaction or a decline in well-being.

### *Limitations*

One limitation of the present study is that self-selection bias may have influenced the findings. The only individuals who participated in the study were those who were interested in the topic related to gendered racial microaggressions. It is possible that individuals who did not feel strongly about the purpose of the study chose not to participate. Moreover, the results of the present study cannot be used to claim causation due to its cross-sectional design.

Additionally, data collection occurred during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which may have affected the results of the present study in several ways. First, navigating the global pandemic likely exacerbated perceived general stress (American Psychological Association, 2021). Existing literature revealed that Black women reported increased isolation, anxiety, and depression associated with the COVID-19 pandemic (Chandler et al., 2021). Perhaps social connectedness to mainstream society was also influenced by racial disparities associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, namely disproportionate health outcomes among Black individuals who tested positive for

COVID-19 in comparison to non-Black counterparts (Chandler et al., 2021; Mahajan & Larkins-Pettigrew, 2020; Price-Haywood et al., 2020; Reitsma et al., 2021). Perhaps for Black women with higher levels of SCMS, they may have questioned the likelihood of survival and/or receiving quality care in the event they contracted COVID-19. It is possible that these women were vulnerable to increased levels of distress because they expected comparable health outcomes. The participants' sense of belonging could have also been impacted by mistrust and misunderstanding of information received about COVID-19 (Chandler et al., 2021).

### *Future Research*

Future research should continue to explore other moderators that may explain the association between GRM and SWLS among Black female graduate students. For example, it may be important to explore how other aspects of identity affect Black women's ethnic community connectedness (e.g., sexual orientation, SES, spirituality). It may be beneficial to explore the nuances of the role of SCEC for Black women utilizing qualitative research design. Additionally, a third variable may be interacting with AWAI, SCMS, and/or SCEC to influence the relationship between GRM and SWLS, such as self-efficacy and coping style. Future research may consider examining whether alternative social support (e.g., support from other Black women) would influence the relationship between GRM and SWLS. For example, Lewis and colleagues (2013) found that Black women often coped with gendered racial microaggressions by seeking validation and normalization of these experiences from other Black women, suggesting that the source of social support may influence the coping process and its influence on well-being.

Moreover, future research may consider employing various study designs to extend the literature about Black women's experiences in graduate school. For example, a mixed-methods design may yield a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and well-being among Black female graduate students. Employing a longitudinal study design may be appropriate for investigating changes in the advisory working alliance over time and how those changes influence Black women's well-being while in graduate school. Future research may also consider exploring Black women's experiences within specific disciplines (e.g., STEM, law) since the role of the advisory working alliance may be different amongst academic concentrations.

# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will outline the definitions of racism, perceived racial discrimination, and microaggressions. The second section will describe the unique experiences of Black women in graduate school. Existing literature investigating Black women's experiences often uses Black or African-American interchangeably, but the terms are not synonymous (Bagley & Copeland, 1994). For the purpose of this study, Black will be used to describe this population because it is more inclusive. In particular, women who self-identify as African-American likely also self-identify as Black; however, women who self-identify as Black may not self-identify as African-American (e.g., Caribbean). Third, the theoretical foundation of gendered racism will be reviewed. Additionally, the impact of gendered racism on well-being will be discussed. Lastly, literature concerning the roles of social connectedness and the advisory working alliance on the associations between gendered racial microaggressions and well-being will be reviewed as well as the rationales for including these two variables as moderators in the present study will be discussed.

## Racism, Perceived Racial Discrimination, and Microaggressions

### *Definitions*

There is inconsistency in the literature regarding the definition of racism, but overlapping features do exist, such as (a) the emphasis on beliefs and attitudes that serve to justify superiority of the dominant racial group, and (b) the systemic and sociohistorical nature of racism, such as inequitable distribution and access to resources (Carter, 2007). The term racism was not formally used until the late 1960s when it was

introduced in the Kerner Commission report on civil unrest (USNACCD, 1968). Racism is a complex construct that is embedded within the institutional and systemic frameworks of the United States. According to Jones' (1996) tripartite model of racism, institutional racism refers to policies and practices within institutions that significantly favor or place a racial group at a disadvantage, despite whether it is intentional or not. Examples include hiring and firing practices and school disciplinary policies. In contrast, structural or systemic racism describes a system in which public policies and cultural norms work in reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity (Aspen Institute, n.d.). This type of racism emphasizes pieces of history, which have allowed privileges and disadvantages between groups to adapt over time. Terms like modern racism (i.e., minority groups have freedom to compete in the marketplace and therefore discrimination is a thing of the past) and everyday racism (i.e., frequent instances of oppression via indirect and direct means such as media and personal encounters) have also emerged to capture and explain the nuances of racism (Carter, 2007). Despite its various manifestations and definitions, it has been well documented that racism continues to permeate the experiences of minority populations in the United States.

One manifestation of racism is racial discrimination. According to Carter (2007), racial discrimination is defined by avoidance and minimizing contact between dominant and non-dominant racial group members, intentionally or accidentally. While racism is a complex term often used to refer to ideologies and practices, racial discrimination is a measurable construct that encompasses discriminatory behaviors toward someone based on their racial group membership. The differences between old-fashioned and modern racism have been documented since the late 1990s (e.g., Virtanen & Huddy, 1998). One

significant difference is that modern racism may manifest in subtle ways, such as microaggressions (Pierce, 1974), which are "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group" (Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2007, p. 72). Microaggressions do not have to be intentional and oftentimes the perpetrator will assert that their intention was not to cause harm or disrespect. For example, an individual commenting that a Black teenager is "articulate" is a microaggression due to the underlying message indicating that it is unusual for a Black individual to be intelligent (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). Nevertheless, regardless of intent, these experiences are a threat to the well-being of the victim (Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2007). Experiencing microaggressions has been associated with anxiety (Blume et al., 2012), depressive symptoms (Nadal et al., 2014), and traumatic stress symptoms (Moody & Lewis, 2019). It is possible that the frequency in which one experiences microaggressions influences the severity and/or nature of their impact.

### *Frequency*

The frequency in which racial discrimination occurs is difficult to estimate due to variability in the definition of racial discrimination (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005). Nevertheless, data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI, n.d.) website as well as the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (USEEOC, n.d.) may be helpful in understanding the magnitude of this issue. For example, FBI statistics from 2017 indicated that among the total number of race-based hate crimes committed in the United States, nearly 49% were anti-Black. Considering the present study's focus on the experiences of Black women, it is important to note that 2017 statistics also indicated that 69 hate crime incidents were motivated by multiple biases (e.g., race and gender), which

illustrates the need to consider the intersection of multiple marginalized identities. An estimated 335 victims were affected by the 69 incidents reported. The frequency of racial discrimination may also be measured using data from the USEEOC. Racial discrimination claims in the workplace continue to represent the largest proportion of discrimination charges (USEEOC, n.d.). Literature suggests the manifestation of racial discrimination may vary by the setting in which it occurs, such that one may be denied a promotion in the workplace or graded unfairly in an academic setting. This magnifies the need to investigate Black women's experiences in higher education due to nuances that may not be captured among the general population.

**Black Women's Experiences in Graduate School**

Although still an underrepresented group, Black women have maintained a growing presence in higher education. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2019), post-baccalaureate enrollment among Black students doubled between 2000 and 2016 from 181,000 to 363,000. The NCES also reported that 70% of Black post-baccalaureate students in 2016 were female. It is evident that Black women are present in higher education and more so than their male counterparts. Despite the growing number of Black female graduate students, few studies have used quantitative research methodology to investigate their experiences related to microaggressions.

One relevant aspect of graduate school is the relationship students develop with their academic advisor. Graduate students' relationships with their advisors play a critical role in their experiences and professional development. In fact, mentoring has been identified in the literature as an important educational and interpersonal support for graduate students (Gelso & Lent, 2000; Maton et al., 2011). However, it is noted that

mentoring and advising are not synonymous (Titus & Ballou, 2013). Mentoring is often used in reference to positive relationships where proteges strengthen or develop their professional skills (Russell & Adams, 1997), while advising is best used in reference to positive or negative relationships that may or may not include guidance related to professional skill development (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). Despite the nuances that differentiate these terms, research suggests that faculty members perceive many of the activities associated with these roles (e.g., providing network opportunities) as overlapping (Titus & Ballou, 2013). Titus and Ballou (2013) discovered that more than half of the faculty members who participated in the study preferred the term advisor, while approximately 37% preferred the term mentor. Noteworthy is that 49% of Black non-Hispanic faculty preferred the term mentor compared to the 35% of White non-Hispanic faculty members. This suggests conceptualizations of advising and mentorship may vary by racial/ethnic group, ultimately influencing the expectations and experiences of the advisor and advisee. Considering that higher education is often dominated by predominantly White spaces, and Black women's enrollment in these spaces continues to increase, it is critical to investigate how the advisory alliance influences Black women's well-being and academic success.

While there is a growing literature surrounding undergraduate college students' mental health concerns and utilization (Lipson et al., 2019), there is a dearth of information regarding the experiences of graduate students. In a study investigating the prevalence of depression and anxiety among doctoral students, Liu and colleagues (2019) reported that approximately 23% of the doctoral participants in their study endorsed signs of depression, and about 20% endorsed anxiety symptoms. Their findings also indicated

doctoral students' mentoring relationships mediated the correlation between research self-efficacy and depression/anxiety, meaning that the relationship between research self-efficacy and depression/anxiety was explained by students' relationships with their advisors.

Graduate students endorse similar concerns as undergraduate students, but under much more demanding and socially isolating circumstances (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2009). For example, compared to undergraduate students, the academic expectations for graduate students are much higher, yet graduate class sizes are usually smaller. Smaller class sizes may magnify racial/ethnic minority students' status as a member of an underrepresented group, causing them to feel like a representative of their race (Robinson, 2013). This may place a lot of pressure on ethnic minority students to participate in class and contribute to discussions about racial/ethnic diversity. It is also possible that taking on the role of "racial representative" exacerbates the challenges associated with being a student. In fact, studies suggest racial/ethnic minorities have different experiences than their White counterparts when pursuing advanced degrees. For example, academic barriers have been directly linked to students' racial identity (Maton et al., 2011). To identify and illustrate the challenges faced by Black graduate students, Johnson-Bailey and colleagues (2009) investigated the social experiences of Black graduate students. Authors defined social experiences as informal and formal interactions with other students and faculty, perceptions of how the participants were received on campus, and if participants had fond memories of graduate school/their graduate program. Results of the exploratory factor analysis yielded five factors, including (a) White professor discrimination, (b) enforced social isolation, (c) underestimation of

academic ability, (d) White student discrimination, and (e) forced representation for the race. Against this backdrop, it is important to highlight the need for further investigation about Black graduate students' experiences. Using the five factors produced by Johnson-Bailey and colleagues (2009) as a framework (i.e., White professor discrimination, enforced social isolation, underestimation of academic ability, White student discrimination, and forced representation for one's race), I will summarize and critique the existing literature regarding Black women's experiences in graduate school.

### *White Professor Discrimination*

Limited research has been conducted to explore Black women's experiences in graduate school, specifically regarding experiences of gendered racism. Walkington (2017) noted that although more Black women are entering higher education, they have continued to experience oppression. Specifically, Black women still experience marginalization (e.g., earning less than White and male counterparts) and microaggressions (e.g., being viewed as less capable). Regarding White professor discrimination, Black women have reported they feel invisible or ignored (Robinson, 2013) and perceive their relationships with White faculty as "superficial" (Vakalahi et al., 2014, p. 422). For instance, one Black female student reported observable differences between how faculty interacted with her and her White peers. Specifically, it seemed to her that her White peers had a preexisting relationship with faculty members based on their interactions. Challenges associated with building rapport with faculty have been echoed by Alexander and Bodenhorn (2015). For example, interviews with Black female graduate students who completed their undergraduate degrees at Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCUs) and attended a predominantly White institution (PWI) for

graduate school revealed that participants felt more comfortable speaking with their HBCU mentors (Alexander & Bodenhorn, 2015). In addition to manifesting as interpersonal disconnection, White professor discrimination may also be depicted by receiving poorer grades than their non-Black peers, specifically if a Black female student acknowledges a professor's poor cultural sensitivity (Robinson, 2013). Moreover, according to Walkington (2017), Black women have fewer funding and research opportunities compared to their White and male counterparts. This lack of opportunity may also be a demonstration of White professor discrimination. For example, a participant in Alexander and Bodenhorn's (2015) study reported that her motives to enter her program were questioned and challenged by a White faculty member due to her limited experience. The participant reported that the professor stated they felt weary of her commitment to the program because she had more experience in another field, ultimately refusing to grant her the opportunity to demonstrate her skillset and prove her commitment to her area of interest. Her experience illustrates how White professor discrimination may impede Black women's academic tenure. Although further investigation is necessary, it is evident that Black women may struggle to build and maintain rapport with White faculty.

### *Enforced Social Isolation*

Social isolation has also been identified as a challenge for Black women in graduate school (Maton et al., 2011; Vakalahi et al., 2014). The roles of family, friends, spouses, and peer mentors are critical (Alexander & Bodenhorn, 2015); however, these relationships can also negatively influence adjustment. For example, one participant from Alexander and Bodenhorn's study (2015) described how lack of understanding from

family exacerbated her adjustment difficulties because they could not fully understand her experience. While many participants reported that they relied on their partners for empathic support, one participant noted that the stress of her program was a major contributor to the disintegration of her relationship with her fiancé. Black women are likely to report alienation in addition to disconnection from their programs, classes, and universities (Vakalahi et al., 2014). It is possible that misperceptions by others contribute to the isolation Black women experience. For example, speaking up may be interpreted as being argumentative or problematic (Robinson, 2013). Considering the abundance of literature identifying social support as a protective factor, it is evident that experiencing social isolation in addition to the stress of graduate school may be detrimental to the well-being of Black women navigating academia.

***Underestimation of Academic Ability***

Racial/ethnic minority students have reported challenges directly related to their race, such as others' negative perceptions of their academic merit (Maton et al., 2011). Black female graduate students have reported the need to work twice as hard as White students (Shavers & Moore, 2014; Vakalahi et al., 2014). Shavers and Moore (2014) uncovered "prove-them-wrong" syndrome (i.e., participants' self-reported determination) among a sample of Black female doctoral students. They attributed their determination to the desire to self-define and defy stereotypes. Specifically, participants described their desire to be perceived as hardworking, knowledgeable, and focused. However, participants recognized that they occasionally exhausted themselves out of determination. They shared the detrimental impact of the "strong Black woman" stereotype that insinuated needing help reflected weakness. Participants reported working so hard they

became emotionally and psychologically fatigued but were unable to manage these experiences due to messages instilled in them surrounding Black womanhood. In addition to overworking to be viewed as capable, Black female graduate students have also endorsed perceived limited academic support (Apugo, 2017). Therefore, it is possible that Black women do not feel safe discussing fatigue or exhaustion with faculty due to stereotypes and/or being perceived as incompetent. These findings demonstrate that as Black women strive to prove their academic merit, they may also sacrifice their psychological well-being due to beliefs that they are "strong" (Abrams et al., 2014; Lewis et al., 2016; Shavers & Moore, 2014) and/or cannot afford to make mistakes.

### *White Student Discrimination*

Limited literature has thoroughly explored Black women's experiences of discrimination perpetrated by other students. Although not employing a sample of Black women exclusively, Johnson-Bailey and colleagues (2009) found that experiences of White student discrimination among Black women and men increased over four decades. Survey items to assess these experiences included, but were not limited to, White students being racially insensitive, being dismissive of claims of racism, and being hostile toward Black students. Alternatively, Apugo (2017) sought to understand how millennial Black female master's students perceived their peer relationships within a majority-White graduate-degree setting. Participants recalled several experiences of microaggressions and how relationships with peers provided emotional buffers and support. Interestingly, the researcher discovered that many of the participants had mentorship style relationships with peers and coined the term "proxy mentor peer." This mentor was described as someone who is usually the same sex, generally around the same age, who shares similar

career aspirations and/or social interests as the student. Thirteen of the 15 participants endorsed using peer relationships as a sustainability measure against perceived racial microaggressions and limited academic support. These findings demonstrate that healthy peer relationships may protect students from experiences of microaggressions and gendered racism, ultimately highlighting the need for additional investigation. In summary, peer relationships can have a significant impact on the experiences of Black students in graduate school.

### *Forced Representation for Race*

Furthermore, it is not uncommon for racial/ethnic minority students to feel like they must be a representative for their race (Maton et al., 2011). Among a sample of Black female graduate students, Robinson (2013) coined the term "spoketoken," inspired by tokenism described by Niemann (1999), to conceptualize participants' experience as the token Black female to "convey the significance of voice and physical presence and to underscore the perceived role of the speaker to particular audiences" (p. 161). Participants felt obligated to represent their race, to lead, and/or to educate classmates and faculty about diversity and their experiences as Black women (Robinson, 2013). They also described both positive and negative aspects of being perceived as the spoketoken, such as demonstrating leadership qualities while simultaneously being exhausted as the representative. While it is important to ensure that racial/ethnic minority students feel valued and included, it is equally necessary to ensure that tactics used to accomplish this do not include assigning said student as the representative for their racial/ethnic group.

### *Communities as a Source of Motivation*

Although not a factor associated with Johnson-Bailey and colleagues' (2009) work, another unique experience reported by Black women in graduate school is using their communities as a source of support and motivation (Alexander & Bodenhorn, 2015; Shavers & Moore, 2014; Vakalahi et al., 2014). In the Vakalahi and colleagues (2014) study, the "sustaining forces" theme referred to the importance of the Black community and sources of courage for the Black female Master of Social Work (MSW) students. Results from the Shavers and Moore (2014) study revealed a "part-of-a-bigger-whole" subtheme, meaning participants viewed achieving their doctorate as a way to give back to the community. They reported achieving this milestone was bigger than themselves and therefore served as a motivator. The importance of community was echoed throughout participants' responses. Alternatively, community support and dedication caused weighted pressure to succeed, exemplifying how the "double-edged sword" of coping strategies may manifest (Shavers & Moore, 2014). Specifically, although connection to one's community was a source of strength and support, it could also pose a threat to well-being. One participant reported she wanted to quit on multiple occasions, but her family and community prevented her from doing so. The participant explained the importance of being an example for someone else. Responses suggested that dedication to their communities helped them feel empowered during moments when it was difficult to persevere; however, this commitment could also place a burden on Black women pursuing doctoral degrees. Clearly there is inconsistency in the literature regarding whether connectedness to one's community will serve as a protective factor. This inconsistency emphasizes the need to explore the relationship between Black women's well-being and their connectedness to their communities.

Collectively these findings demonstrate the unique challenges and experiences Black women face in academia. Black women may struggle to initiate and sustain healthy relationships with faculty due to instances of White professor discrimination, feel isolated due to lack of representation and support, overextend themselves to always appear competent and prove they belong, experience discrimination perpetrated by White student peers, become the representative for their race, and lean on their communities for motivation and support. It is possible that gendered racism directly contributes to these experiences, which will be outlined next.

**Gendered Racism**

Black women's experiences of oppression have traditionally been defined in three ways: 1) there is an accumulative experience of both racism and sexism, 2) racism and sexism interact in a unique way, and 3) race and gender are intersecting categories and simultaneously shape and influence experiences (Thomas et al., 2008). The first definition refers to the "double jeopardy" (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998) Black women face by having to deal with racism, sexism, and unique combinations of the two. Research from this perspective often measures experiences of racism and sexism separately or holds one variable constant (i.e., race or gender) while investigating psychological distress related to the other (e.g., Klonoff & Landrine, 1995). According to Thomas and colleagues (2008), this approach is problematic because it assumes each area of oppression is equal and does not account for social inequalities. The second approach claims race and gender interact in a unique way (e.g., Moradi & Subich, 2003). Research from this perspective may investigate how the interaction of racism and sexism contributes to variance in psychological symptoms compared to each construct individually. Thomas and

colleagues (2008) noted that the issue with this approach is that it still attempts to explain Black women's experiences by conceptualizing them as race-based or gender-based. Lastly, the intersectional approach to defining Black women's experiences of oppression can be best explained by Collins (1990) and Crenshaw (1989), who conceptualized the term intersectionality as a framework to investigate how race, class, and gender simultaneously impact Black women's experiences. Essed (1991) concluded that the oppression Black women face is formulated by racist perceptions of gender roles. Gendered racism is rooted in Black feminist theory and scholarship and describes the unique experiences of Black women who hold multiple minority statuses. These layered identities cannot be separated and are best understood as intersecting categories. This approach to defining Black women's experiences of oppression is the only one that views race and gender simultaneously, but empirical research from this perspective is limited.

Investigating gendered racism among Black women has been difficult due to research methodology (Lewis et al., 2017). For example, comparative methods (e.g., comparing White women and Black women), additive methods (e.g., measuring racism and sexism separately then adding them together), and interactional methods (e.g., measuring racism and sexism separately then creating a statistical interaction term) fail to capture the simultaneous influence of race and gender (Lewis et al., 2017). Findings from Lewis and colleagues (2016) support the claim that Black women's experiences of gendered racial microaggressions are unique. Specifically, among a sample of Black female students, including graduate and professional students, participants reported feeling sexualized in ways that were specific to stereotypes about Black women (e.g., Jezebel). Focus group analyses yielded three core themes of gendered racial

microaggressions: (a) projected stereotypes, (b) silenced and marginalized, and (c) assumptions about style and beauty. Within each theme were two sub-themes: (a) expectation of the Jezebel and expectation of the angry Black woman, (b) struggle for respect and invisibility, and (c) assumptions about communication styles and assumptions about aesthetics, respectively. Therefore, according to Lewis and Neville (2015), scales created to capture experiences of sexism (e.g., Schedule of Sexist Events Scale; Klonoff & Landrine, 1995) cannot be revised by inserting "Black woman" to properly measure gendered racism in this population (e.g., Thomas et al., 2008).

The Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale (GRMS; Lewis & Neville, 2015) is one solution to existing issues in methodology. The GRMS is a quantitative measure for identifying gendered racial microaggressions experienced by Black women specifically. This is a major methodological contribution because (a) it provides a quantitative approach to understanding experiences that are often investigated qualitatively and (b) the intersectional theoretical framework recognizes that gender and race cannot be viewed independently. Lewis and colleagues (2016) suggested future research (a) investigate how experiencing gendered racial microaggressions may influence well-being or (b) identify factors that may buffer the negative effect of these experiences. However, no empirical studies have quantitatively explored how Black female graduate students' well-being is affected by gendered racial microaggressions using this scale. The present study aims to respond to the suggestion presented by Lewis and colleagues (2016) by investigating how gendered racial microaggressions influence well-being among Black female graduate students.

**Gendered Racism and Well-Being**

Research has documented that experiencing perceived racial discrimination can inversely impact ethnic minority individuals' financial aspects of life (Jaggar, 2008; O'Connell, 2012; Williams, 2017), physical health (Carter et al., 2017; Fuller-Rowell et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2018; Sanders-Phillips et al., 2014; Szanton et al., 2012), and psychological well-being (Pieterse et al., 2011). Pieterse and colleagues (2011) conducted a meta-analysis using 66 studies published from 1996 to 2011 to examine the relationship between racial discrimination and mental health among Black Americans. Their results supported the notion that exposure to racial discrimination negatively impacts the mental health of Black Americans. Particularly, the greater the exposure to racial discrimination and appraised stressfulness of the situation was, the greater the likelihood was of reporting mental health issues.

Existing literature supports that experiencing gendered racism contributes to negative mental health outcomes such as suicidal ideation (Perry et al., 2012) and psychological distress among Black women (Carr et al., 2014; Everett et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2008). Also, experiencing racial discrimination may initiate stress responses in victims that mimic posttraumatic stress disorder (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005; Carter, 2007; Chou et al., 2011; Sanders-Phillips et al., 2014; Thompson, 1996). For example, Dale and Safren (2019) found that there is a relationship among race-related discrimination and PTSD hyperarousal symptoms, negative cognitions, and self-blame among a sample of Black women living with HIV/AIDS. Increased experiences of gendered racial microaggressions predicted higher PTSD hyperarousal symptoms, avoidance, negative cognitions about the world and self, and self-blame. In fact, when investigating the influence of gendered racial microaggressions, racial

discrimination, and HIV-related discrimination concurrently, only gendered racial microaggressions added a unique contribution to total PTSD symptoms scores. Moody and Lewis (2019) also confirmed that experiencing gendered racial microaggressions is significantly related to traumatic stress symptoms. These findings indicated that gendered racism may contribute to trauma-like symptoms among Black women.

Researchers have also expanded the literature by exploring how coping may influence the relationship between gendered racism and well-being (Lewis et al., 2013; Lewis et al., 2017; Shorter-Gooden, 2004; Thomas et al., 2008; West et al., 2010; Williams & Lewis, 2019). Lewis and colleagues (2013) used a qualitative focus group study design to investigate how Black women cope with gendered racial microaggressions. Results produced five coping strategies: (a) using one's voice as power, (b) resisting Eurocentric standards of beauty, (c) leaning on one's support network, (d) becoming a Black superwoman, and (e) becoming desensitized and escaping. Authors emphasized that participants reported several coping strategies based on the context of the situation and the potential impact on their well-being. This underscores the need to assess how Black women in academia may utilize strategies specific to the context of pursuing a graduate degree. Specifically, participants reported leaning on friends, family, and peers for social support as a coping strategy, suggesting that social support may serve as buffer to experiencing gendered racial microaggressions (Lewis et al., 2013).

Thomas and colleagues (2008) assessed Black women's experiences of gendered racism and whether Africultural coping was a mediator between experiences of gendered racism and psychological distress. Africultural coping styles are strategies commonly

utilized by Black individuals (e.g., spiritual-centered coping, collective coping). Participants reported experiencing gendered racism in an array of interpersonal situations, including employers and supervisors, co-workers, and teachers or professors at least once in a while throughout their lifetime. Authors reported a significant positive relationship between gendered racism and global psychological distress, which is consistent with existing literature. Overall, participants' responses indicated that it is common for Black women to experience some form of gendered racism.

It is possible racial identity may influence the impact of gendered racism. There are disagreements in the literature about the role of racial identification and if it is helpful or harmful in situations involving racial discrimination (Chae et al., 2011; Szymanski & Lewis, 2016; Thompson, 1996). For example, results from Thompson (1996) did not support the hypothesis that racial group identification (i.e., how closely one feels in their ideas and feelings to members of their racial group) would mediate the impact of experiences of racism. Williams and Lewis (2019) found that Black women who reported higher frequencies of gendered racial microaggressions and negative self-perceptions of their identity were more likely to utilize disengagement coping strategies, ultimately leading to more depressive symptoms. Results indicated that coping strategies partially mediated the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and depressive symptoms. Essentially, after considering disengagement coping, gendered racial microaggressions still had a direct effect on depressive symptoms. Conversely, Chae and colleagues (2011) discovered that high racial group identification buffered the negative effect of moderate levels of perceived racial discrimination. These complex findings amplify the need to further explore the role of racial group identification as it relates to

responding to gendered racial microaggressions. The concept of racial group identification (i.e., one's connection and affiliation to their racial group) has also been operationalized as ethnic community social connectedness.

**Social Connectedness, Gendered Racial Microaggressions, and Psychological Well-Being**

While existing literature indicates that social support is important for understanding how Black women cope with gendered racial microaggressions, it is still unclear how the source of this social support influences the coping process. Social connectedness refers to how close an individual feels to others (Costen et al., 2013). According to Lee and Robbins (1998), it is an internal sense of belonging that can be strengthened by satisfying long-term relationships with others who accept the individual for who they are. Yoon and colleagues (2012) proposed that it is insufficient to measure global social connectedness for racial/ethnic minorities due to experiences of marginalization from mainstream society. Therefore, individuals who identify as racial/ethnic minorities may experience connectedness to their ethnic community and mainstream society. Social connectedness to an individual's ethnic community is the subjective sense of closeness and belonging to that individual's ethnic community (Yoon et al., 2012).

It is possible that social connectedness to one's ethnic community may serve as a buffer in the relationship between microaggressions and well-being (Chae et al., 2011; Liao et al., 2016; Settles et al., 2010; Yap et al., 2011), but Szymanski and Lewis (2016) found otherwise for levels of connectedness that were beyond moderate among a sample of Black female college students, suggesting that social connectedness may only serve as

a buffer under certain circumstances (i.e., when connection is no more than moderate). Research has indicated that the role of ethnic community connectedness may be different for men and women. In particular, Yap and colleagues (2011) found that belongingness was related to higher life satisfaction for women only, indicating a sense of belonging may impact Black women's life satisfaction more than their male counterparts. Additionally, it was proposed that others' evaluations may be particularly important to women's sense of self and connectedness. Specifically, the belief that others view Black individuals more positively was related to greater belongingness for women. Considering the integral role of evaluation in higher education, experiencing gendered racial microaggressions may pose a threat to Black women's well-being and success in graduate school.

In the present study, social connectedness was expected to moderate the association between gendered racial microaggressions and well-being. Specifically, for Black female graduate students with lower ethnic community social connectedness, there would be a negative association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. One possible explanation for this is low ethnic community connectedness may manifest as failure to utilize Africultural coping strategies, which makes them more likely to experience psychological distress (Morrison & Hopkins, 2019). Additionally, low ethnic community connectedness may manifest as feeling rejected or not welcome by the Black community, therefore limiting support and resources from the Black community. Conversely, for students with higher ethnic community connectedness, it was anticipated that the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction would not be significant after controlling for perceived general stress.

Individuals with high levels of ethnic community connectedness are likely to experience a sense of belonging, acceptance, and closeness (Yoon et al., 2012) with others from the Black community. Research suggests Black female graduate students lean on their communities for support and motivation (Shavers & Moore, 2014). Closeness to one's community may also help them to alleviate distress by feeling validated when faced with gendered racial microaggressions (Sue et al., 2008). It is possible that utilizing mainstream society as a source of social support may also minimize the impact of gendered racial microaggressions. Perhaps individuals who feel a strong sense of connection and support to society may perceive incidents involving gendered racial microaggressions as isolated and a reflection of the perpetrator only, not society-at-large.

**Advisory Working Alliance, Gendered Racial Microaggressions, and Psychological Well-Being**

According to Schlosser and Gelso (2001), the advisory working alliance is defined as "the portion of the relationship that reflects the connection between advisor and advisee that is made during work toward common goals" (p. 158). Schlosser and Gelso (2001) noted that the advisory working alliance reflects the connection between the advisor and advisee. Components of the advisory working alliance include (a) rapport, which is the support and encouragement offered by the advisor in addition to the emotional bond they share; (b) apprenticeship, which is the degree to which the advisor promotes understanding of the goals, tasks, and expectations of graduate school in addition to teaching the advisee how to conduct work; and (c) identification-individuation, which is the degree to which the advisee seeks to be similar or different

than their advisor in addition to the advisee's admiration for their advisor (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001).

Research suggests graduate students can identify desirable and undesirable qualities of an academic advisor (Barnes et al., 2010; Bloom et al., 2007; Kador & Lewis, 2007; Taylor et al., 2018). Characteristics that students attribute to advisors may be clustered into interpersonal or instructional categories (Schlosser et al., 2003). Desirable interpersonal characteristics may include accessibility, helpfulness, caring (Barnes et al., 2010; Bloom et al., 2007), as well as regular communication and emotional support (Taylor et al., 2018). Desirable instructional characteristics may include structure in the advising process and timely feedback (Taylor et al., 2018), as well as tailored guidance and facilitation of proactive integration of the student into the graduate program (Bloom et al., 2007). Undesirable characteristics in both categories can be considered the opposite of those previously identified. Additional variables that may impact a student's satisfaction with their advisor include (a) ability to choose the advisor, (b) frequency of meetings, (c) benefits (e.g., advisor serving as a role model) and costs (e.g., negative assumptions made about the student based on characteristics of their advisor) associated with the advisory alliance, and (d) conflict resolution (Schlosser et al., 2003). These findings illustrate that preferred components of the advisory working alliance include a healthy balance of personal and professional dynamics. Considering the interpersonal factors that influence components of the advisory working alliance (i.e., rapport, apprenticeship, and identification-individuation; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001), it is worthy to outline what characteristics may nurture or harm this dynamic.

It is likely that Black women graduate students may seek support from their advisor when they encounter the aforementioned stressors (e.g., gendered racial microaggression). Literature suggested a strong advisory alliance may be negatively associated with psychological distress among graduate students (Liu et al., 2019; Wei et al., 2012) and positively associated with motivation to continue studies and satisfaction with their program (Mason, 2012). Specifically, using a sample of medical students in northeast China, Liu and colleagues (2019) found that depression and anxiety symptoms were negatively associated with advisory working alliance. On the same vein, Wei and colleagues (2012) also found that the advisory working alliance was negatively associated with psychological distress among a sample of East Asian international graduate students. In addition, Mason (2012) found that students who reported a positive relationship with their advisors also reported feeling more motivated to continue their studies and more satisfied with their program. In sum, a greater advisory working alliance may be related to higher motivation and well-being among graduate students.

There is limited literature regarding how the advisory working alliance impacts Black women in graduate school. Noy and Ray (2012) found that women of color perceived less advisor support in comparison to White counterparts, which may exacerbate their feeling of isolation. Jones and colleagues (2013) proposed a Black feminist approach to academic advising for Black female students. This approach emphasizes Black feminist thought across three themes: (a) advisors' responsibilities (e.g., helping students decode the hidden curriculum), (b) advising functions (e.g., advocating), and (c) characteristics/behaviors of advisor-advisee relationship (e.g., communal dialogue). Central to this approach are culturally sensitive considerations,

specifically the intersection of race and gender. It is possible that utilizing this approach could improve the status of the advisory working alliance. Although the empirical research is limited, it is clear that unique considerations may need to be made when developing and maintaining the advisory working alliance with students of minority status (Schlosser et al., 2011).

The advisory working alliance was expected to moderate the association between gendered racial microaggressions and well-being. Specifically, this study anticipated that for Black female graduate students with lower advisory alliance there would be a negative association between gendered racial microaggressions and well-being. The students who perceived a weak relationship with their advisor may hesitate to share or withhold their experiences of gendered racism, therefore restricting opportunities for receiving support from their advisor. Research suggested Black women are prone to utilize social support when coping with gendered racism (Alexander & Bodenhorn, 2015; Lewis et al., 2013), and one's advisor may be a primary source of social support in the context of graduate school. Conversely, for Black women graduate students with greater advisory working alliance, it is expected that the association between well-being and gendered racial microaggressions will not be significant after controlling for perceived general stress. One explanation for this is because a greater advisory working alliance may include a strong emotional bond, which may enable the student to be more willing to addresses their experience of gendered racial microaggression and have psychological resources to cope effectively.

Perceived general stress refers to the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful (Cohen et al., 1983). Since perceived general stress has been

demonstrated to be negatively correlated with life satisfaction among African American students (Barnes& Lightsey, 2005), this variable was included as a co-variate in the data analysis.

**Summary**

It is essential to consider the experiences of Black women in graduate school using an intersectionality framework. The limited existing literature has captured the unique experiences of Black female students using both qualitative and quantitative methods. However, limited literature has focused on Black women in graduate school specifically. It has been documented in the literature that advisory working alliance may play a significant role in the student's coping with challenges (e.g., gendered racial microaggression). Also, literature has produced mixed findings concerning the role of social connectedness among Black individuals. Few studies have examined how this concept influences the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and well-being among Black women in graduate school specifically, which magnifies the need for this study. Therefore, the current study proposed three moderation hypotheses (see Figure 1).

1. *Hypothesis 1:* Advisory working alliance was expected to moderate the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. Specifically, for Black female graduate student participants with lower advisory working alliance, there would be a negative association between gendered racial microaggressions and well-being. However, for participants with greater advisory working alliance, it was expected that the association

between life satisfaction and gendered racial microaggressions would not be significant after controlling for perceived general stress (see Figure 2).

2. *Hypothesis 2:* Ethnic community social connectedness was expected to moderate the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. Specifically, for Black female graduate students with lower ethnic community social connectedness, there would be a negative association between gendered racial microaggressions and well-being. However, for participants with higher ethnic community social connectedness, it was expected that the association between life satisfaction and gendered racial microaggressions would not be significant after controlling for perceived general stress (see Figure 3).
3. *Hypothesis 3:* Mainstream society connectedness was expected to moderate the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. Specifically, for Black female graduate students with lower mainstream society social connectedness, there would be a negative association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. However, for participants with higher mainstream society social connectedness, it was expected that the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction would not be significant after controlling for perceived general stress (see Figure 4).

**Figure 1**

*The Conceptual Model for the Moderation Hypotheses*

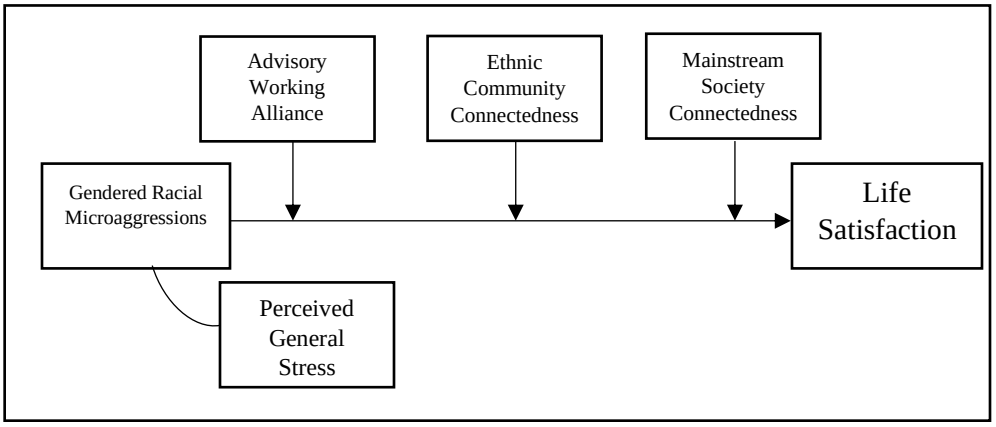



**Figure 2**

*Advisory Working Alliance as a Moderator*

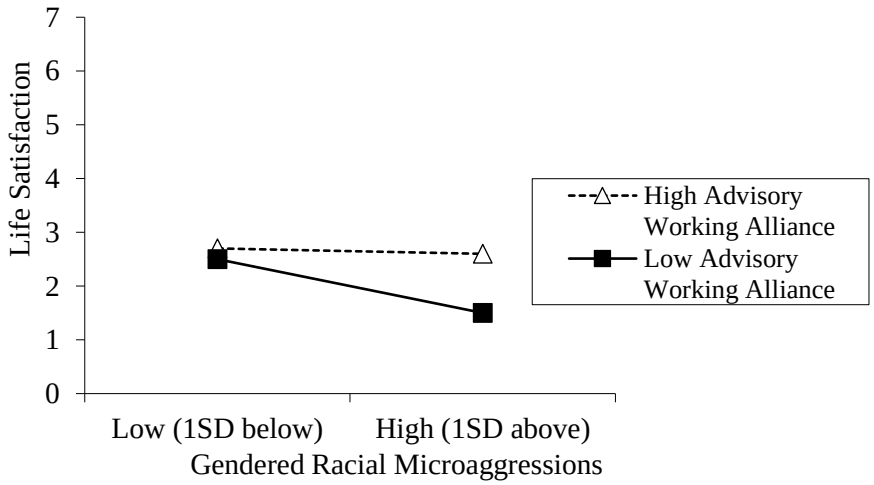


**Figure 3**

*Ethnic Community Connectedness as a Moderator*

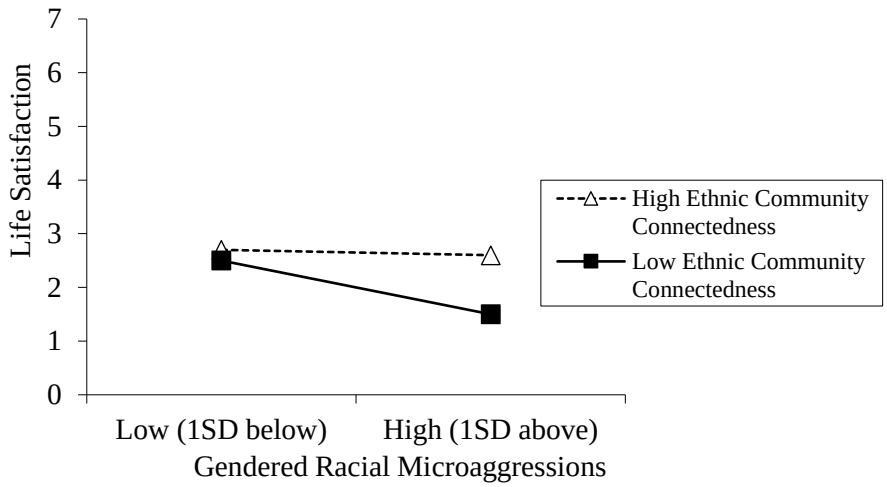
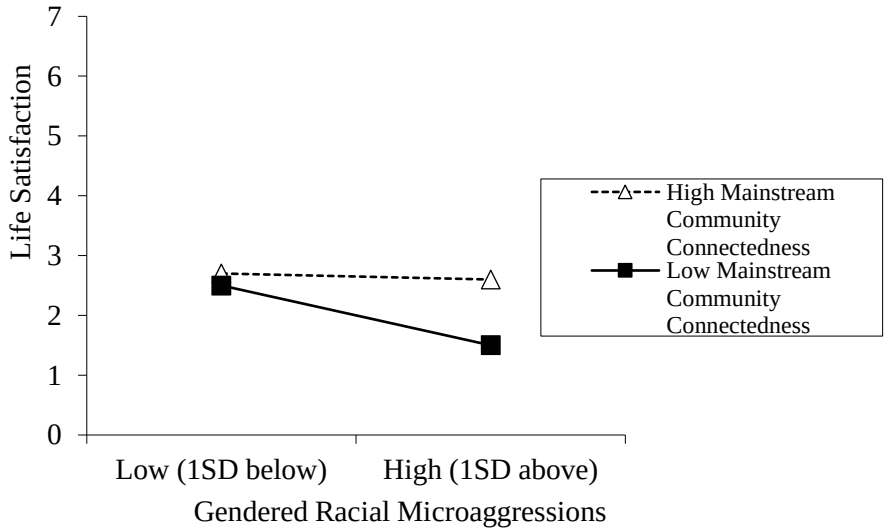



**Figure 4**

*Mainstream Society Social Connectedness as a Moderator*



# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

The focus of the present study was to examine if the advisory working alliance and social connectedness moderate the relationship between experiences of gendered racial microaggressions and well-being among Black women in graduate school. This chapter outlines the sample, measures, and procedure used. The following moderation hypotheses were investigated (see Figure 1):

1. *Hypothesis 1:* Advisory working alliance was expected to moderate the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction after controlling for perceived general stress. Specifically, for Black female graduate student participants with lower advisory working alliance, there would be a negative association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. However, for participants with greater advisory working alliance, it was expected that the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction would not be significant (see Figure 2).
2. *Hypothesis 2:* Ethnic community social connectedness was expected to moderate the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction after controlling for perceived general stress. Specifically, for Black female graduate students with lower ethnic community social connectedness, there would be a negative association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. However, for participants with high ethnic community social connectedness, it was expected that the association

between well-being and gendered racial microaggressions would not be significant (see Figure 3).

3. *Hypothesis 3:* Mainstream society social connectedness was expected to moderate the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction after controlling for perceived general stress. Specifically, for Black female graduate students with lower mainstream society social connectedness, there would be a negative association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. However, for participants with higher mainstream society social connectedness, it was expected that the association between life satisfaction and gendered racial microaggressions would not be significant (see Figure 4).

**Figure 1**

*The Conceptual Model for the Moderation Hypotheses*

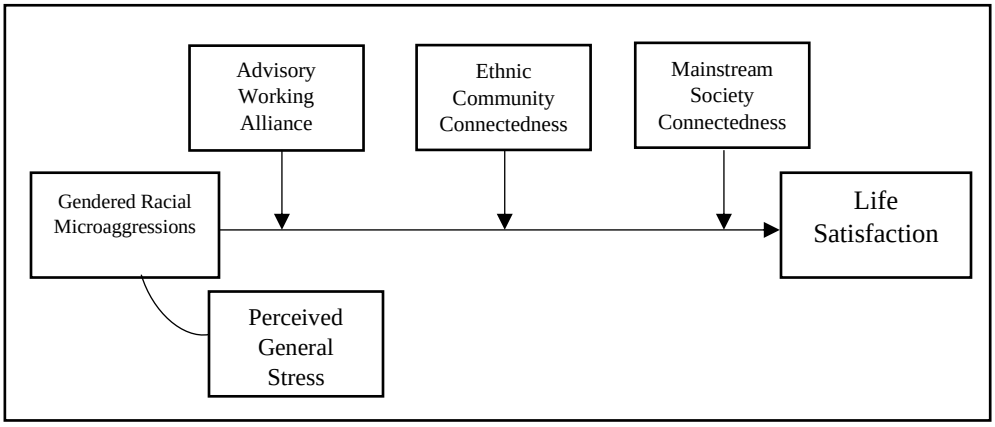


**Figure 2**

*Advisory Working Alliance as a Moderator*

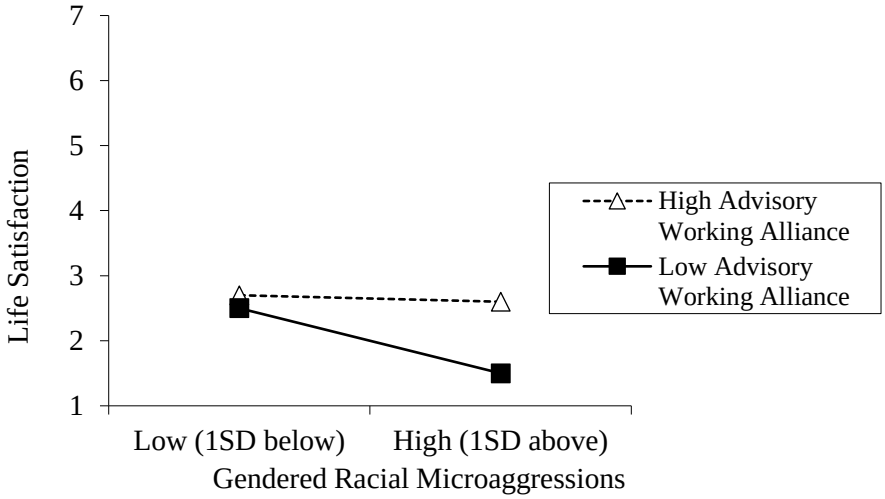



**Figure 3**

*Ethnic Community Connectedness as a Moderator*

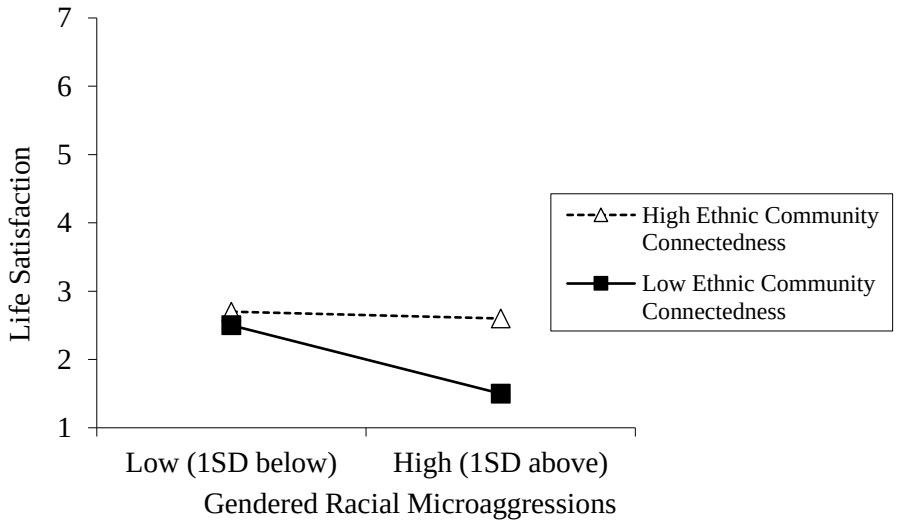
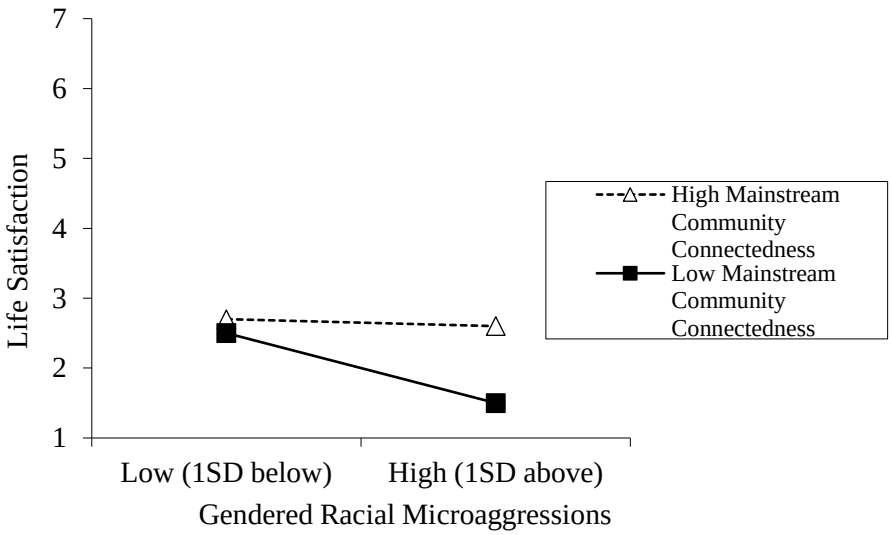


**Figure 4**

*Mainstream Society Social Connectedness as a Moderator*




## The Present Study

A power analysis was conducted using G*Power software 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009) to determine the proper sample size needed for a small, medium, or large effect size. For a power of .80 with an alpha level of .05, the results suggested that at least 550 participants would be required to achieve a small effect, at least 77 participants would be required for a medium effect, and at least 37 participants would be required for a large effect. The present study aimed for recruiting approximately 200 participants for achieving small to medium effect.

## Participants

Potential participants were recruited using the researcher's professional and personal networks and social media (e.g., listservs, Twitter, Facebook). Initially, 802 individuals accessed the survey on Qualtrics. However, 235 participants were not qualified to participate in this study because they identified as male or non-female. Additionally, nine participants were not enrolled or currently in a graduate program outside of the United States, 12 participants were aged below 18 years old or declined to report their age, and 116 participants did not self-identify as Black. Moreover, 82 participants stopped responding after demographics questions, 30 participants did not answer any item on a particular measure, and 133 participants incorrectly responded to the validity check item. After removing invalid participants, a total of 185 participants were left for the subsequent analyses.

Participants' mean age was 30.74 years old (*SD* = 7.11, range = 20 to 67 years). Approximately 139 (75%) participants identified as African-American, 22 (12%) identified as Caribbean, 18 (10%) identified as African, and six (3%) manually entered their ethnicity (e.g., bicultural, Latina). Regarding sexual orientation, eight (4%) identified as gay, 14 (8%) as lesbian, 34 (18%) as bisexual, 123 (67%) as heterosexual, and six (3%) identified as other (e.g., queer, pansexual). Additionally, 79 (43%) participants identified as middle class, followed by 39 (21%) as lower middle class, 38 (21%) as upper middle class, 13 (7%) as lower class, and four (2%) as upper class. Prior to attending graduate school, 53 (29%) participants completed their bachelor's degrees at HBCUs, 116 (63%) at PWI, five (3%) at HSI, and nine (5%) at MSI. Most participants, specifically, 79 (43%) were enrolled in master's programs, and 104 (56%) were doctoral students. Regarding participants' graduate institutions, 33 (18%) studied at an HBCU,

129 (70%) at a PWI, seven (4%) at an HSI, and 12 (7%) at an MSI. Participants also reported the number of years they have been enrolled in their current graduate program. On average, students were enrolled in their current program for 2.94 years (*SD* = 1.70, range = 1.17 to 10.92 years). The average time reported working with a current advisor was 2.5 years (*SD* = 1.41, range = 1.08 to 7.5 years). A summary of participants' primary majors is outlined in Table 1.

**Procedure**

Approval was obtained from the researcher's university Institutional Review Board. Participants were recruited online using social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), professional networks and listservs (e.g., American Psychological Association), and the researcher's personal networks. Potential participants were eligible for the study if they (a) were at least 18 years old, (b) self-identified as a Black woman, (c) were currently enrolled in a graduate program in the United States, and (d) worked closely with an academic advisor. Participants were asked to complete the survey online via Qualtrics. Upon following the survey link, participants were presented with an electronic informed consent statement outlining the purpose of the study, the estimated time needed to complete the study (i.e., 20 minutes), potential risks and benefits of participation, information about entering the raffle, and a reminder that participation is strictly voluntary. Participants agreed to proceed by clicking a blue arrow at the end of the consent agreement. Identifying information and participants' IP addresses were not collected in this study. National mental health resources (e.g., National Suicide Prevention Hotline) were provided in the debriefing section of the survey. Participants were also given the contact information of the current researcher and her advisor.

Following the completion of the online survey, participants were presented with debriefing information and encouraged to contact their university counseling centers or the National Suicide Prevention Hotline for assistance if experiencing distress. Lastly, participants were asked if they would like to be entered into a drawing to win one of seven $10 VISA gift cards. If the participant chose "yes," they were redirected to a new Qualtrics survey and asked to provide their name and email address. If the participant selected "no," they were presented with an exit screen and thanked for their participation.

## Measures

### *Demographics*

Participants reported their age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity (e.g., African-American, Caribbean, African), the classification of their undergraduate institution (e.g., PWI, MSI), the classification of their graduate institution (e.g., HBCU, PWI), their current graduate program degree-type (e.g., master's, doctorate), length of time enrolled in their current program, length of time working with their current primary advisor, socioeconomic status (SES), and the college of their primary major (e.g., College of Arts and Sciences).

### *Gendered Racial Microaggressions*

The 26-item Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale (GRM; Lewis & Neville, 2015) was used to measure gendered racial microaggressions. The GRM measures frequency (GRMF) and stress appraisal (GRMA). Sample items include "I have been told that I am too independent" and "someone has challenged my authority in a work, school, or other professional setting." Participants were asked to identify the lifetime frequency of various experiences on a 6-point Likert scale from 0 ("never") to 5 ("once a week or

more"). Participants were also asked to identify how stressful those experiences were for them on a 6-point Likert scale from 0 ("this never happened to me") to 5 ("extremely stressful"). Higher scores indicate increased frequency or more perceived stress. Construct validity was supported by a significant positive relationship between the GRM and the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (Nadal, 2011) as well as the Schedule of Sexist Events (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995). This scale was validated among several samples of Black women (Lewis & Neville, 2015). The GRM has also demonstrated strong reliability, with Cronbach's alpha ratings ranging from .93 (Lewis & Neville, 2015) to .95 (Dale & Safren, 2019) for appraisal and .92 (Dale & Safren, 2019; Lewis & Nevile, 2015) for frequency. For the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .94 for appraisal (GRMA) and .95 for frequency (GRMF).

***Social Connectedness***

The Social Connectedness in Ethnic Community (SCEC) and Social Connectedness in Mainstream Society scales (SCMS; Yoon et al., 2012) were used to measure participants' sense of closeness within their ethnic community and mainstream society respectively. The SCEC and SCMS contain five parallel items, with phrases in the SCEC changed to reflect a specific ethnic community. Sample items include "I feel connected to U.S. society" (SCMS) and "I feel like I fit into the _____ community" (SCEC) where participants insert their ethnic background (e.g., Caribbean, African) in the blanks. Each measure uses a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). Higher total scores suggest higher levels of social connectedness. Construct validity was supported by a significant positive relationship between the SCEC and enculturation, and the SCMS with acculturation (Yoon et al., 2012) among Mexican

American students. Liao and colleagues (2016) reported Cronbach's alphas of .94 for the SCEC and .93 for the SCMS among Black American individuals. For the present study, Cronbach's alphas were .95 and .96 for the SCEC and SCMS respectively.

### *Advisory Working Alliance*

The advisory working alliance was measured using the Advisory Working Alliance Inventory (AWAI; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). The AWAI (30 items) measures the graduate advising relationship from the student's perspective. The AWAI contains three subscales, including (a) rapport, in which a sample item is "my advisor welcomes my input into our discussions," (b) apprenticeship, in which a sample item is "my advisor facilitates my professional development through networking," and (c) identification-individuation, in which a sample item is "I tend to see things differently from my advisor" (reverse-scored item). Each measure uses a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree," 3 = "neutral," 5 = "strongly agree"). For the purpose of this study, subscale and total scores were used to capture the student's perception of the advisory working alliance. A higher score suggests a more positive working alliance. Construct validity was supported by a significant positive relationship between the AWAI and the Counselor Rating Form-Short Version (Corrigan & Schmidt, 1983). Schlosser and Gelso (2001) reported Cronbach's alphas among a sample of psychology doctoral students from various racial/ethnic backgrounds ranging from .90 to .95 for the AWAI total score. For the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .95 for the AWAI total score, .94 for the rapport subscale, .91 for the apprenticeship subscale, and .67 for the identification-individuation subscale.

### *Life Satisfaction*

Well-being was measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985). The SWLS is a five-item measure intended to evaluate a person's overall degree of life satisfaction without assessing individual constructs such as physical health or affect. The SWLS uses a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). Sample items include "The conditions of my life are excellent" and "I am satisfied with my life." Higher scores suggest higher levels of life satisfaction, while lower scores indicate degree of dissatisfaction. Construct validity was support by a positive relationship with the positive affect subscale of the Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn, 1969) and a negative relationship with the negative affect subscale (Bradburn, 1969). Utsey and colleagues (2000) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .82 among Black college students. For the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .87.

***Perceived Stress***

Perceived general stress was measured using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen et al., 1983). The PSS (10 items) used in the present study is an abridged version of the 14-item PSS, which measures the degree to which situations in one's life over the last month were appraised as stressful. The PSS uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 ("never") to 4 ("very often"). Sample items include "In the last month, how often have you felt things were going your way?" (reverse-scored item) and "In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?" Total scores were used to represent overall general stress. Higher scores suggest higher levels of stress. Construct validity was supported by a positive relationship between the PSS and College Student Life-Event Scale (Levine & Perkins, 1980), which measures stressful life

events. Greer and Brown (2011) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .70 among Black college students. For the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .80.

Table 1

*Primary Majors of Black Women in Graduate School*

| **Major** | ***n* (%)** |
|---|---|
| Agriculture and Life Sciences | 3 (1.6%) |
| Art and Design | 7 (3.8%) |
| Business | 9 (4.9%) |
| Communications and Media | 12 (6.5%) |
| Education | 25 (13.5%) |
| Engineering | 3 (1.6%) |
| Health and Human Development | 15 (8.1%) |
| Information Sciences and Technology | 12 (6.5%) |
| Law | 2 (1.1%) |
| Liberal Arts and Science | 20 (10.8%) |
| Medical | 7 (3.8%) |
| Social Sciences | 47 (25.4%) |
| Nursing | 12 (6.5%) |
| Other | 11 (5.9%) |
| **Total** | **185** |

# CHAPTER 4

# RESULTS

## Preliminary Analyses

First, missing data was analyzed at the item level. Results showed 3.7% for GRMF, 4.8% for GRMA, .5% for SCMS, .5% for SCEC, 0% for SWLS, 1% for AWAI, and .5% for PSS. The Expectation-Maximization algorithm (Shafer & Graham, 2002) in SPSS was utilized to impute the missing data (<5% on all measures in this study). Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alphas, and zero-order correlations were calculated for the main variables (see Table 2).

Additional preliminary analyses were conducted to determine if well-being varied as a function of any demographic variables. Analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to examine whether well-being varied as a function of sexual orientation, ethnicity, SES, major, graduate program level, undergraduate institution classification, and graduate institution classification. The results indicated that there were no significant differences for sexual orientation ($F$[4, 180] = .47, $p$ >.05), ethnicity ($F$[3, 181] = .89, $p$ > .05), major ($F$[13, 171] = 1.12, $p$ > .05), graduate institution classification ($F$[4, 180] = 2.15, $p$ > .05), or graduate program level ($F$[2, 182] = .84, $p$ > .05). However, significant differences were revealed for SES ($F$[5, 168] = 3.92, $p$ < .01) and undergraduate institution classification ($F$[4, 180] = 2.51, $p$ < .05). Correlation analyses were conducted to investigate whether age, length of time in the program, and length of time working with current advisor were associated with well-being. The results indicated that there was no significant association between age and life satisfaction ($r$ = .001, $p$ > .05), or between

length of time in the program and life satisfaction ($r$ = .048, $p$ > .05), or between length of time working with current advisor and life satisfaction ($r$ = .051, $p$ > .05).

Existing research indicated that perceived stress is negatively associated with life satisfaction among African American students (Barnes& Lightsey, 2005), thus it was included as a covariate. In the present study, correlation analyses revealed a significant relationship between perceived stress and life satisfaction ($r$ = -.35, $p$ < .01). While SWLS varied as a function of some demographic variables (i.e., SES, undergraduate institution classification), there are no existing empirical studies that provide evidence for Black women in graduate school. Therefore, the present study only included PSS as a covariate for later analyses.

The subsequent moderation analyses were conducted using Hayes' (2013) PROCESS computational tool in SPSS. A simple effect analysis was conducted when a significant interaction effect was revealed. This study used the pick-a-point procedure (Hayes, 2013) through probing the interaction with the moderator at a high (+1 *SD*) level versus at a low (-1 *SD*) level from the mean of the moderator variables (i.e., AWAI, SCEC, and SCMS).

**Hypothesis 1: Advisory Working Alliance as a Moderator**

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the advisory working alliance would moderate the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction after controlling for perceived stress. Length of time with primary advisor was also included as a covariate. According to Schlosser and colleagues (2003), perceptions of the advisory working alliance can change over time. Students who endorsed positive relationships with their advisors consistently reported that their relationship improved over time, while

individuals who reported negative relationships stated the relationships grew more distant or got worse. Moreover, results from Bloom and colleagues' (2007) qualitative study on helpful characteristics of advisors revealed that (a) care for students and their success, (b) accessibility, (c) guidance tailored to each student, (d) serving as a role model, and (e) proactively integrating students into the profession were the most desirable. These findings suggest that experiences over time may have a significant impact on a student's perception of the advisory alliance. Results from the present study indicated a significant moderation effect for AWAI-A on the association between GRMF and SWLS (*B* = .53, *SE* = .17, 95% CI [0.19, 0.86], $\Delta R^2$ = .12), but not for AWAI-R (*B* = 0.09, *SE* = .16, 95% CI [-0.24, 0.41]), AWAI-I (*B* = -0.002, *SE* = .16, 95% CI [-0.31, 0.31]) or AWAI (*B* = .32, *SE* = .19, 95% CI [-0.06, 0.70]). In particular, results from simple effects indicated that the negative association between GRMF and SWLS was significant for individuals at a lower level of advisory working alliance apprenticeship (*B* = -0.77, *SE* = .20, 95% CI [-1.16, -0.37]). However, the association between GRMF and SWLS was not significant for individuals at a higher level of AWAI-A (*B* = 0.10, *SE* = .19, 95% CI [-0.28, 0.48]) (see Figure 5). Additionally, the AWAI did not moderate the relationship between GRMA and SWLS. Specifically, the two-way interactions were not significant for GRMA x AWA on SWLS (*B* = .14, *SE* = .20, 95% CI [-0.26, 0.53]), GRMA x AWAI-A on SWLS (*B* = .12, *SE* = .16, 95% CI [-0.20, 0.44]), GRMA x AWAI-R on SWLS (*B* = .06, *SE* = .19, 95% CI [-0.32, 0.45]), or GRMA x AWAI-I on SWLS (*B* = 0.16, *SE* = .18, 95% CI [-0.20, 0.52]).

**Hypothesis 2: Ethnic Community Social Connectedness as a Moderator**

Hypothesis 2 predicted that SCEC would moderate the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction after controlling for perceived stress. Results indicated the GRMA x SCEC on SWLS was not significant (*B* = -.03, *SE* = .07, 95% CI [-0.17, 0.10]). Moreover, GRMF x SCEC on SWLS was not significant (*B* = -.02, *SE* = .07, 95% CI [-0.15, 0.11]). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. Participants' ethnic community social connectedness did not moderate the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 3: Mainstream Society Social Connectedness as a Moderator**

Lastly, Hypothesis 3 predicted that mainstream society social connectedness would moderate the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction after controlling for perceived stress. The results revealed that the two-way interaction of GRMF x SCMS on SWLS was significant (*B* = -0.09, *SE* = .04, 95% CI [-0.17, -0.00], $\Delta R^2$ = .02). Specifically, simple effect results revealed that the negative relationship between GRMF and SWLS was significant for individuals at a higher level of SCMS (*B* = -.38, *SE* = .11, 95% CI [-0.60, -.0.16]). However, the association between GRMF and SWLS was not significant for individuals at a lower level of SCMS (*B* = -0.05, *SE* = .12, 95% CI [-0.30, 0.16]) (see Figure 6). Additionally, the results revealed that the two-way interaction of GRMA x SCMS on SWLS was significant (*B* = -0.16, *SE* = .04, 95% CI [-0.25, -0.08], $\Delta R^2$ = .06). Specifically, there was a significantly negative relationship between GRMA and SWLS among participants at a higher level of SCMS (*B* = -0.38, *SE* = .12, 95% CI [-0.63, -0.13]). However, the association between GRMA and SWLS was not significant for individuals at a lower level of SCMS (*B* = 0.18, *SE* = .12, 95% CI [-0.05, 0.41]) (see Figure 7).

Table 2

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. PSS | -------- | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. SWLS | -.35** | -------- | | | | | | | | |
| 3. GRM-F | .30** | -.31** | -------- | | | | | | | |
| 4. GRM-A | .36** | -.23** | .71** | -------- | | | | | | |
| 5. AWAI | -.08 | .08 | -.23** | -.11 | -------- | | | | | |
| 6. AWAI-R | -.05 | .02 | -.30** | -.10 | .92** | -------- | | | | |
| 7. AWAI-A | -.10 | .12 | -.12 | -.12 | .92** | .72** | -------- | | | |
| 8. AWAI-I | -.03 | .07 | -.23** | -.03 | .74** | .66** | .55** | -------- | | |
| 9. SCMS | -.32** | .30*** | -.26** | -.37** | .11 | .05 | .18* | -.03 | -------- | |
| 10. SCEC | -.01 | .26*** | -.13 | .14 | .25** | .31** | .17* | .15* | .07 | -------- |
| *Mean* | 2.04 | 4.70 | 2.12 | 2.23 | 3.52 | 3.83 | 3.40 | 3.19 | 3.90 | 5.53 |
| *Actual Range* | 1.78- | 4.04- | 1.30- | 1.45- | 2.91- | 3.72- | 2.91- | 2.94- | 3.79- | 5.35- |
| | 2.64 | 5.09 | 3.04 | 2.87 | 4.03 | 4.03 | 3.61 | 3.40 | 3.99 | 5.65 |
| *Possible Range* | 0-4 | 1-7 | 0-5 | 0-5 | 1-5 | 1-5 | 1-5 | 1-5 | 1-7 | 1-7 |
| *SD* | .60 | 1.27 | 1.03 | .97 | .79 | .95 | .86 | .80 | 1.73 | 1.25 |
| *α* | .80 | .87 | .95 | .94 | .95 | .94 | .91 | .67 | .96 | .95 |

*Note. N* = 185. PSS = Perceived Stress Scale; SWLS= Satisfaction with Life Scale; GRMF=Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale-Frequency; GRMA=Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale-Appraisal; AWAI=Advisory Working Alliance Inventory; AWAI-R=Advisory Working Alliance Inventory-Rapport; AWAI-A= Advisory Working Alliance Inventory-Apprenticeship; AWAI-I= Advisory Working Alliance Inventory-Identification-Individuation; SCMS=Social Connectedness to Mainstream Society Scale; SCEC=Social Connectedness to Ethnic Community Scale

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

**Figure 5**

*Effect of Frequency of Gendered Racial Microaggressions on Life Satisfaction at High Versus Low Levels of Advisory Working Alliance Inventory Apprenticeship*

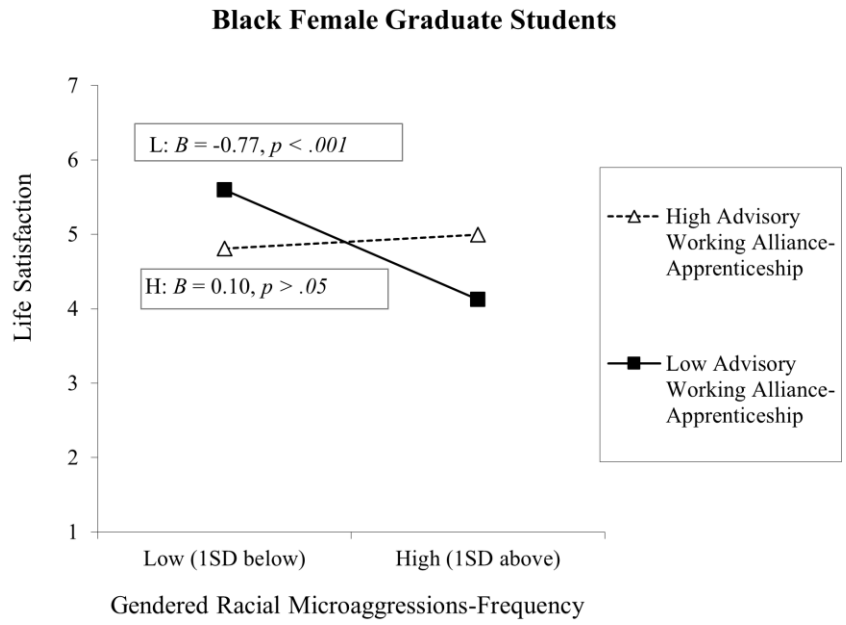



**Figure 6**

*Effect of Frequency of Gendered Racial Microaggressions on Life Satisfaction at High Versus Low Levels of Mainstream Society Social Connectedness*

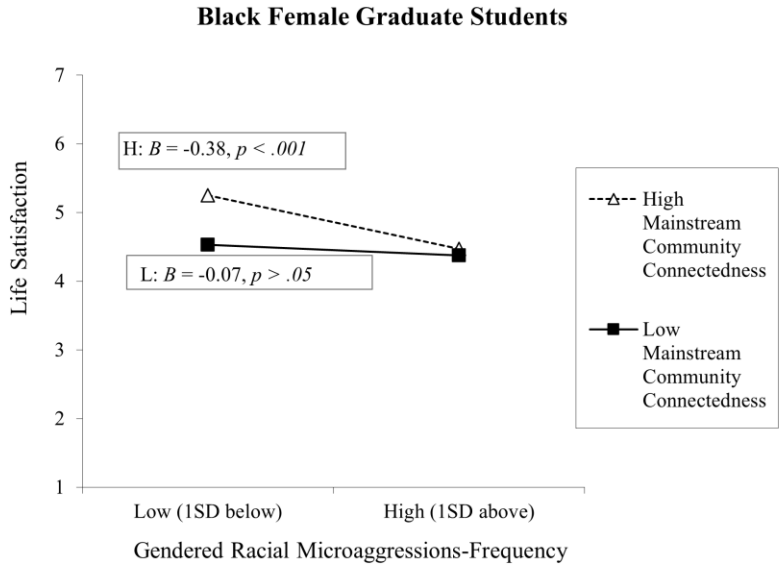
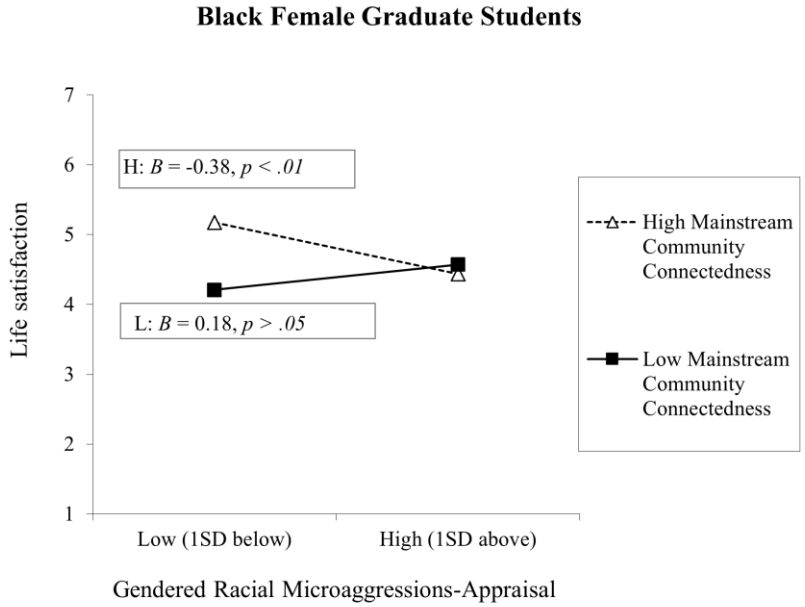


**Figure 7**

*Effect of Appraisal of Gendered Racial Microaggressions on Life Satisfaction at High Versus Low Levels of Mainstream Society Social Connectedness*



# CHAPTER 5

# DISCUSSION

Based on intersectionality and gendered racism theoretical frameworks, the present study investigated if the advisory working alliance and social connectedness moderated the relationship between experiences of gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction among Black women in graduate school. Several significant findings were revealed in this study. The results partially supported Hypothesis 1. Namely, working alliance-apprenticeship moderated the association between frequency of gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. The results from the simple effect analysis revealed that for Black women in graduate school with a lower level of advisory working alliance-apprenticeship, there was a negative association between frequency of gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. However, the association between frequency of gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction was not significant for Black women in graduate school with a higher level of advisory working alliance-apprenticeship. Some examples of poor apprenticeship include failure to educate a student about the process of graduate school, not inviting a student to collaborate in projects, being unavailable when needed, and failure to facilitate professional development through networking (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). It is possible that low apprenticeship within the advisory working alliance (e.g., failure to facilitate networking) extends existing marginalization experienced by Black women in graduate school when they encounter adversity (e.g., gendered racial microaggressions; Alexander & Bodenhorn, 2015; Dortch, 2016; Ellis, 2001; Green et al., 2018; Shavers & Moore, 2019; Vakalahi et al., 2014), which might reduce one's life satisfaction. However, for Black

women in graduate school with higher advisory working alliance-apprenticeship (e.g., receiving help from the advisor to establish a timetable for tasks of graduate training, being involved in their advisor's research projects), this dynamic may buffer the negative impact of frequency of gendered racial microaggressions on one's life satisfaction. According to Schlosser and Gelso (2001), AWAI-A scores may represent levels of instructional connection, and those with higher scores likely classify meetings with their advisor as productive, which ultimately streamlines their progress within their program. In contrast, failure to develop a productive working relationship with one's advisor can hinder program progress and contribute to program difficulties (Dortch, 2016; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). Individuals with lower AWAI-A may feel stuck. According to Schlosser and colleagues' (2003) study, discussing career aspirations has been identified as a positive component of the advising relationship. It is possible that higher levels of apprenticeship may provide clarity about how the advisee can achieve their career goals, which may reduce the negative impact of gendered racial microaggressions on their life satisfaction thus far. It is also possible that specific aspects of apprenticeship (e.g., being invited to collaborate on research projects) redirects Black women's focus to professional/academic tasks as opposed to experiences of gendered racial microaggressions, which may help buffer the negative impact of gendered racial microaggressions on their life satisfaction.

However, results of moderation analyses indicated that the advisory working alliance did not moderate the relationship between stress appraisal of gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. This finding indicated that the negative relationship between the stress associated with gendered racial microaggressions and life

satisfaction is not significantly influenced by the advisory working alliance. It is possible that socialization experiences unique to Black women contribute to internalizing aspects of the "Strong Black Woman" stereotype (Lewis & Neville, 2015; Thomas et al., 2008; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). This stereotype perpetuates the idea that Black women should be strong, resilient, and able to withstand a considerable amount of stress with little to no support. As a result of internalizing this stereotype, Black women may develop skewed beliefs about what should be considered overwhelming or severely stressful, and in turn become desensitized to experiences of gendered racial microaggressions.

Interestingly, AWAI-R did not moderate the relationship between frequency or appraisal of gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. It is possible that although social support is important to Black women in graduate school (Alexander & Hermann, 2016; Shavers & Moore, 2014), an advisor's interpersonal support alone may not be enough to buffer the impact of gendered racial microaggressions. Additionally, the aspects of rapport captured by AWAI-R include respect, general support, and encouragement (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). Perhaps there are additional characteristics of the advisory working alliance that may be relevant that are not captured by AWAI-R, such as trust (Alexander & Bodenhorn, 2015; Posselt, 2018) or shared identity (Lewis et al., 2013).

Furthermore, AWAI-I did not moderate the relationship between frequency or appraisal of gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. These findings were congruent with expectations because identification-individuation within the advisory working alliance does not provide practical or psychological resources that may be helpful to combat the negative impact of gendered racial microaggressions. Results

indicate that the degree to which the advisee wants to be like their advisor (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001) does not affect the relationship between experiencing gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction for Black female graduate students.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that ethnic community social connectedness would moderate the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. Specifically, it was hypothesized that for Black women with lower ethnic community connectedness, there would be a negative association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. Surprisingly, SCEC did not moderate the negative association between gendered racial microaggressions (i.e., frequency and stress appraisal) and life satisfaction. These results were consistent with Szymanski and Lewis' findings (2016) that racial identity centrality did not moderate the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and psychological distress. However, the results of the present study were not aligned with Liao and colleagues' findings (2015) that ethnic community connectedness weakened the association between perceived racial microaggressions and anxiety symptoms among Black individuals. The findings in the present study were also inconsistent with results from Chae and colleagues' study (2011) suggesting that high racial group identification moderated the impact of perceived racial discrimination on psychological distress. Existing literature supports that there is a complicated relationship between racial identity, perceived racial discrimination, and psychological distress among Black individuals (Sellers et al., 2003). Specifically, the relationship between these variables is inconclusive. There are several potential explanations for the inconsistencies in the literature. First, it is possible that Black women's ethnic community connectedness plays a more complex role in their

experiences of gendered racial microaggressions because perpetrators could be members of their ethnic group. In this case, social support may not be generalized to one's entire ethnic community, ultimately reducing this variable's positive impact on well-being. Additionally, there is inconsistency among studies regarding how the studied variables (i.e., gendered racial microaggressions, ethnic community social connectedness, life satisfaction) are defined and measured, which likely contributes to the inconclusive findings in the existing empirical literature. Pieterse and colleagues (2011) outlined how the operationalization of perceived racism and the psychological outcome variables vary across studies. They underscored that the relationship between perceived racism and psychological distress is influenced by how these variables are measured. While some studies focus on the frequency of events, others target appraisal, and while some studies assess for general distress, others investigate specific outcomes such as anxiety or depression (Carter, 2007).

Lastly, Hypothesis 3 predicted that mainstream society social connectedness would moderate the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. It was expected that there would be a significantly negative relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction among Black women with lower mainstream connectedness. Surprisingly, the results indicated that the negative relationship between gendered racial microaggressions (i.e., frequency and stress appraisal) and life satisfaction was significant for Black women in graduate school with higher mainstream society social connectedness. Black women who reported higher belongingness to U.S. mainstream society were more vulnerable to the harmful effects of gendered racism. These findings are consistent with existing literature (Banks & Kohn-

Wood, 2007) suggesting that Black individuals who identify closely with mainstream society may be more susceptible to psychological distress when experiencing microaggressions. Perhaps Black women who feel accepted by and connected to American mainstream society experience more psychological injury after experiencing gendered racial microaggressions because the social rejection is unexpected (Moor et al., 2010). Results of the present study emphasize that higher connection to mainstream society would exacerbate the negative association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction for Black women in graduate school.

**Contributions**

The present study contributes to the literature in several ways. The scarcity of existing literature indicates that the population of Black women in graduate school is overlooked, and the present study helps address this gap. In addition, the current study advances the literature by investigating Black women's experiences from an intersectional framework, rather than assessing the role of racism or sexism separately. Findings from the present study indicated that gendered racial microaggressions negatively impact the life satisfaction of Black women in graduate school beyond general stress. This is the first study to provide empirical evidence examining potential moderating effects of the advisory working alliance and social connectedness on the association between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction among Black women in graduate school. In particular, results from the simple effects revealed that the negative association between GRMF and SWLS was significant for Black women in graduate school with lower AWAI-A, the negative association between GRMA and SWLS was significant for Black women in graduate school with higher SCMS, and the

negative association between GRMF and SWLS was significant for Black women in graduate school with higher SCMS.

## Implications

### *Educational Implications*

Faculty members working with Black women advisees may consider working collaboratively with their advisees to strengthen the apprenticeship component of the advisory working alliance (e.g., facilitating professional development through networking, being available when needed, helping students conduct work within a plan; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). It is possible that AWAI-A facilitates instructional connection, which may act as a buffer between the negative impact of gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. Results of the present study are consistent with Rice and colleagues (2016), who found that advisory working alliance apprenticeship was inversely related to stress. These findings suggest that AWAI-A is a pivotal component of the relationship between GRM and SWLS among Black women in graduate school.

Higher education institutions may consider providing training and workshops to faculty and staff regarding gendered racial microaggressions. Specifically, it may be beneficial to provide education about defining and recognizing these experiences, as well as how these experiences may affect Black women's life satisfaction. Raising awareness may facilitate self-reflection and self-improvement among faculty and staff when they work with Black female graduate students (Booker et al., 2016; Hudson, 2020). Through transformative learning (Jackson, 2008), individuals learn to question their assumptions about the world, develop alternative assumptions, then test them. For example, transformative learning may help faculty discover and confront biases they hold

regarding Black womanhood. Perhaps training opportunities and workshops will raise awareness about the unique challenges faced by Black women in graduate school and give faculty members the opportunity to learn how to better support this population.

### *Clinical Implications*

Mental health providers working with Black female graduate students may want to assess the roles of mainstream society connectedness and ethnic community connectedness when they cope with gendered racial microaggressions. It is likely that Black women graduate students who endorse higher mainstream society social connectedness may be more vulnerable to the harmful effects of gendered racial microaggressions. Furthermore, clinicians can validate and help clients process their experiences of perceived gendered racial microaggressions.

Results of the present study emphasize the importance of advisory working alliance apprenticeship. Clinicians working with Black women in graduate school may consider assessing this aspect of the advisory working alliance if a client expresses poor life satisfaction or a decline in well-being. It is possible that advisory working alliance apprenticeship contributes to one's self-efficacy and competence (Mason, 2012), which influences their motivation to complete their program. Individuals with lower advisory working alliance apprenticeship may endorse academic challenges and psychological distress (Rice et al., 2016; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001; Schlosser et al., 2003). Existing literature indicates the advisory working alliance plays an important role in graduate students' well-being such that a stronger alliance is negatively associated with psychological distress (Liu et al., 2019; Wei et al., 2012).

## Limitations

Despite the present study's novel findings, a few limitations must be acknowledged. First, self-selection bias may play a role in the present study's findings since only individuals who were interested in the topic related to gendered racial microaggressions would choose to participate. Perhaps individuals who did not feel strongly about the purpose of the study, or those who did not consider the study relevant to their experiences, would choose not to participate. Additionally, results of the present study cannot be used to claim causation due to its cross-sectional design.

Additionally, data collection occurred during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It is possible that COVID-19 affected the results of the present study. Specifically, navigating the global pandemic likely exacerbated perceived stress (American Psychological Association, 2021). In addition, Black women endorsed increased isolation, anxiety, and depression as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Chandler et al., 2021). It is also possible that SCMS may have been influenced by racial disparities associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, such that Black women may have felt less connected to U.S. mainstream society based on health outcomes among Black individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 in comparison to non-Black counterparts (Chandler et al., 2021; Mahajan & Larkins-Pettigrew, 2020; Price-Haywood et al., 2020; Reitsma et al., 2021). According to Price-Haywood and colleagues (2020), among the patients in their study who tested positive for COVID-19 and required hospitalization, 76.9% were Black. Additionally, 70.6% of patients who died from COVID-19 were also Black. These findings indicate that Black individuals who contracted COVID-19 were at higher risk of hospitalization and death. Perhaps participants questioned their belonging to U.S. society as a result of these racial disparities in the healthcare system, as evidenced

by findings that those with higher SCMS were more vulnerable to the negative impact of gendered racial microaggressions. Specifically, for individuals with high SCMS, they may have questioned the likelihood of survival and/or receiving quality care in the event they contracted COVID-19. It is possible that these women experienced increased levels of distress because they expected comparable health outcomes but eventually discovered that Black individuals were disproportionately more likely to be hospitalized. Mistrust and misunderstanding of information received about COVID-19 could have also impacted participants sense of belonging and closeness to U.S. society (Chandler et al., 2021).

**Future Research**

Future research should continue to explore other moderators that may explain the mechanism between gendered racial microaggressions and well-being. The results of the present study are inconsistent with previous research (Liao et al., 2015) regarding the role of social connectedness among Black women in graduate school. Future research may want to consider how other aspects of identity affect Black women's ethnic community connectedness (e.g., sexual orientation, SES).

It is possible that a third variable may be interacting with AWAI, SMCS, or SCEC to influence the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. Potential moderators may include first-generation status, self-efficacy, social support (Gayathri & Karthikeyan, 2016), and coping style. For example, coping style may be associated with one's connection to their ethnic group, ultimately influencing the relationship among GRM, SWLS, and SCEC. Regarding the experiences of Black women in graduate school specifically, future research may want to investigate these

variables within specific fields (e.g., STEM, law, medical school) since Black women from these disciplines were underrepresented in the present study. Future research may also examine whether alternative social support (e.g., support from other Black women) would influence the relationship between GRM and SWLS. For example, Lewis and colleagues (2013) found that Black women often coped with gendered racial microaggressions by seeking validation and normalization of these experiences from other Black women, suggesting that the source of social support may influence the coping process and its influence on well-being.

Additionally, future research may want to consider employing longitudinal studies to investigate changes in the advisory working alliance over time and how those changes affect Black women advisee's well-being in their face of gendered racial microaggressions. A mixed-methods design may also yield a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and well-being for Black women in graduate school. Perhaps future research may want to consider examining why apprenticeship is important for Black women in graduate school who have experienced gendered racial microaggressions. Considering the dearth of literature investigating this population, it is important to examine Black women's experiences from various approaches.

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# APPENDIX A

## MEASURES

Note: Items marked with as asterisk (*) are reverse coded; bold text indicates validity check items

Demographics

1. Age:
2. Gender
    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Other (please specify)

3. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?
    a. Gay
    b. Lesbian
    c. Bisexual
    d. Heterosexual
    e. Other (please specify)

4. Do you self-identify as Black?
    a. Yes
    b. No

5. Which best describes your ethnicity?
    a. African-American
    b. Caribbean
    c. African
    d. Other (please specify) _____

6. Is your graduate institution located in the United States?
    a. Yes
    b. No
7. Which best describes your socioeconomic status?
    a. Lower Class
    b. Lower Middle Class
    c. Middle Class
    d. Upper Middle Class
    e. Upper Class
    f. Other (please specify) _____
8. How long you have been enrolled in your current graduate program?
    _____yr_____mo

9. How long you have been working with your current primary advisor?_____yr_____mo
10. Please select the college of your primary major
    a. Agriculture and Life Sciences
    b. Art & Design
    c. Business
    d. Communications and Media
    e. Earth & Mineral Sciences
    f. Education
    g. Engineering
    h. Health & Human Development
    i. Information Sciences & Technology
    j. Law
    k. Liberal Arts & Science
    l. Medical
    m. Social Sciences
    n. Nursing
    o. Other (please specify) _____

11. Which best describes the program you are currently enrolled in?

    a. Master's
    b. Doctoral
    c. Other (please specify) _____

12. Which best describes your undergraduate institution?

    a. Historically Black College/University (HBCU)
    b. Predominantly White Institution (PWI)
    c. Minority Serving Institution (MSI)
    d. Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)
    e. Other (please specify) _____

13. Which best describes your current graduate institution?
    a. Historically Black College/University (HBCU)
    b. Predominantly White Institution (PWI)
    c. Minority Serving Institution (MSI)
    d. Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)
    e. Other

Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale (GRMS)

Reference: Lewis, J. A., & Neville, H. A. (2015). Construction and initial validation of the Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale for Black women. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 62(2), 289-302. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cou0000062

Frequency

0=Never
1=Less than once a year
2=A few times a year
3=About once a month
4=A few times a month
5=Once a week or more

Appraisal

0=This has never happened to me
1=Not at all stressful
2=Slightly stressful
3=Moderately stressful
4=Very stressful
5=Extremely stressful

Directions.

Please think about your experiences as a Black woman. Please read each item and think of how often each event has happened to you in your lifetime. In addition, please rate how stressful each experience was for you. Stressful can include feeling upset, bothered, offended, or annoyed by the event.

Based on my experiences as a Black woman…

1. Someone accused me of being angry when I was speaking in a calm manner
2. Someone assumed that I did not have much to contribute to the conversation
3. I have been told that I am too independent
4. Someone has made me feel unattractive because I am a Black woman
5. In talking with others, someone has told me to calm down
6. My comments have been ignored in a discussion in a work, school, or other professional setting
7. I have been told that I am too assertive
8. Someone has made a sexually inappropriate comment about my butt, hips, or thighs
9. I have been perceived to be an "angry Black woman"
10. Someone has challenged my authority in a work, school, or other professional setting
11. Someone made a negative comment to me about my skin color/skin tone
12. Someone made me feel exotic as a Black woman
13. Someone has imitated the way they think Black women speak in front of me (for example, "g-i-r-l-f-r-i-e-n-d")
14. I have been disrespected by people in work, school, or other professional setting
15. Someone made me feel unattractive because of the size of my butt, hips, or thighs
16. I have been assumed to be a strong Black woman
17. Someone has assumed that I should have a certain body type because I am a Black woman
18. I have felt unheard in a work, school, or other professional setting
19. I have received negative comments about my hair when I wear it in a natural hairstyle
20. I have been told that I am sassy and straightforward
21. Someone objectified me based on my physical features as a Black woman
22. I have felt someone has tried to "put me in my place" in a work, school, or other professional setting
23. Someone assumed I speak a certain way because I am a Black woman
24. I have felt excluded from networking opportunities by White co-workers
25. I have received negative comments about the size of my facial features
26. Someone perceived me to be sexually promiscuous (sexually loose)

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)

Reference: Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., and Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 24,* 386-396.

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, please indicate by writing a number in the space how often you felt or thought a certain way.

0 = Never
1 = Almost never
2 = Sometimes
3 = Fairly often
4 = Very often

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
2. In the last month, how often have you felt you were unable to control the important things in your life?
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?
4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?
8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?
10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were pilling up so high that you could not overcome them?

Advisory Working Alliance Inventory (AWAI)

Reference: Schlosser, L. Z., & Gelso, C. J. (2001). Measuring the working alliance in advisor–advisee relationships in graduate school. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *48*(2), 157-167. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.48.2.157

These 30 items pertain to your perceptions about your relationship with your advisor. For the purposes of this study, the term advisor is referring to the faculty member that has the greatest responsibility for helping guide you through your graduate program (e.g. advisor, major professor, committee chair, dissertation chair). Please respond to the items using the following scale:

| | Strongly Disagree | | Neutral | | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I get the feeling that my advisor does not like me very much. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. My advisor introduces me to professional activities (E.g. conferences, submitting articles for journal publication) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I do not want to be like my advisor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. My advisor welcomes my input into our discussions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. My advisor helps me conduct my work within a plan. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I tend to see things differently from my advisor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. My advisor does not encourage my input into our discussions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. My advisor has invited me to be a responsible collaborator in his/her own work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I do not want to feel similar to my advisor in the process of conducting work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. My advisor is not kind when commenting about my work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. My advisor helps me establish a timetable for the tasks of my graduate training. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. My advisor and I have different interests. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I do not feel respected by my advisor in our work together. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. My advisor is available when I need her/him. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. I feel like my advisor expects too much from me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. My advisor offers me encouragement for my accomplishments. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Meetings with my advisor are unproductive. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. I do not think that my advisor believes in me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. My advisor facilitates my professional development through networking. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. My advisor takes my ideas seriously. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. My advisor does not help me stay on track in our meetings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I do not think that my advisor has my best interests in mind. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. I learn from my advisor by watching her/him. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. I feel uncomfortable working with my advisor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. I am an apprentice of my advisor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. I am often intellectually “lost” during my meetings with my advisor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. I consistently implement suggestions made by my advisor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. My advisor strives to make program requirements as rewarding as possible. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. My advisor does not educate me about the process of graduate school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. My advisor helps me recognize areas where I can improve. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

31. This is a checking item. Please click “**5** Strongly Agree” for this item.

Social Connectedness in Mainstream Society (SCMN) and
Social Connectedness in the Ethnic Community (SCETH) Scales

Reference: Yoon, E., Jung, K.R., Lee, R.M., & Felix-Mora, M. (2012). Validation of Social Connectedness in Mainstream Society and the Ethnic Community Scales. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 18*(1), 64-73

Instructions: Please indicate your agreement with the following items using the 1–7 scale below. There are no right or wrong answers. Please be open and honest in your responding.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| strongly disagree | disagree | slightly disagree | neither agree nor disagree | slightly agree | agree | strongly agree |

1. ____ I feel a sense of closeness with U.S. Americans.
2. ____ I feel a sense of belonging to U.S. society.
3. ____ I feel accepted by U.S. Americans.
4. ____ I feel like I fit into U.S. society.
5. ____ I feel connected with U.S. society.

6. ____ I feel a sense of closeness with ____ Americans (e.g., African American, Afro-Caribbean).
7. ____ I feel a sense of belonging to the _____ American community (e.g., African American, Afro-Caribbean).
8. ____ I feel accepted by ___ Americans (e.g., African American, Afro-Caribbean).
9. ____ I feel like I fit into the ____ American community (e.g., African American, Afro-Caribbean).
10. ____ I feel connected with the ___ American community (e.g., African American, Afro-Caribbean).

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)

Reference: Diener, E. D., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of personality assessment*, *49*(1), 71-75.

Instructions. Below are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1—7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item.

Please be open and honest in your responding. The 7-point scale is as follows:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Slightly disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Slightly agree. | Agree | Strongly agree |

__ 1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
__ 2. The conditions of my life are excellent.
__ 3. I am satisfied with my life.
__ 4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
__ 5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.