African American College Students’ Experience of Racial Discrimination and the Role of College Hassles

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The current study examines the relationship between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms. In particular, it investigated whether college hassles moderated or mediated the relationship. Participants included 194 African American students from a large, Midwestern, state university. Participants provided self-report of their experience of daily hassles related to racial discrimination and college life in addition to depressive symptoms and demographic information. Results indicated that the relationship between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms was mediated by college hassles. The results suggest that by decreasing the experience of generic college hassles, the indirect relationship between discrimination and depressive symptoms might be minimized.

As institutions of higher education aim to increase the racial diversity of their student populations, a number of concerns have been raised in the literature. In addition to the common hassles experienced by the average college student, the experience of discrimination is a major factor in the quality of college life specific to African American students and other students of color (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Sellers et al., 2003). It is important to continue to investigate and seek to understand these dynamics. In particular, it is essential to investigate variables that affect the experience of discrimination. Recent research has shifted to understand variables which influence the relationship between discrimination and mental health in African American college students (e.g., ethnic/racial identity; Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Sellers et al., 2003). However, how generic stressors facing college students (e.g., handling multiple responsibilities, making important decisions about education and career) relate to discrimination and mental health has yet to be examined. This study works to fill this gap and examines how college hassles affect the relationship between discrimination and mental health for African American college students.

Examining college hassles and other variables that affect the experience of discrimination can aid in retention, success, and graduation of African American students. Work to minimize discrimination is, of course, necessary given the realities of society. However, in the mean time, research needs to investigate how environmental and dispositional factors influence the experience. The present study builds on a transactional model of stress, which focuses on the interaction between an individual and the environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This conceptualization captures variables in the campus climate as well as background characteristics (i.e., experiences of discrimination, college hassles, gender, family characteristics) that might affect African American students rather than assuming a monolithic outcome for all African American students.
DAILY HASSLES CONCEPTUALIZATION

Research has conceptualized hassles as experiences that are commonly part of everyday life. Specifically, they are defined as the “irritating, frustrating, distressing demands that to some degree characterize every day transactions with the environment” (Smith, 1993, p.18). It is important to make this distinction, because although these events might seem more mundane than major life events (e.g., loss of a loved one, assault), daily hassles have been found to be more detrimental to mental and physical health because of their cumulative effects (Deitch et al., 2003; Kanner, Coyne, Schaeffer, & Lazarus, 1981). The examination of hassles allows us to examine events that are relatively common aspects of everyday life yet also have the potential to affect health.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Racial discrimination is defined as differential treatment on the basis of race (Blank, Dabady, & Citro, 2004). Recent research has highlighted that discrimination has changed over the past several decades and is now less overt (e.g., being ignored/overlooked while waiting in line, being mistaken for someone who serves others) than earlier forms of discrimination (e.g., lynching, being denied service at a restaurant [Essed, 1991; Harrell, 2000]). However, even less overt incidents may be stressful, leading to feelings of resignation and hopelessness (Essed, 1991; Harrell, 2000; Blank, Dabady, & Citro, 2004). Chronically stressful or discriminatory events can accumulate over time, resulting in poorer mental health (Deitch et al., 2003). This study examines racial discrimination that is considered less blatant or overt and is experienced in the context of everyday, interpersonal experiences (e.g., being ignored, overlooked, or not provided service [Essed, 1991; Harrell, 2000]).

Although this study focuses on the experience of discrimination among African Americans, it is unfortunately a common negative experience for other racial and ethnic groups in the United States as well (Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999). However, African Americans are more likely to report experiencing racial discrimination compared with these groups. In a community study of lifetime experiences of discrimination, 70% of African Americans compared with 30% of White Americans reported experiencing at least one discriminatory event (Forman, Williams, & Jackson, 1997). In another study, researchers found that 44.4% of non-Hispanic Whites, compared with only 8.8% of non-Hispanic Blacks, reported that they had never experienced a daily discriminatory event (Kessler et al., 1999). A recent survey found that more than 75% of college students (African American, White, Hispanic, and Asian American students) agreed that although racial hostility is not openly expressed, it is still felt to some extent, and 28% of the students said that African Americans are the targets of discrimination (Biasco, Goodwin, & Vitale, 2001). Research also suggests that African American students at predominantly White colleges and universities experience higher levels of race-related stress compared with historically Black colleges and universities (Greer & Chwalisz, 2007). The experience of discrimination continues to be prevalent in the lives of African Americans.

Within the past two decades, research on the effects of discrimination on mental health has increased. Researchers have investigated the experience and effects of discrimination on stigmatized groups and found that discrimination is associated with both mental and physical health symptoms among African Americans and can adversely affect mental health (Banks, Kohn-Wood, & Spencer, 2006;
Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Essed, 1991; Kessler et al., 1999; Sellers et al., 2003). These studies have found that increased exposure to discrimination correlates with increased reporting of psychiatric problems, in particular, depression and depressive symptoms. An important distinction is that this study is interested in the range of depressive symptomatology rather than a discrete diagnosis. Depressive symptoms are conceptualized as one possible outcome related to the experience of daily hassles for African American students on a predominantly White campus.

COLLEGE HASSLES

It is important to recognize that racial discrimination is a contextualized experience. When examining the experience of college students, it is essential that the context of college life be taken into consideration. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed a transactional model of stress, which allows for the interaction between person and environment. In that way, an African American college student (a person) can be conceptualized as experiencing discrimination and more generic hassles related to college life (environmental factors) that interact to affect the overall college experience. College hassles refer to the everyday stressors that a college student might face. These include handling multiple responsibilities, navigating social relationships, and making important decisions about education and career. Previous research on the college experience of African American males supports the validity that these hassles exist and are burdensome (e.g., financial responsibilities, relationships, academic pressures and decisions; Watkins, Green, Goodson, Guidry, & Stanley, 2007). In general, college students have been found to report a variety of stressors, ranging from intrapersonal to academic to financial (Ross, Niebling, & Herkert, 1999). Although research has documented the experience of college hassles, it is unclear what role these stressors play in relation to the experience of discrimination.

CURRENT STUDY

Given that discrimination remains a part of the college experience for many African American students, this study examined how college hassles affected the relationship between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms. In particular, the nature of the effect was explored based on the mediator and moderator distinctions outlined in Baron and Kenny (1986). The guiding research question was whether college hassles would moderate or mediate the relationship between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms.

Using Baron and Kenny's framework, it is important to distinguish between a moderator and mediator. If college hassles moderated the relationship between discrimination and depressive symptoms, this would provide us with subgroups of discrimination that correlate differently with depressive symptoms. Moderators have been described as addressing "when" or "for whom" variables might relate to an outcome (Frazier, Tix, & Barron, 2004). However, if college hassles mediate the relationship between discrimination and depressive symptoms, we would understand that college hassles represents the "generative mechanism" through which discrimination is able to influence depressive symptoms (Baron & Kenny, 1986, p. 1173). Mediators have been said to establish "how" and "why" one variable might correlate with an outcome (Frazier et al., 2004). Although the terms are often used interchangeably, they are quite different and provide distinct understandings of the relationship between variables.

This distinction will help to organize the thinking of professionals who create
programming and interventions or work to support African American college students. It will inform the direction of the work and has implications for where to focus attempts to improve the college experience. For example, if college hassles moderate the relationship between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms, it would be important to understand how the experience of generic stressors exacerbates or buffers the deleterious effects of discrimination for a group reporting a high or low frequency of discriminatory events. However, if college hassles mediate the relationship between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms, it would mean that college hassles explain the relationship between discrimination and depressive symptoms and suggests the need to mitigate the generic stressors as a means of lessening the negative outcomes in the face of discrimination. The current study will help to organize conceptualizations of how to address needs of African American college students’ experience of discrimination.

METHOD

Participants

African American students who were born in the United States (n = 194) from a large, Midwestern, state university were recruited to participate in this study. The university had a total enrollment of approximately 18,000 undergraduate students, and approximately 2,100 (12%) of the student population were African American. Ninety percent of participants in this study were residents of the state, and 70% were employed part time. Sixty-six percent of the sample was female. Ninety-seven percent identified as African American, and the remaining 3% indicated Biracial/Multiethnic or another Black ethnicity within the Diaspora (e.g., “African American/Native American,” “Black/Puerto Rican”). The majority of the participants were sophomores (32%) and juniors (30%). Most students were between 18 and 20 years of age (65%), yet students ranged in age from 18 to 34 years (M = 20). Respondents reported that their mothers had a range of education (high school diploma, 29.5%; some college, 34.7%; college diploma, 26.4%). Average mother’s education was between high school diploma and some college (M = 1.78; SD = 0.96).

Procedure

After receiving approval from the institutional review board, participants were recruited through flier advertisements, direct contact, and by word of mouth. Researchers were stationed in the main hallway near the elevators of a campus building housing general studies and a dozen academic departments. Students who chose to participate in the study signed consent forms and were given information for the university counseling center owing to questions about experiencing a negative mood. Upon completion, students were debriefed and given $10 for their participation.

Measures

Daily Life Experience. Racial discrimination was measured by the Daily Life Experience subscale, from the Racism and Life Experience Scales, which has been validated with African Americans (Harrell, 1997). It is a self-report measure of the frequency of 18 everyday discrimination events with adequate reliability (α = .93). Participants were asked how often they experienced each racial hassle over the past year. Responses for the frequency of each event ranged from 0 (never happened) to 5 (once a week or more). Scores were averaged to generate a range of 0 to 5. Representative items include “being treated rudely or disrespectfully” and “Others expecting your work to be inferior.”

College Hassles Scale. The College Hassles Scale was an adapted measure of self-reported...
hassles that affect college students taken from the Inventory of College Students’ Recent Life Experiences (Kohn, Lafreniere, & Gurevich, 1990). The measure was reduced to 18 items through piloting with an African American student sample (α = .89). Participants were asked how often they experienced each hassle in the past year with responses ranging from 0 (never happened) to 5 (once a week or more), and scores were averaged. Representative items include “Being let down or disappointed by friends” and “Important decisions about your education.” The scale was validated on a college sample. Similar hassles have been reported specifically within African American college samples (Watkins et al., 2007).

The Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D). This 20-item measure assessed the presence and intensity of depressive symptoms (Radloff, 1977; current sample α = .90). Participants were asked to rate the frequency for each symptom over the past week. Responses ranged from 1 (rarely or none of the time, less than once a day) to 4 (most of the time, 5 to 7 days a week). Scores were averaged to generate a range of 0 to 2.70. Representative items include “I felt fearful” or “I felt that people disliked me.” This scale has been validated in previous research with African Americans (Barbee, 1992).

Demographics. Gender, parental education, and age were used as control variables in the model. Parental education was used as a proxy for socioeconomic status and was measured categorically including “some high school,” “high school diploma,” “some college,” and “college diploma.” Research has suggested this measure as an indicator of socioeconomic status that is less volatile and consistently reported compared with income (McLoyd, 1998). Mother’s education was used over father’s education owing to missing data for fathers. Age was measured continuously in years. These variables were controlled for because there is a possibility that they could confound results and influence the interpretation of findings as they relate to racial hassles (Forman et al., 1997; Kessler et al., 1999).

Planned Analyses
A series of hierarchical ordinary least-squares regression analyses were conducted to test how college hassles influenced the relationship between discrimination and the report of depressive symptoms. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), a moderator is present if the interaction of two variables is significant given that each variable is significantly related to the outcome variable. A mediator is present if the following four conditions are met: (a) the predictor must be significantly associated with the mediator; (b) the predictor must be significantly associated with the dependent measure; (c) the mediator must be significantly associated with the dependent variable; and (d) the impact of the predictor on the dependent measure is less after controlling for the mediator, college hassles (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Therefore, an initial run determined whether racial discrimination and college hassles were significantly related to depressive symptoms, which served as a condition to continue with examination of moderation. Separate analyses were conducted to assess whether the four conditions were met for mediation.

RESULTS
Overall, racial discrimination was positively correlated with college hassles (r = .49; p < .05), CES-D scores (r = .29; p < .01), and mothers’ education level (r = .15; p < .05). In addition, colleges hassles were significantly positively correlated with depressive symptoms (r = .47; p < .01). Age was also positively correlated with gender (r = .17; p < .05). See Table 1 for full report of means, standard deviations, and correlations.
On average, based on Likert scale responses, students reported experiencing racial discrimination a “few times” over the course of the previous year ($M = 1.75; SD = 0.95$). The most frequently reported event was “being stared at by strangers” ($M = 2.26; SD = 1.47$) and “being treated in an overly friendly/superficial way” ($M = 1.99; SD = 1.50$). Male students ($M = 1.94; SD = 0.95$) reported significantly more racial discrimination than female respondents ($M = 1.65; SD = 0.95$). The events were also recoded into dichotomous variables (0 = never experienced; 1 = all other response values) to further understand how many of the 18 events were experienced by each respondent. This analysis showed that students reported experiencing numerous racially discriminatory events ($M = 13.77; SD = 4.61$) with one quarter of the respondents reporting experiencing all 18 of the discriminatory events within the past year ($n = 49; 25.3\%$). The next two largest response groups were 17 events ($n = 25; 12.9\%$) and 16 events ($n = 24; 12.4\%$). Only 2 respondents (1.0\%) reported experiencing none of the racially discriminatory events in the past year. Overall, African American students experienced numerous racially discriminatory acts (50.6\% reported 16 events or more) at a low intensity (“a few times over the past year”).

College hassles occurred on average “once a month” for respondents ($M = 2.62; SD = 0.86$) with no significant difference by gender. The most frequently experienced hassles included “a lot of responsibilities” ($M = 3.57; SD = 1.46$) and “too many things to do at once” ($M = 3.42; SD = 1.44$). In the full sample, the average CES-D mean score was 0.72±0.49, with no gender difference. The mean CES-D score was used for analyses, rather than the sum score, to minimize the influence of missing data. On average, males in the sample were

### Table 1

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gendera</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>20.37 (2.35)</td>
<td>18-34</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s Education</td>
<td>1.78 (0.96)</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Discrimination</td>
<td>3.13 (2.31)</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Hassles</td>
<td>4.38 (2.23)</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>.47**</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.49*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a 1 = female; 2 = male.
*p < .05. **p < .01.
TABLE 2.
Hierarchical Regression Analyses of Racial Discrimination Associated with College Hassles (Condition 1 of Mediation Analysis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>.12</td>
<td>-.13*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>Mother’s Education</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racial Discrimination</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.49**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ r^2 = 26.3\% \]
\[ n = 188 \]

* \( p \leq .05 \)  ** \( p \leq .01 \)

older \( (M = 20.94; SD = 2.93) \) than females \( (M = 20.13; SD = 1.99) \). Mother’s education was between “high school diploma” and “some college” \( (M = 1.78; SD = 0.94) \).

A regression was conducted to examine if college hassles moderated the relationship between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms. Before testing for moderation, all continuous study predictors were centered to minimize round-off errors. In addition, a precondition for examining moderation is that both variables—college hassles and discrimination—be significantly related to the outcome of depressive symptoms. Because the relationship between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms was not significant (Table 3, Step II) with college hassles in the model, the condition was not met. Therefore, the test for moderation could not move forward.

A series of regression analyses were conducted to examine if the four conditions were met for mediation. A figure depicting the proposed mediation is shown in Figure 1 with racial discrimination (A) as the predictor, college hassles (B) acting as the mediator, and depressive symptoms (C) as the dependent measure. The first condition was met; racial discrimination was significantly associated with college hassles, \( F(4, 184) = 9.75, p < .001, \beta = .49, p < .01 \) (Table 2). Conditions 2 through 4 were met by the regression analyses displayed in Table 3. The first block of variables included, gender, age, mother’s education, produced a significant overall model, \( F(4, 185) = 5.56, \)

TABLE 3.
Hierarchical Regression Analyses of Racial Discrimination and College Hassles Associated With CES-D Scores (Conditions 2–4 of Mediation Analysis)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Step II</th>
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<td>SE</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s Education</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Discrimination</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Hassles</td>
<td></td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.37**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ r^2 = 8.8\% \]
\[ \Delta r^2 = 17.4\% \]
\[ n = 189 \]

* \( p \leq .10 \)  ** \( p \leq .05 \)** \( p \leq .01 \)
FIGURE 1. Mediation Model of College Hassles Mediating the Relation Between Racial Discrimination and CES-D Scores

$p < .01$; and explained 8.8% of the variance. The second condition of mediation was met when racial discrimination was significantly related to CES-D scores with college hassles omitted from the model, $\beta = .31, p < .001$. In the second step, $F(5, 182) = 8.88, p < .001$, college hassles was added to the model. The third condition of mediation was met when college hassles was significantly related to CES-D scores, $\beta = .37, p < .001$. With this step in the regression model, there was a significant change in $r^2$, and the model explained 17.4% of the variance. Condition four for mediation was met given that the significance of racial discrimination’s relationship to CES-D scores was diminished, $\beta = .13, p = .095$, when college hassles was entered into the model. Sobel’s test, conducted to determine the significance of the suggested mediation, showed that college hassles significantly influenced the relationship between racial discrimination and CES-D scores, $t = 4.83, p < .001$. This test indicated that the indirect effect of discrimination via college hassles was significantly different from zero. Therefore, the indirect effect of racial discrimination on depressive symptoms was fully explained through college hassles.

**DISCUSSION**

The overall findings of this study suggest that the experience of racial discrimination and college hassles are important factors in self-reported depressive symptoms in this population. Specifically, college hassles mediates the association of racial discrimination and depressive symptoms. This finding has implications for how college professionals conceptualize the experience of racial discrimination.

On average, students reported experiencing these racially discriminatory events “a few times” over the past year with an average Likert scale score of 1.75 out of a total of 5 (e.g., “once a week or more”). The low frequency level of racially discriminatory events could be explained by the tendency for marginalized
groups to underreport racial discrimination (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Crocker & Major, 1989). This finding could also be explained by a positive campus climate with a low level of discrimination in general. In this sample, male students reported experiencing significantly more experiences with racial discrimination than female students, and this finding is consistent with previous research (Banks et al., 2006; Caldwell, Zimmerman, Bernat, Sellers, & Notaro, 2002; Kessler et al., 1999). Similar to previous research, this study found that experiencing racial discrimination was directly correlated with decreased mental health (Banks et al.; Forman et al., 1997; Kessler et al.). However, this study included the measurement of college hassles, which then suggested an indirect relationship between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms.

More recently, research has moved beyond the direct effects examination of discrimination and expanded to examine indirect effects (e.g., Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Neblett, Shelton, & Sellers, 2004; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). These studies investigated variables that moderate the relationship between discrimination and mental health (i.e., racial identity). They found that the negative relationship between discrimination and mental health was buffered by certain racial identity beliefs. These studies speak to the reality that racial discrimination is a part of the college experience, although the experience varies based on variables beyond the frequency of such events.

The main research question for the current study was to delineate if, like racial identity, college hassles might be a variable that indirectly affects the relationship between discrimination and mental health. Moderation would have indicated that college hassles changes the direction or strength of the relationship between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms for certain groups. However, the conditions for moderation were not met. Instead, mediation was the indirect relationship that emerged, with college hassles as a catalyst for the relationship between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms. The examination of college hassles is important because previous research examining the experience of racial discrimination within a college population often excluded population-specific stressors.

The suggestion of mediation is consistent with the few studies that conceptualize stress as a mediator variable in the experience of racial discrimination and other uncontrollable daily stressors (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Folkman & Lazarus, 1986; Harrell, 2000; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). The finding also fits the theoretical model of transactional stress, which posits that environmental and personal factors interact in meaningful ways to add to our understanding of the stress experience. Increased levels of stress are theorized to explain the negative relationship between racial discrimination and outcomes.

The literature also suggests that chronic, everyday hassles affect mental health and can therefore affect how individuals experience other stressors in their lives (Deitch et al., 2003). For example, if an African American student is experiencing a number of generic college hassles, we might expect that student to be more vulnerable to negative affect in relation to racial discrimination. Furthermore, the experience of students could be influenced by the larger campus climate. Research suggests that if a campus is not intentional about increasing the diversity in programming and support systems as it increases the number of students from varying backgrounds, it can negatively impact student engagement and feeling of connection to the campus (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). This dynamic could increase the level of
overall stress possibly putting students at risk for experiencing negative affect. However, the other side of the coin is important to recognize as well. If a student is managing the daily hassles of college life well, the negative relationship between discrimination and depressive symptoms might be less strong.

Campuses need to be aware of the messages their programming sends. Students from a variety of backgrounds need to see themselves reflected in the campus. Perceptions of campus climate vary by racial groups, so it is important to gather feedback from multiple sources. For example, research has found that even when students of color and White students report similar levels of racial incidents, students of color rated the climate as more racist and less accepting compared with White students (Rankin & Reason, 2005). Therefore, how students perceive interactions and subsequently cope are important variables to consider in addition to their encounters with college and racial hassles.

College students are in a transitory phase of life, and those who attend college are consumed with academic and social demands. In this current study, college hassles such as having increased responsibilities and time limitations explained the indirect relationship between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms. Both of these variables are sources of stress that influence the experiences of African American college students in this sample. However, this study suggests that understanding college hassles as a mediator is an important finding and should be considered in further studies examining the effects of discrimination in college samples. Divisions of student and academic affairs should be intentional about seeking out ways to minimize the experience of college hassles for this specific population with the knowledge that doing so can possibly mitigate negative effects of racial discrimination.

This study has several limitations in that it is cross-sectional in nature, thereby limiting conclusions to correlational results and consists of self-report measures only. In addition, it was not possible to examine the experiences of racial discrimination and college hassles at the local level. Having specific data about which college hassles and racially discriminatory acts occurred within close proximity of each other would allow for more sophisticated analysis of the relationship between the variables. It is possible that the experience of college hassles experienced by African American students overlaps with racial discrimination reports—in that generic hassles are perceived as racially discriminatory in nature or the perception of campus climate increases the likelihood of experiencing college hassles. Future studies could approach these variables in a longitudinal design with perhaps a diary component to better examine the mediating effects.

The current study offers an increased understanding of the association between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms in African American college students. Furthermore, this study suggests that college hassles mediates the relationship between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms. These results demonstrate that when experiences of racial discrimination are reported among African American students that, by decreasing the experience of generic college hassles, the indirect relationship between discrimination and depressive symptoms might be minimized.

Campus professionals working with African American students should be aware of not only how racial discrimination affects the college experience, but also how perhaps managing general college stress can help to affect deleterious outcomes. As college become more racially diverse, it is important to work to ameliorate the college experience for students of color from multiple angles. Of course, it is a hope that racial discrimination will decrease.
However, in the mean time, the current study indicates the need to assess and support students in navigating the daily hassles of college life as an indirect way of improving the mental health of African American college students.
REFERENCES


