2017

Exploring racial ideology and coping as moderators of the association between experiencing racial microaggressions and psychological outcomes in black college student

Terrence Harper II

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.emich.edu/theses

Part of the Psychology Commons

Recommended Citation


This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses, and Doctoral Dissertations, and Graduate Capstone Projects at DigitalCommons@EMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@EMU. For more information, please contact lib-ir@emich.edu.
Exploring Racial Ideology and Coping as Moderators of the Association between Experiencing Racial Microaggressions and Psychological Outcomes in Black College Students

by
Terrence Harper II

Dissertation

Submitted to the Department of Psychology
Eastern Michigan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
Clinical Psychology

Dissertation Committee:
Stephen Jefferson, Ph.D, Chair
Michelle Byrd, Ph.D.
Heather Janisse, Ph.D.
Shalonda Kelly, Ph.D.
Ellen Koch, Ph.D.

June 16, 2017
Ypsilanti, Michigan
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my ancestors, my family, and my community. Much has been sacrificed for the dream of the beloved community. It is my hope that my efforts, like the efforts of those who have come before me, will serve as the foundation for the work of the future, the perseverance of this dream.
Acknowledgments

As a Black man, the work that I have done in examining relationships among mental health, psychology, and racial identity has always had profound personal significance. I have long felt a responsibility to help people who have been historically oppressed, misrepresented and underserved by systems and institutions. As energizing and rewarding as this work can be, it often comes at a cost. There were routinely times during my graduate education that I questioned whether or not I had the fortitude to continue. Less often, but still significant, were times in which I questioned if I belonged. I have to thank the people in my life who consistently reaffirmed me.

Dr. Jefferson: I cannot thank you enough for the support you have provided over these past six years. I entered graduate school with uncertainty about what I wanted to do. You provided needed guidance and perspective. Most importantly, you believed in me at times when I didn’t believe in myself. I couldn’t have asked for a better adviser.

Mom and Dad: You instilled in me a thirst for knowledge and a good work ethic. You also taught me how to respect others. I owe my commitment to social justice and education largely to your upbringing. You mean the world to me and I hope you are proud.

Phillip: I thought of you frequently when doing this work. You are the hope that I have for this world. Your openness and kindness of spirit inspire me to be better.

Mahlet, Barbara, Nikki, and Jasmine: You each have helped me to better understand my value and the impact that I have on the lives of others. I treasure your mentorship and friendship.
Amber: You have been with me through it all. Words cannot express how meaningful your presence, patience, and support have been over the past years. When I told you I didn’t think I could do it, you didn’t believe me. When I questioned what I was doing with my life, you made it clear that your love and support were not contingent on any career or accomplishment. When I cried because school and life were overwhelming, you offered your shoulder and your ear. You have given me so much and I couldn’t have done this without you. I love you more than life itself. Thank you.
Abstract

Recently, researchers have investigated how racial identity status attitudes may influence the relationship between experiencing racism and affective responses (i.e., it has been suggested that racial identity may act as a buffer against experiencing negative affect as a consequence of exposure to racial discrimination). While this question has received increased attention in recent years, this literature has not extensively examined this association with more current and refined conceptualizations of subtle discrimination (i.e., microaggressions) and racial ideology. Additionally, the impact of racial coping styles on this association has not yet been examined. As such, the purpose of this study was to examine whether endorsement of racial identity and color-blind attitudes might both moderate the relationship between experiencing modern racism (quantified using the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale) and psychological distress. A secondary goal of this study was to determine the potential impact of racial coping styles on the aforementioned relationship. Utilizing a sample of 218 Black college students, this study found that the association between experiencing racial microaggressions and endorsing symptoms of psychological distress was moderated by color-blind racial attitudes. This study also found that anger regulation coping partially mediated the relationship between racial microaggression scores and psychological distress. Further, this study found no support for the hypothesis that racial identity attitudes and color-blind racial attitudes would additively moderate the association between experiencing racial microaggressions and endorsing symptoms of psychological distress.
Table of Contents

Dedication .......................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgments.................................................................................................................. iii
Abstract .................................................................................................................................... v
List of Tables ........................................................................................................................... ix
List of Figures .......................................................................................................................... x
Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 11
  Literature Review ................................................................................................................... 13
    Defining Racism and its Effects ......................................................................................... 13
      Racial Microaggressions ................................................................................................. 16
    Stress and Coping Framework for Conceptualizing Racism .........21
    Effects of Microaggressive Stress .................................................................................... 23
  Racial Identity Theory ........................................................................................................... 29
    Cross’s Theory of Nigrescence ......................................................................................... 29
    Empirical Studies of Racial Identity ................................................................................. 32
    Conceptualizations of Race in Self-Concept ................................................................. 34
    Sellers’ Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity ....................................................... 36
    Racial Microaggressions and Racial Identity ................................................................. 37
  Racial Ideology and the Perception of Subtle Racism ..................................................... 39
  Present Study ....................................................................................................................... 41
Hypotheses ............................................................................................................................. 42
  Hypothesis 1 ......................................................................................................................... 43
  Hypothesis 2 ......................................................................................................................... 43
  Hypothesis 3 ......................................................................................................................... 44
Hypothesis 4..............................................................................................................44
Method .....................................................................................................................48
Participants.............................................................................................................48
Procedure ................................................................................................................48
Measures ..................................................................................................................49

Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale .............................................................49
Cross Racial Identity Scale ......................................................................................50
Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale .....................................................................51
Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity .......................................................52
Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale .........................................................................53
Racism-Related Coping Scale ................................................................................54

Study Design ..........................................................................................................54

Statistical Analyses .................................................................................................54

Results ....................................................................................................................63

Hypothesis 1 .............................................................................................................58
Hypothesis 2 .............................................................................................................63
Hypothesis 3 .............................................................................................................64
Hypothesis 4 .............................................................................................................65

Discussion ..............................................................................................................68

References ..............................................................................................................83

Appendices .............................................................................................................98

Appendix A: Study approval letter from the Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee .................................................................99
Appendix B: Items from the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS) ................................................................. 101

Appendix C: Cross Racial Identity Scale .......................................................... 103

Appendix D: Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS21) ...................... 107

Appendix E: Scoring Instructions and Items from the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity ................................................................. 108

Appendix F: Items from the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) ..... 113

Appendix G: Items from the Racism-Related Coping Scale (RRCS) ............. 114
### List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness, and Kurtosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Conditional Effects of Racial Microaggressions at Low, Medium, and High Levels of Color-Blind Racial Attitudes as Predictors of General Negative Emotional States</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hypothesis 1 model</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hypothesis 2 model</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hypothesis 3 model</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hypothesis 4 model</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Conditional effects of racial microaggressions at low, medium, and high levels of color-blind racial attitudes as predictors of general negative emotional states</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Standardized regression coefficients for the relationship between racial microaggressions and depression/anxiety/stress as mediated by anger regulation coping</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

On November 4, 2008, Barack Obama was elected the 44th President of the United States of America. The election of President Obama is seen as historic, as he is the first African-American to hold the office. For many, this day was symbolic of unprecedented hope and signaled the beginning of a “post-racial” era. The idea that this country, less than 60 years from the signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, could elect a Black President is in the minds of many Americans an awe-inspiring event. However, while some observers appreciate that this single event is not representative of the experience of the average African American in modern US society, some view the Obama Presidency as emblematic of a new reality, one in which racial equality has been achieved in this country. Unfortunately, the assertion that racism is no longer a significant problem in the United States fails to consider the extensive empirical literature that denies this claim (Sue et al., 2007; Harrell, 2000; Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000; Kessler et al., 1999; Gibbons et al., 2004). Racism, especially for African Americans, is still a problem in the United States. It is shortsighted to suggest that there are no enduring ramifications of institutionalizing slavery and sanctioning racial terrorism in the form of lynchings and Jim Crow laws. It is more likely the case that many of the negative stereotypes regarding the inferiority of Black people remain intact to this day; it is merely the outward expression of such attitudes that has decreased (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). As such, racial discrimination is most commonly experienced in more insidious and covert forms today (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000), and it is most frequently manifested in ambiguous and unintentional acts perpetrated by otherwise well-intentioned individuals who unconsciously hold negative attitudes about African Americans. The tension associated with the recent, highly-publicized deaths of individuals like Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Walter Scott, and Sandra Bland lends credence to
the notion that, though unconscious, subtle racist attitudes may have devastating consequences. Indeed, Correll and colleagues (2007) found evidence of bias in response latencies of police officers attempting to determine if Black targets were armed/unarmed and subsequently making decisions to shoot/not shoot.

Consideration of the current racial climate of this country begs the question, how are African Americans affected by subtle racism, which is more chronic and nebulous than overt racism? Are there specific psychological effects that can be expected when African Americans experience such bias? Research has increasingly demonstrated that experiencing racism, in both overt and subtle forms, can have a significant impact on African Americans. However, we are still only beginning to understand the individual differences that influence the observed within group differences in responses to racism. With the current study, we hope to begin to better understand these phenomena.

The purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between experiencing subtle racism and psychological outcomes (e.g., depression, anxiety, affect). The moderating role of racial attitudes and coping in this relationship will be explored in an effort to better understand the complex findings that have been previously established in the literature. Unlike previous work on this topic, this study focuses on examining the additive moderation of racial identity and color-blind racial attitudes on the relationship between experiencing subtle racism (i.e., racial microaggressions) and psychological outcomes. This study will attempt to build upon previous research that has addressed these topics by incorporating the theoretical advances in both racial identity theory and microaggression theory and by using this framework as a means of advancing theory regarding the way that racial ideology and cognitive complexity may influence responses to subtle racism.
The following literature review will describe all of the key constructs investigated in this study, beginning with experienced racism. Next, modern theories of African American racial identity theory will be discussed. This will be followed by a discussion of how racial ideology and coping influence the perception of subtle forms of racial bias (i.e., microaggressions). Finally, this review will conclude with an explicit statement of the hypotheses of this study.

**Literature Review**

**Defining Racism and Its Effects**

As racism is often defined in many ways, it is appropriate to begin with the definition of racism that will contextualize related constructs (e.g., racial microaggressions) in the remainder of this discussion. Shelly Harrell (2000) defines racism as,

A system of dominance, power, and privilege based on racial-group designations: rooted in the historical oppression of a group defined or perceived by dominant-group members as inferior, deviant, or undesirable; and occurring in circumstances where members of the dominant group create or accept their societal privilege by maintaining structures, ideology, values, and behavior that have the intent or effect of leaving nondominant-group members relatively excluded from power, esteem, status, and/or equal access to societal resources (p. 43).

Thus, racism can be understood as a construct with implications that affect interpersonal interactions as well as institutional structures. In other words, racism has the power to influence members of nondominant racial groups (in the case of this study, African Americans) directly through encountering denigrating messages regarding their identity as nondominant racial group members in interpersonal interactions and indirectly via the impact of pervasive racist attitudes.
embedded in societal structures. Racial discrimination and racial prejudice can then be understood as the behavioral and attitudinal concomitants of racism.

As social scientists have become increasingly aware of health disparities that disproportionately affect African Americans, it has accordingly become imperative to investigate possible relationships between the experience of racial discrimination and various health outcomes (Jackson et al., 2004). Studies examining the impact of experiencing racial discrimination have been fairly consistent in finding that these experiences can be especially detrimental to mental and physical health outcomes (Carter, 2007), particularly in the case of African Americans (Hunter & Schmidt, 2010; Soto et al., 2011). Specifically, research suggests that the cumulative effects of experienced racism are positively associated with hypertension, decreased quality of life, frustration, intrusive thoughts, resentment, low self-esteem, hopelessness, and subjective distress in African Americans (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996; Clark et al., 1999; Harrell, 2000; Utsey et al., 2000; Utsey et al., 2002). Further, depression and anxiety are the types of psychological distress most often associated with experiences of racism (Carter, 2007; Paradies, 2006; Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). Studies have also found that these deleterious effects are even more alarming because African Americans report that experiencing racism is a relatively common occurrence in their lives, as 61% of African Americans reported experiencing some form of racial discrimination every day and 91% of preadolescent African Americans reported experiencing at least one discriminatory experience in their lifetime (Kessler et al., 1999; Gibbons et al., 2004). These findings emphasize the need to for psychologists to further investigate the relationship between experiencing racism and mental health outcomes, as elucidation of this association is important for developing ways to ameliorate the deleterious effects of racism.
These data clearly demonstrate that racism negatively affects the lives of African Americans in modern society; however, these effects may vary as a result of how the targets of such biased treatment respond to it. In their review of the extant literature on the latter topic, Pieterse and Carter (2010) found that racism, racial identity, and psychological stress interact to differentially predict the negative psychological outcomes related to experiencing racism.

The current study is an attempt to further our understanding of the factors associated with how African Americans differentially respond to instances of being targets of racism. In beginning to theorize about what may cause different responses to experiences of racism, social scientists hypothesize that the way targets of racism generally think and feel about their targeted social status could be a significant factor. Traditionally, this construct has been conceptualized as a part of one’s racial identity (i.e., do you endorse strong or weak, positive or negative, active or passive attitudes related to your identity). Consequently, research examining the influence of racial identity in the perception of racial discrimination has expanded significantly in the past couple of decades (Pieterse & Carter, 2010; Jefferson & Caldwell, 2002; Watts & Carter, 1991). The findings of this research indicate that a thorough understanding of the association between experienced racism and psychological consequences likely involves racial identity. Still, until recently, this line of research had not been extensively explored (Sellers et al., 2006), and what research that has been conducted has generated more questions about the nature of this relationship.

While some of the previously mentioned studies conceptualize experiences of racism in terms of more overt acts, others attempted to use constructs of racism that were more chronic and subtle. The term *microaggressions* is increasingly being used to refer to the subtle, nebulous behavioral and environmental manifestations of aversive racism, which communicate derogatory
racial messages on a daily basis (Sue et al., 2007). The study of microaggressions theory offers an overarching theoretical framework from which to approach the task of operationalizing subtle racism across multiple studies. Part of the goal of the current study is to contribute to the literature examining how African American individuals cope with experiences of subtle racism in a way that further supports the experiential realities of people of color while honoring the complexity inherent in the interrelationships among psychological health, experienced racism, and racial ideologies. Given that advances in measures of racial identity and experiences of racism have both recently reached a level of sophistication that allows researchers to more readily measure current conceptualizations of these constructs, achieving consistency in the measurement of subtle racism across studies is a reasonable goal to which this study hopes to contribute. The study of microaggressions offers one of the most promising approaches currently available in assessing these day-to-day, subtle racist encounters.

**Racial microaggressions.** One of the reasons that it is easier to overlook the manifestations and effects of more subtle and modern forms of racism is that they are often less immediately obvious in comparison with old-fashioned forms of discrimination (e.g., denying people of color service, murdering people of color). Racial microaggressions are subtle, verbal, and behavioral expressions that communicate denigrating racist messages to people of color (Nadal, 2011). Sue and colleagues (2007) proposed a taxonomy of racial microaggressions that occur as manifestations of present-day racism as well as a number of themes under which microaggressions may be subsumed. The three forms of microaggressions are microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. Microassaults are explicit racial derogations characterized by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions (Sue et al., 2007, p. 274). Microassaults tend to
be more consciously perpetrated (similar to old-fashioned racism), but usually in situations in which an individual of the dominant group loses control or feels protected against the social repercussions of using a microassault (e.g., posting a racial epithet as an anonymous commenter on a website). Microinsults are communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person’s racial heritage or identity (Sue et al., 2007, p. 274). Microinsults are frequently perpetrated unconsciously and/or innocently, and thus, the insulting message to the person of color is hidden (e.g., expressing surprise or marveling at the high intellectual ability of a Black person). Microinvalidations are exchanges that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color (Sue et al., 2007, p. 274). Microinvalidations insinuate that one’s experience and perception of racist events are inconsequential or invalid (e.g., when White people tell Black people that they are “color-blind,” it serves to diminish these Black individuals’ experience of life as racial beings).

The microaggression process model (Sue, 2010) attempts to explain how microaggressive events are experienced from beginning to end. It consists of five phases (incident, perception, reaction, interpretation, and consequence) that individuals endure as a result of dealing with a potential microaggression. In the incident phase, the potential microaggression is experienced by the recipient. Of the microaggressive themes originally proposed by Sue and colleagues (2007), Sue (2010) notes that the most common themes experienced by African Americans are ascription of intellectual inferiority, second-class citizenship, assumption of criminality, assumption of inferior status, assumed universality of the Black experience, and assumed superiority of White cultural values/communication styles. In addition, themes such as color blindness, denial of individual racism, and the myth of meritocracy apply broadly to the experience of all minority racial groups (for a more thorough elaboration of these themes, see Sue et al., 2007 and Sue,
2010). The incident phase is followed by the perception phase, in which the recipient of the potential microaggression must determine whether the action or behavior was influenced by underlying racial bias. Reaction is the immediate cognitive, behavioral, and/or emotional response to the potential microaggression. Interpretation is the attempt to make sense of the incident (e.g., why it happened, what were the perpetrator’s intentions). The final phase, consequence, entails the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive processes that develop over time as a result of the experience of the microaggression.

As the literature in the area of racial microaggressions has only recently proliferated, research examining the impact and effect of these phenomena remains relatively unexplored (Wong et al., 2014). Given that this is the case, analogies that compare the experience of racial microaggressions to experiencing other types of stressors were utilized to develop theories concerning how experiencing such treatment might affect targets. Specifically, we know that research indicates that psychological stressors have a comparable effect to biological stressors in terms of their effects on the body (Keltner & Dowben, 2007). Sue (2010) likens the microaggression process model to Selye’s (1952; 1982) general adaptation syndrome (GAS) model in its potential to explain the body’s reaction to microaggressive stressors. In the first stage of the GAS model, alarm, an organism recognizes the existence of a threat, and this awareness results in an increase in physiological arousal in order to mobilize the body’s defenses to combat the threat. Sue posits that individuals’ vigilant reaction toward microaggressions is similar in the attempt to determine whether one’s identity is being attacked. In the resistance stage, physiological changes begin to stabilize (while arousal still remains higher than usual) in order to allow efforts to cope with the threat to begin. If the threat remains, this stage is prolonged, which can result in susceptibility to other diseases. This is related to the experience
of microaggressions in that struggling with microaggressions indefinitely can adversely affect self-esteem (Sue, 2010). Since the body’s resources are limited, exhaustion occurs when the threat cannot be overcome, which can result in the organism’s collapse or death. Sue (2010) suggests that chronic microaggressive stressors can “wear down” the recipients to the extent that a feeling of burnout is consistently experienced.

De La Fuente (1990) posited that Selye’s GAS model of the physiological response to biological stressors could activate a similar process with regard to cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to psychological and social stressors. This position in combination with De La Fuente’s work with earthquake victims led to the development of the crisis decompensation model (CDM), which consisted of three stages: impact, attempted resolution, and decompensated adjustment. In the initial impact stage, individuals are confused and disoriented by the stressors, which commonly co-occurs with emotional reactions such as guilt, anger, anxiety, and depression. This is similar to the experience of individuals reacting to microaggressions, in that the experience can be jarring and confusing, prompting the individual to attempt to make sense of what has happened. Attempted resolution follows the impact stage and is characterized by a mobilization of resources to deal with the crisis. This stage is akin to the individual’s attempts to cope with the internal conflict associated with experiencing microaggressions via the use of coping strategies. However, if attempted resolution is unsuccessful, the person enters the decompensated adjustment stage, which is characterized by withdrawal, apathy, low affect, and physical illness. Similarly, unsuccessful coping with microaggressions can result in psychological challenges and increased susceptibility to physical illness. It is worth noting that De La Fuente’s CDM and Selye’s GAS models have generally focused on instances of extreme physical and psychological trauma, whereas the microaggression process model focuses on
regularly occurring phenomena in ordinary human experience. As Sue (2010) points out, this begs the question: Are microaggressions, as commonly occurring and less extreme stressors, sufficiently stressful to result in psychological and physical harm?

It might be argued that the stress associated with experiencing microaggressions pales in comparison to the stress associated with traumatic events (e.g., rape, natural disaster), which would invalidate comparisons made between the microaggression process model and the GAS and CDM models. However, research suggests that seemingly small stressors in the form of “daily life hassles” can still produce significant harmful effects (Spangenberg & Pieterse, 1995), reinforcing, by analogy, the notion that microaggressions can indeed be stressful. Further, the cumulative impact and life change that occur with stressful events need to be considered when attempting to ascertain the impact of the events (Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Holmes & Holmes, 1970). The life-change model assumes that stress can occur as a result of any change and that the accumulation of small changes can result in stress experienced as significantly traumatic (Holmes & Holmes, 1970). So while it might be the case that microaggressions and other daily life hassles are not sufficient in and of themselves to constitute a significant trauma, the cumulative impact of these experiences can be harmful, especially given that marginalized groups often experience microaggressive stress for the duration of their lifetimes (Sue, 2010).

Another consideration that the life-change, GAS, and CDM models fail to appropriately capture in the experience of microaggressions is the appraisal process that is often evoked by these experiences that can moderate the individual’s reaction to the microaggression. The transaction model of stress proposed by Lazarus (1966) recognizes that stressful events can be understood as the result of a transaction between person characteristics and situational characteristics. Essentially, an individual must perceive a stimulus to be a stressor in order for
the subsequent stress reaction to take place (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In this way, stress reactions can be seen as not simply a response to stressful situations without an internal assessment or appraisal of the event as stressful.

Still each of the previously elaborated models fails to adequately consider race-related factors and the sociopolitical context under which minority racial groups exist in society (Carter, 2007). In this way, the degree to which microaggressions symbolize strong memories of historical and enduring oppression and injustice may be lost in the conceptualization of microaggressive stress with these theories (Duran, 2006). Historical trauma and racial microaggressions are linked inextricably, as the underlying denigrating messages inherent in the microaggressions originate in the historic mistreatment of African Americans since the time they were enslaved. As this is the case, conceptualizing microaggressions as being simply everyday hassles does not fully respect their complexity. This is illustrated by a study conducted by Utsey and colleagues (2008) in which race-related stress was found to be a more powerful predictor of psychological distress than other, more general stressful life events. Given that African Americans typically report experiencing a high rate of discriminatory incidents (Sellers & Shelton, 2003), it may be the case that racial microaggressions occupy a class of stress by themselves, as these individuals typically have to contend with ordinary stressful life events in addition to coping with race-related stressors.

**Stress and coping framework for conceptualizing racism.** Historically, the conceptualization of racism in scientific research has occurred within a stress and coping framework (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996; Clark et al., 1999; Harrell, 2000; Utsey et al., 2000; Pieterse & Carter, 2010) based upon Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) transactional model of stress and coping. As mentioned earlier, the model is described as transactional because events
characterized as stressful are thought to be the result of a transaction between person characteristics and situational characteristics. The transactional nature of microaggressive exchanges in specific and experiences of racial discrimination in general make the use of this model in conceptualizing racial microaggressions appropriate, although it may not account for the historical trauma associated with microaggressions. This distinction is important to note because an overemphasis on the personal characteristics of the targets of such treatment (e.g., merely looking at such a person’s cognitive appraisal tendencies) might lead researchers to the spurious conclusion that whether or not an individual evaluates a situation as stressful is primarily dictated by a person’s unique personality traits rather than including the possibility that systemic racism might also play a key role. Historical trauma and environmental microaggressions might be considered a type of “situational” characteristic, even though the delineation of these concepts in this way might lend itself to underestimating the enduring nature of these phenomena. If one carefully considers that within the transaction is an interaction of situational and personal characteristics that in combination uniquely precipitate a form of stress-related reaction, then it is more likely that a more precise understanding of the dynamics that occur within racial microaggressions will be achieved. In this way, it is not merely that an individual has to perceive a stimulus to be a stressor in order for a stress reaction to take place. So while examining racial microaggressions within the context of a stress and coping framework can still be subsumed under Harrell’s (2000) conceptualization of race-related stress as the outcome of “transactions between individuals or groups and their environment that emerge from the dynamics of racism, and that are perceived to tax or exceed existing resources or threaten well-being,” (p.44), it is likely that racial microaggressions can be experienced as stressful even by those who do not know or believe that what has occurred was a racist incident (rather it is
more likely the case that those who experience racism-related stress and attribute such stress to racism have a clearer and less capricious explanation for what has occurred and why it was stressful). This represents a divergence from Harrell’s assertion that in order for a situation to be perceived as racist (and thus stressful), race must be considered a salient aspect of an individual’s experience. This is not to say that the person characteristics most often associated with racism related stress (i.e., significance, centrality, and meaning of race to a person’s identity) are no longer relevant. But it does represent the nuanced clarification that while accounting for the role of racial identity in the association between experiencing racism, stress, and coping remains crucial in understanding differing responses to racism as well as understanding the variety of psychological outcomes related to the aforementioned responses, it is likely that other factors such as beliefs and meaning associated with one’s overarching racial ideology as well as situational factors also play a role that is just as significant.

**Effects of microaggressive stress.** Microaggressive theory suggests that the effects and severity of experiencing microaggressions may depend on an individual’s perception of available resources to deal with the threat as well as the nature of the challenge posed by the threat (Sue, 2010). Given that many African Americans report experiencing chronic, everyday discrimination (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000; Carter, 2007; Harrell, 2000; Harrell et al., 2003; Kessler et al., 1999), the cumulative impact of these stressors must also be considered when attempting to assess the effects. The countless combinations of appraisal factors, nature of microaggressions, and frequency of experiences lend credence to the notion that a microaggressive experience’s potential for impact can manifest in multiple ways.

Race-related stress can negatively impact the biological health of African Americans via affecting physiological reactivity and immune functioning (Brondolo et al., 2005; 2008). Clark
(2006) found that experiencing subtle racism was associated with cardiovascular reactivity, which is hypothesized to contribute to hypertension. Fang and Myers (2001) found that the heart rate and blood pressure of African American male participants rose when they watched videos depicting racist situations. Utsey and Hook (2007) found that the relationship between race-related stress and psychological distress was moderated by resting heart rate variability such that psychological distress weakened at higher levels of resting heart rate variability in African American men. These studies suggest that the heightened physiological reactivity to chronic microaggressive stressors may also be implicated in the development of coronary heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, allergies, and asthma (Sue, 2010). Additionally, the chronic nature of microaggressions may decrease the efficiency of immune functioning, increase susceptibility to disease, and speed the progression of disease (Miller et al., 2007).

It is hypothesized that racial microaggressions can adversely affect subjective well-being, self-esteem, psychological adjustment, and mental health (Utsey & Hook, 2007; Utsey et al., 2008; Buser, 2009). At this point, research that has specifically examined emotional correlates of racial microaggressions is limited, as most studies have not parsed the different effects resulting from overt vs. covert forms of racism. Williams, Neighbors, and Jackson (2003) observed significant relationships between experiences of discrimination and diagnoses of major depression. With regard to microaggressive stress specifically, Torres and colleagues (2010) found that African American graduate students’ experiences of having their personal abilities underestimated, being treated like a second-class citizen, and being culturally and racially isolated were associated with increased endorsement of depressive symptoms. Nadal and colleagues’ (2014) study suggested that individuals who experience racial microaggressions are likely to exhibit symptoms of depression and anxiety. However, the association between
experiencing racial microaggressions and negative mental health symptoms was weak. In light of the aforementioned evidence suggesting a moderate relationship between experiencing racism and negative mental health symptoms, it may be the case that other factors play an influential role in this relationship—potentially mitigating such effects, suggesting that meditational factors may influence this relationship. Sue, Capodilupo, and Holder (2008) found evidence suggesting that microinsults and microinvalidations in the lives of African Americans can result in feelings of rage, guilt, frustration, low self-esteem, and depression. It is likely that experiencing microaggressions is associated with experiencing depression because interpersonal stressors are strongly related to various forms of depression (Hammen, 2006). To the extent that racial microaggressions are experienced as insulting and demeaning, depression and negative affect seem to be naturally associated outcomes.

Cognitive effects of microaggressive stressors occur as a consequence of an individual’s attempts to understand and make sense of the microaggression. Researchers have theorized that this occurs as a consequence of the resource-intensive cognitive appraisal efforts that occur when a target feels the need to determine the meaning of a microaggression. Additionally, the process is further complicated by the target’s need to evaluate and implement an “appropriate” response to such events, further straining the cognitive resources of the target because each potential response comes with its own set of consequences that also need to be assessed during this process before action is taken. Sue and colleagues (2007) address the importance of the latter process, highlighting the fact that there can often be a cost to responding to racial microaggressions (i.e., a “catch-22”). For example, choosing to respond might result in being labeled oversensitive, paranoid, or angry, but choosing to remain silent might result in
psychological distress for the target as a consequence of feeling helpless to be able to effectively communicate to those who are hurting you that they are causing you pain.

Research supports the assertion that experiencing blatant and subtle forms of racism is correlated with performing in a manner consonant with someone under high cognitive load. For example, Salvatore and Shelton (2007) found that African Americans who witnessed explicitly discriminatory practice demonstrated pronounced impairment on the Stroop test; however, what is perhaps even more compelling is the finding that African American participants who witnessed subtle racism demonstrated even more impairment on such tasks than those who witnessed the overt discrimination. It seems reasonable to interpret this finding as indicating that the added attributional ambiguity inherent in dealing with microaggressions likely explains this difference in responding (Sue et al., 2007). The notion that cognitive disruption can impair performance is also supported by the research investigating stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Widely accessible stereotypes, such as the microaggressive theme “ascription of intelligence,” can drain cognitive resources for task performance because individuals may be apprehensive about being evaluated in a manner that confirms a stereotype about their social group; thus, research suggests that to cope with this fear, some individuals protectively disengage from the task to ensure that poor performance does not affect their self-esteem (Steele, 1997).

There is a wide range of behavioral responses to racial microaggressions, as the ways that individuals attempt to deal with them varies based on a number of contextual and personal factors. The effectiveness of these behavioral responses in assisting the individual with navigating through the experience and aftermath of a racial microaggression also varies. Sue (2010) documented five of the most common behavioral responses to microaggressions:
hypervigilance, forced compliance, rage and anger, fatigue and hopelessness, and strength through adversity. *Hypervigilance* describes an orientation toward majority group members of leeriness that Ponterotto and colleagues (2006) describe as “anticipatory racism reaction” that has developed as a consequence of experiencing multiple instances of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination over a lifetime. This hypervigilance can be adaptive insofar as it allows marginalized groups to better anticipate structural and interpersonal barriers to surviving and thriving; however, it can also be maladaptive because it can limit one’s willingness to pursue relationships with individuals of the majority group. *Forced compliance* refers to behavioral strategies that externally reflect identification with dominant group norms and culture. These strategies often entail conforming with majority group norms, concealing one’s feelings about or experiences with racism, and expressing oneself in a way that would be perceived as less threatening or offensive to majority group members (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). These strategies can be adaptive because attempting to defy majority group members and norms can decrease one’s chances of survival. However, these strategies might also result in internalized racism and the willful disowning of cultural norms and values in order to advance in society (Sue, 2010).

Consistent experiences with racial microaggressions can result in feelings of *rage and anger*, as one is routinely subjected to injustice. While more often than not, intense rage can result in alienation of relationships (Sue, 2003), passionate anger can also serve as the impetus for action toward social justice. The exacting psychological toll of racial microaggressions can often incur *fatigue and hopelessness*. Smith and colleagues (2007) presented the theoretical framework of “racial battle fatigue,” which attempts to examine the responses of frustration, anger, exhaustion, and withdrawal that can characterize African American males’ experience of living and studying at historically White campuses in which environmental and interpersonal racial microaggressions
occur on a consistent basis. Sue (2010) points out that fatigue from microaggressions can adversely affect energy needed to deal with everyday life events. The concept of strength through adversity identifies behavioral responses that have been observed in continued adaptive functioning of marginalized group members despite experiencing frequent racial stressors. Attributes associated with strength through adversity are heightened perceptual awareness, ability to accurately read nonverbal and contextual cues, bicultural flexibility, and a sense of group identity. These attributes influence the coping of people of color such that they are able to deal with these negative experiences in functional ways.

In their review of the literature on coping with racism, Brondolo, Ver Halen, and colleagues (2009) found evidence supporting the notion that the severity of psychological reactions to racism was at least partially influenced by how well one copes. Accordingly, one could understand these common behavioral responses to racial microaggressions as representing different ways of coping with experiences of racism with varying levels of effectiveness. In a meta-analysis investigating perceived discrimination and associated variables, Pascoe and Richman (2009) found that passive and emotion-focused coping approaches (e.g., forced compliance) were less effective than active and problem-focused coping approaches (e.g., engagement in social justice movements) in reducing the impact of perceived discrimination on psychological health. However, drawing conclusions about how African American individuals cope with racism from these data is a tenuous endeavor because these studies tend to examine perceived discrimination and coping broadly (i.e., across racial groups and with generic measures of coping). This may be partially due to the lack of comprehensive measures of the range of coping strategies used by African Americans to cope with racism (Brondolo et al., 2009). It is certainly worth noting that the study of coping with racism has been largely
dominated by the use of scales that were not developed with the unique aspects of racism-related stress/coping in mind and were often developed and validated on primarily White populations (Forsyth & Carter, 2014). In order to better understand how a full range of racism-related coping strategies can mitigate and/or exacerbate the severity of psychological reactions in African American populations, Forsyth and Carter (2014) developed the Racism-Related Coping Scale (RRCS). In attempting to better explain the complex relationships involved in the experience of racism, this study will employ the recently developed RRCS to investigate how coping influences the experience of racial microaggressions, concomitant racial identity attitudes, and subsequent affect. Specifically, the bargaining and hypervigilance subscales (examples of passive racism-related coping strategies) of the RRCS will be examined as potential moderators of the association between racial identity attitudes and endorsement of microaggressions as well as mediators of the association between endorsement of microaggressions and negative affect.

**Racial Identity Theory**

**Cross’s theory of Nigrescence.** Before the Civil Rights Movement, it was widely assumed that the disdain for African Americans that was prevalent in mainstream culture resulted in the internalization by African Americans of the predominant negative view of what it means to be Black. William Cross’s observation of Black identity contradicted this notion as he noted many examples of positive racial identity for African Americans in spite of being embedded in a national context that openly denigrated this racial group. Consequently, he proposed the original Nigrescence (French term for *becoming Black*) theory in 1971, a stage model of racial identity through which the psyche of African Americans transformed from one steeped in racial self-hatred to a mentality replete with racial pride. Cross’s original theory was revised and expanded in accordance with evolving understanding of African American racial
identity based on observation and research (Cross, 1991). Some of the most significant changes coincided with the development of the Cross Racial Identity Scales (CRIS; Vandiver et al., 2000) which forced further re-conceptualization of the Nigrescence model based on empirical findings. The most recent iteration of Cross’s theory embraces the view that people can possess racial identity attitudes that are characteristic of more than one stage, thus moving away from a linear stage model of racial identity. Cross’s expanded theory of Nigrescence also includes the concept of race salience (the importance or significance of race in a person’s life).

The racial identity attitudes included in this theory are pre-encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization. Pre-encounter racial identity attitudes involve the adoption of values of the dominant racial group about what it means to be Black. There are three types of pre-encounter racial identity attitudes: miseducation, assimilation, and anti-Black. Pre-encounter miseducation attitudes embrace the validity of negative stereotypes prescribe by dominant racial culture about African Americans. Pre-encounter assimilation racial identity attitudes are characterized by the adoption of a mainstream identity, in which race is not viewed as important or salient. Pre-encounter anti-Black racial identity attitudes are marked by self-contempt, as the individual devalues Black aesthetics and cultural imperatives (based on negative stereotypes) and generalizes this disdain to core aspects of the overall evaluation of self. Although each of these racial identity attitudes may be viewed as unhealthy in some way, it is pre-encounter anti-Black attitudes that are theorized to be linked with low self-esteem and poor mental health (Worrell, Vandiver, Cross, & Fhagen-Smith, 2004).

It is hypothesized that many African American individuals experience an “encounter” (which was originally conceptualized as a stage of racial identity but revised because it represents an experience with racism rather than an attitude) that may persuade them to consider
that their previous frame of reference was flawed. Usually the encounter experience was jarring and often deeply personal, such as experiencing blatant racial discrimination (e.g., being called a racial epithet) or being a witness to events wherein fellow Black people experience clear racial discrimination. Though the model is no longer distinctly a stage model, the encounter experience is thought to still lay the groundwork for the subsequent development of immersion-emersion and internalization attitudes.

The immersion-emersion racial identity attitudes are characterized first by a dramatic transition from endorsing mainstream identity attitudes to vilifying these attitudes and second by a transition toward internalization racial identity attitudes. People who hold these attitudes often think dichotomously about issues of race, often resulting in a tendency to glorify anything associated with being Black and vilify things associated with being White. Movement toward internalization often includes a willingness to objectively consider the strengths and weaknesses of dominant and non-dominant racial groups.

Internalization racial identity attitudes are characterized by Black self-acceptance. Cross described this racial identity status as movement toward a pluralistic nonracist perspective (Cross, 1978) that was marked by ideological flexibility and self-confidence about one’s Blackness. Three types of internalization racial identity attitudes were enumerated: the Black Nationalist, biculturalist, and multiculturalist. What distinguishes these identity attitudes from one another is the degree to which individuals of each status are able to adopt more than one salient identity.

Cross’s theory of racial identity development is one of the foremost in the field because it exemplifies the dynamic interplay of sound theory and research reinforcing each other in the
theory’s evolution. As this is the case, Cross’s Expanded Theory of Nigrescence has been widely used in the study of associations with racial identity.

**Empirical studies of racial identity.** Empirical investigations have uncovered several significant associations between racial identity and psychological outcomes (Hughes et al., 2015; Jones et al., 2014; Pieterse & Carter, 2010). Pre-encounter racial identity attitudes have been consistently linked to feelings of inferiority and shame, lower levels of self-actualization and self-esteem, and endorsement of depressive symptoms (Cross, 1991; Jefferson, 2011; Munford, 1994; Cross et al., 1998; Pyant and Yanico, 1991; Parham & Helms, 1985). Though most significant associations with negative psychological variables are associated with pre-encounter racial identity attitudes, there is evidence that supports associations between having recently experienced an encounter (as conceptualized by Cross) and reporting increased psychological distress (Franklin-Jackson & Carter, 2007). Immersion-emersion attitudes have also been found to be associated with anger, race-related distress, and psychological distress (Carter et al., 2008; Johnson & Arbona, 2006; Cross et al., 1998). However, it is also the case that strong relationships between positive psychological outcomes and positive racial identity attitudes have been found (though up to this point, this finding has not been found as consistently as the positive association that is thought to exist between endorsing negative attitudes about what it means to be Black and negative psychological outcomes; Sellers et al., 2006; Rowley et al., 1998; Cross, 1991). The endorsement of internalization racial identity attitudes has been demonstrated to be predictive of psychological well-being in a couple of studies (Franklin-Jackson & Carter, 2007; Cross et al., 1998). Vandiver and colleagues (2000) suggest that these associations between positive racial identity attitudes and well-being are likely related to the idea
that being confident in one’s racial identity results in a sense of meaningfulness, belonging, and enterprise.

Given the support found for associations among experiencing racism (specifically racial microaggressions) and racial identity with psychological outcomes, a compelling consideration is investigating the potential moderating effect of racial identity on the association between experiencing racial microaggressions and psychological outcomes. Fairly recently, several researchers have considered the possibility that holding certain racial identity attitudes may act as a buffer against some of the deleterious effects of experiencing racism, affording protection from racism for those who endorse positive identities (Neblett et al., 2004; Cross et al., 1998). Though this hypothesis has not yet been thoroughly explored, preliminary data from investigations of the potential moderating effect of racial identity on the association between experienced racism and psychological outcomes is promising (Sellers et al., 2006; Harper, 2014).

As mentioned previously, Cross’s model of racial identity is one of the most widely referenced in studies examining the effects of these attitudes. However, it is noteworthy that there is currently no consensus among researchers on the most optimal way to conceptualize African American racial identity at present. Marks and colleagues (2004) suggest that this could be partially attributed to the notion that the available models of racial identity may be addressing different aspects of the construct. As such, differences in findings regarding associations and effects of racial identity may be related to the way that researchers choose models and measures of racial identity according to their understanding of what aspects of functioning are captured within the construct of racial identity. Cross’s expanded Nigrescence theory and the resulting Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) have consistently demonstrated that pre-encounter (especially anti-Black) attitudes are generally associated with negative psychological outcomes. Throughout
the evolution of this theory, it has also been the case that internalization attitudes were hypothesized to be positively correlated with general psychological health (Vandiver, 2001). Support for this hypothesis has been inconsistent and certainly not as strong as support linking negative psychological outcomes with pre-encounter racial identity attitudes. Further examination of the ways that internalization and pre-encounter attitudes are operationalized elucidates a likely explanation for this inconsistency. The items on the CRIS that measure internalization attitudes do not assess how a person feels about being Black as much as they assess that person’s “political” attitudes concerning being Black and how one should behave as a consequence of these attitudes (e.g., “I believe the best way to solve our problems is to think Afrocentrally,” or “I believe it is important to have both a Black identity and a multicultural perspective, which is inclusive of everyone”). In contrast, each item on the Pre-encounter Self-Hatred subscale asks the respondent how the person “feels” about being Black (e.g., I sometimes have negative feelings about being Black). It may be the case that an assumption of Cross’s theory is that being politically active in any manner with regard to racial identity is a sign of pro-Black attitudes. However, it is important that items also measure how the respondent feels about being Black if racial identity is to be understood comprehensively. Utilizing the CRIS in isolation, in its current form, to assess positive racial identity attitudes would limit the meaningful interpretation of any resulting data.

**Conceptualizations of race in self-concept.** In his most recent conceptualization of the Nigrescence racial identity model, Cross (1991) posited that Black identity is framed by a two-factor model “in which self-concept is thought to consist of a general personal identity domain and a racial or group identity domain [or reference group orientation]” (p. 39). It follows that a measure of Black racial identity that results from this theory would have to incorporate both the
personal identity domain (PI) and the reference group orientation (RGO). Cross elaborates that the personal identity domain is made up of variables/constructs that are hypothesized to be universal in the human experience (e.g., self-worth, self-esteem, etc.). Reference group orientation, on the other hand, is composed of aspects of the identity that may differ according to one’s membership in a specific race, gender, or culture. This definition indicates that the CRIS subscales vary in their effectiveness in measuring Black identity. The CRIS Pre-encounter Self-Hatred subscale is characterized by items such as “I go through periods when I am down on myself because I am Black.” In this item, issues germane to the individual’s personal identity domain are tapped in so far as this question addresses the individual’s feelings and self-esteem. It also effectively captures the reference group orientation aspect of identity in that beliefs specific to the individual’s racial group membership are also assessed. In this way, the Pre-encounter Self-Hatred subscale measures what it purports to measure, a particular set of racial identity attitudes. In contrast, the CRIS Internalization subscales (Multiculturalist and Afrocentric) only seem to assess the reference group orientation aspect of racial identity. A representative item from these subscales illustrates this point: “I respect the ideas that other Black people hold, but I believe that the best way to solve our problems is to think Afrocentrically.” Though there is certainly a positive bent to this item, an explicit question is not asked about how the individual feels about being Black on this or any other items on these subscales. One can certainly ascertain what beliefs the persons have that would be specific to their racial membership, but the lack of explicit exploration of the individual’s feelings about being Black (as well as the focus on behavior that should result from pro-Black attitudes) result in measures that incompletely assess Black racial identity. In order to study positive racial identity attitudes that capture both the personal identity domain and the reference group
orientation, an alternative measure of Black racial identity is necessary. In order to supplement the Pre-encounter Self-Hatred subscale, this study draws upon another prominent racial identity theory: Robert Sellers’ multidimensional model of racial identity.

**Sellers’ multidimensional model of racial identity.** In the multidimensional model of racial identity (MMRI; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998), racial identity is determined by ascertaining the significance (importance or lack thereof) and meaning (positive/negative valence of feelings) of racial group membership to the individual. The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997) was developed as a measure of the MMRI that assesses the four dimensions of racial identity posited by Sellers: racial centrality, racial salience, racial ideology, and racial regard. Of these dimensions, racial regard, the measure of a person’s affective and evaluative judgment of her/his race, is most relevant to this study. Racial regard is further divided into two types: public regard and private regard. Public regard refers to the beliefs that the individual has about what other people feel and think about Black people. Private regard refers to how the individual feels about being Black as well as how the individual thinks about Black people generally. The framing of private regard items (e.g., “I am happy that I am Black” and “I feel that the Black community has made valuable contributions to this society”) adequately assesses the personal identity domain and the reference group orientation aspects of racial identity. Using this measure in combination with Cross’s Pre-encounter Self-Hatred measure allows for more nuanced measurement of pro-Black and anti-Black racial identity attitudes, rather than requiring the assessor to make assumptions about pro-Black attitudes based on low anti-Black scores or vice versa. As this is the case, the private regard subscale of the MIBI offers a meaningful way to examine how pro-Black attitudes may interact with experiencing racial microaggressions and
psychological outcomes. Consistent with what would be expected of a measure that compliments the pre-encounter scale, private regard has been found to be positively associated with self-esteem, body satisfaction, and lower depression scores (Oney et al., 2011; Settles et al., 2010; Rowley et al., 1998).

**Racial microaggressions and racial identity.** Sue and colleagues’ (2007) elaboration of the different types and categories of racial microaggressions led to the development of the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS; Nadal, 2011). It is a comprehensive measure of many of the microaggressive experiences that people of color encounter on a regular basis. The subscales of the REMS include Assumptions of Inferiority, Second-Class Citizen and Assumptions of Criminality, Microinvalidations, Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity, Environmental Microaggressions, and Workplace and School Microaggressions. Though useful, some of these microaggressive experiences apply more aptly to African American experiences than do others, and for this examination of relationships among racial microaggressions, racial ideology, and psychological outcomes it is most appropriate to focus on the subscales of Assumptions of Inferiority and Microinvalidations. The rationale for limiting the use of this measure to the aforementioned two subscales is as follows: The inclusion of racial identity attitudes that incorporate both personal identity domain and reference group orientation is more likely to be related to microaggressive experiences that can influence the person’s feelings about being Black. For example, if a Black person is assumed to be inferior in a microaggressive exchange, the racial identity attitudes that she holds about being Black (pro-Black or anti-Black) may influence how she is affected. If she endorses anti-Black racial identity attitudes, then the implication in the microaggression that she is inferior may amplify feelings of low self-esteem associated with being Black, resulting in negative affect and psychological distress (the same
could be argued for positive racial identity attitudes and positive affect/psychological well-being). If a Black person experiences a microinvalidation, the pro-Black/anti-Black racial identity attitudes that he holds can also influence the response. The individual who holds pro-Black attitudes and experiences a microinvalidation may accurately attribute the microaggression to the perpetrator and not experience significant negative affect and/or distress (e.g., if the individual feels good about being Black, then the denial of that person’s experiential reality that occurs with a microinvalidation would be considered absurd rather than a personal indictment). While the other microaggression subscales could certainly be related to one’s racial identity and psychological functioning (especially in the case of the assumptions of criminality and work/school subscales), there are ways in which these microaggressions are situation specific versions of the assumptions of inferiority and microinvalidation types. That is, the latter subscales (inferiority and microinvalidation) are likely the most generalizable examples of microaggressions and likely best exemplify the main racism construct of interest in the current study. Finally, findings from a previous study offer empirical support for the moderating role of racial identity attitudes in explaining the association of these two microaggression subscales and experiencing negative affect (Harper, 2014). Specifically, at high and moderate levels of anti-Black attitude endorsement, a significant, positive correlation was uncovered between both microinvalidation and assumptions of inferiority microaggression subscales and our measure of general negative affect. However, no significant association was found between the latter variables when respondents endorsed low levels of anti-Black attitudes. Significant interactions were also uncovered when pro-Black attitudes were used in these analyses in place of anti-Black sentiments; however, in these analyses, low and moderate levels of endorsement of pro-Black attitudes were associated with significant positive correlations between experiencing
microaggressions and endorsing symptoms of negative affect. At high levels of pro-Black attitudes, no association was uncovered between the latter variables.

**Racial Ideology and the Perception of Subtle Racism**

This study hypothesizes that the association between experiencing racial microaggressions and psychological outcomes is influenced by one’s racial identity. As mentioned previously, there have been numerous racial identity researchers who have postulated theories concerning the potential buffering effect of racial identity in this relationship. Though initial research to support this hypothesis has yielded promising results (Harper, 2014), it is likely that racial identity is not the only factor that influences how individuals respond to racial microaggressions. Neville and colleagues (2005) point out that there is a dearth of literature on within-group differences in racial beliefs among African Americans outside of the research examining racial identity. This suggests that we know very little about differences in other important racial beliefs among members of this group. For example, without an appreciation of how institutional racism affects the lives of people of color in this country, a person might view social outcomes that result from racism in a very different light than those who acknowledge that racial bias exists. Exploring these racial beliefs will likely add to our understanding of the complexity of racial attitudes and their concomitants. In an effort to do so, Neville and colleagues (2005) proposed that the term racial ideology could be conceptualized as “a global term to characterize the specific theories encompassing racial attitudes (e.g., racial identity, racial beliefs)” (p. 29). With this definition, they distinguish the personal racial self-concept (i.e., racial identity) from the “individual-society dialectic” involved in the shaping of one’s racial outlook. Racial ideology then can be understood as a superordinate category that includes racial identity and other racial beliefs within it.
When considering how one’s racial ideology may influence how one experiences racial microaggressions, color-blind racial attitudes may be of particular relevance. Color-blind racial attitudes involve the distortion or minimization of racism as consequence of the belief that racism is no longer a significant concern in modern society (Neville et al., 2013). These attitudes are often viewed as innocuous and even beneficial, as the desire to “not see color” is related to the aspiration that people be judged by the “content of their character” rather than the color of one’s skin. The minimization of racial issues is founded upon the notion that everyone should be equal. However, these attitudes act to diminish the reality of disenfranchisement, stratification, and systemic discrimination that remain embedded in societal structures and institutions.

As a consequence of research demonstrating that White individuals are more likely to endorse color-blind racial attitudes (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; 2003), a majority of the extant research on this topic has focused on these populations. In a predominantly White sample, Neville and colleagues (2000) found that endorsement of color-blind racial attitudes was associated with racial intolerance, racism toward African Americans, and just world beliefs (i.e., believing that everyone has equal opportunities in the world and that success and failure are due to personal effort). Adoption of color-blind racial attitudes has also been found to be associated with increased tendency to engage in victim-blaming (Bobo & Kluegel, 1997). When considering the implications of these findings for African Americans, we might logically speculate that the adoption of color-blind racial attitudes could result in internalized victim-blaming that would be associated with endorsing anti-Black racial identity attitudes. Similarly, African Americans who choose to embrace color-blind racial attitudes may be blindsided by a racial incident because they chose to ignore race-related aspects of such incidents (Neville et al., 2001), which supports the idea that racial ideology, broadly, and racial identity, specifically, may act as a buffer against
negative outcomes associated with racism. To date, investigations of the relationship between endorsing color-blind attitudes and mental health outcomes in African American populations have been limited and inconsistent in their findings. Coleman, Chapman, and Wang (2012) found that color-blind racial attitudes were a negative predictor of race-related stress, though they cautioned that it may be the case that a lack of awareness of incidences of racism may have resulted in a lack of recognition of the effect of racism on one’s life, thus diminishing the tendency to report race-related stress. Barr and Neville (2014) found that Black young adults who held color-blind racial attitudes were negatively affected by messages from their parents concerning assimilation into mainstream culture. These studies demonstrate the need to further explore how racial ideology (i.e., in this paper operationalized as color-blind racial attitudes and Nigrescence racial identity attitudes) may act to influence the association between experiencing racism and psychological outcomes.

Reid and Foels (2010) point out that extensive research that aims to elucidate how individuals perceive racism has not yet been conducted, perhaps partially because it is assumed this topic has been covered extensively already in the literature examining racial attitudes. It has not. Consequently, such exploration is vital because support for the contention that color-blind racial attitudes and racial identity attitudes can impact both individuals’ responses to racism as well as their general psychological health.

Present Study

This study explored how being the target of racial microaggressions is associated with such variables as racial ideology (i.e., racial identity and color-blind racial attitudes), racial coping strategies, and negative affect (i.e., positive/negative affect, depression, anxiety) in a
sample of African American college students. Specifically, the potential moderating effects of racial identity and color-blind racial attitudes on the relationship between racial microaggressions and psychological functioning was explored.

This study endeavors to contribute uniquely to the research literature in a number of ways. To date, there are few published studies examining the role of racial identity in the experience of racial microaggressions (Torres & Taknint, 2015). Also, the examination of both racial identity and color-blind racial attitudes in the association of racial microaggressions with psychological outcomes will add nuance to the existing literature on moderators of this association by further articulating the complexity of this relationship via the conceptualization of these moderators as aspects of racial ideology. As mentioned previously, the influence of color-blind racial attitudes has not been extensively investigated in African American populations, so this study will further the field’s understanding of how this construct is experienced in a population of African American college students. Finally, this study is also important (though not unique) because it has the potential to validate the emergent theory that experiencing subtle forms of racial discrimination is both painful and psychologically damaging. Insight into this dynamic will benefit not just African American targets of such treatment, but these findings also have the potential to help dominant group members who perpetrate such acts to understand that such behavior is damaging to other people.

Hypotheses

As this study primarily sought to ascertain whether or not racial identity has an indirect effect on psychological functioning by means of acting as a buffer against microaggressions (Sellers et al., 2006), the following hypotheses guided this investigation:
**Hypothesis 1.** It is hypothesized that color-blind racial attitudes will moderate the association between experiencing racial microaggressions and endorsing symptoms of depression/anxiety/stress (see Figure 1). While significant moderation is expected, it is anticipated that one of two outcomes may occur pertaining to the direction of the effect of moderation. It could be the case that color-blind racial attitudes have a buffering impact in the experience of symptoms of depression/anxiety/stress, such that higher levels of color-blind racial attitude endorsement weaken the positive association between racial microaggressions and depression/anxiety/stress. However, it could also be the case that color-blind racial attitudes exacerbate the experience of symptoms of depression/anxiety/stress that occur as a consequence of experiencing racial microaggressions, such that higher color-blind attitudes strengthen the positive association between racial microaggressions and depression/anxiety/stress.

**Hypothesis 2.** Racial identity attitudes (pre-encounter self-hatred and private regard) and color-blind racial attitudes will additively moderate the association between experiencing racial microaggressions and endorsing symptoms of depression/anxiety/stress (see Figure 2). Specifically,

a. The association between microaggression total scores and psychological distress (i.e., combined depression, anxiety, and stress scores) will vary as a function of both the level of color-blind attitudes participants endorse as well as their level of Black self-hatred attitude endorsement. As mentioned in Hypothesis 1, the moderating effect of color-blind attitudes is expected to be significant, even though the direction of this moderation is as of yet unclear. With regard to Black self-hatred attitude endorsement, it is expected that at higher levels of Black-self hatred attitudes, experiences of racial microaggressions will positively predict endorsement of
depression/anxiety/stress symptoms. At lower levels of Black self-hatred attitudes, it is expected that this positive association will diminish in strength.

b. The association between microaggression total scores and psychological distress (i.e., combined depression, anxiety, and stress scores) will vary as a function of both the level of color-blind attitudes participants endorse as well as their level of private regard (i.e., pro-Black) attitude endorsement. As mentioned in Hypothesis 1, the moderating effect of color-blind attitudes is expected to be significant, even though the direction of this moderation is as of yet unclear. With regard to pro-Black attitude endorsement, it is expected that at higher levels of pro-Black attitudes the positive association between experiencing racial microaggressions and endorsement of depression/anxiety/stress symptoms will be weaker. At lower levels of pro-Black attitudes, it is expected that this positive association will increase in strength.

**Hypothesis 3.** The association of acknowledging that one has experienced a microaggression (i.e., microaggression scores) and endorsing Black self-hatred attitudes will be moderated by both the bargaining and the hypervigilance coping style scores (see Figure 3). As these coping styles are passive, it is expected that higher endorsement of these styles will be implicated in a strong positive association between experiencing racial microaggressions and endorsement of self-hatred attitudes. Lower endorsement of these passive styles is expected to be implicated in a weaker positive association between experiencing racial microaggressions and endorsement of self-hatred attitudes.

**Hypothesis 4.** The association of racial microaggression scores and negative affect will be mediated by coping with racism style (see Figure 4).
Hypothesis 1

Figure 1. Hypothesis 1 model. This model illustrates the role of color-blind racial attitudes in moderating the relationship of racial microaggressions to depression/anxiety/stress.
Hypothesis 2

Figure 2. Hypothesis 2 model. This model illustrates the role of color-blind racial attitudes and racial identity attitudes in additively moderating the relationship of racial microaggressions to depression/anxiety/stress.
Hypothesis 3

Figure 3. Hypothesis 3 model. This model illustrates the role of bargaining and hypervigilance coping styles in moderating the relationship of racial microaggressions to Black self-hatred attitudes.

Hypothesis 4

Figure 4. Hypothesis 4 model. This model illustrates the role of racism-related coping in mediating the relationship of racial microaggressions to depression/anxiety/stress.
Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from undergraduate psychology courses at Eastern Michigan University. Participation in this study was voluntary, and students could receive extra credit for their participation if professors of these courses were amenable. Participation in this study was restricted to students who identify racially as Black/African American. An initial sample of 282 students was collected. Of this initial sample, 218 students identified as Black (the 64 students who did not identify as Black were eliminated from the sample). As was expected based on the composition of this institution’s student body and national trends, the sample for this study was composed of more women than men (149 female, 66 male, 1 gender queer, and 2 chose not to disclose). The average age of participants was 21.02 (SD = 4.16; range 17–49). The average grade point average of participants was 3.06 (SD = .72). The sample consisted primarily of undergraduate students (215 undergraduates), with one student identifying as a graduate student and two students not reporting their current educational status.

Procedure

Institutional review board approval for this study was sought and obtained from the Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee (see Appendix A for the UHSRC approval letter). This study was conducted online. Participants were recruited via the EMU SONA system, a web-based human participant management system. Essentially, the system acts as a virtual bulletin board, as individuals who are interested in participating in research may solicit information about a number of available studies for which they may be eligible. After completing a consent form and affirming that they wished to participate,
respondents were then linked to a SurveyMonkey webpage with the relevant questionnaires for the current study presented in the following order: the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS), the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale, 21-item version (DASS-21), the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions scale (REMS), the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS), the Racism-Related Coping Scale (RRCS), and the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI).

Measures

Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS). The REMS (Nadal, 2011) is a 45-item measure designed to assess the frequency with which people of color are exposed to subtle statements and behaviors that unconsciously communicate denigrating messages to them over the past six months. Items are scored using a 6-point Likert-type scale to indicate the number of times a respondent has experienced a particular microaggression within the past 6 months ($0 = I did not experience this event in the past six months, 3 = I experienced this event 3 times in the past six months, 5 = I experienced this event 5 or more times in the past six months$). Higher scores indicate higher frequencies of microaggression experienced within the past six months. A list of the items of the REMS is included in Appendix B. The REMS is composed of six subscales: Assumptions of Inferiority, Second-Class Citizen and Assumptions of Criminality, Microinvalidations, Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity, Environmental Microaggressions, and Workplace and School Microaggressions. The Assumptions of Inferiority subscale consists of eight items and represents microaggressions in which people of color are assumed to be poor or hold substandard careers. The Second-Class Citizen and Assumptions of Criminality subscale consists of seven items and represents microaggressions in which people of color receive inferior treatment or substandard service as compared to Whites as well as when people of color are stereotyped to be deviant or criminals. The Microinvalidations subscale consists of nine items
and represents microaggressions that are unconscious verbal statements in which the perpetrator may have good intentions, but which convey negative messages to people of color. The Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity subscale consists of nine items and represents microaggressions in which people of color may feel like perpetual foreigners. The Environmental Microaggressions subscale consists of seven items and represents microaggressions exemplified by deficiencies of people of color in positions of power, prestige, and influence. The Workplace and School Microaggressions subscale consists of five items and represents microaggressions in which people of color experience discrimination and feelings of alienation in work and school settings. The REMS produced a coefficient alpha of .93 for the entire measure (Nadal, 2011). Further, internal consistency for each of the subscales of this measure were found to produced coefficient alphas well above .8 (α = .89 for Assumptions of Inferiority, α = .88 for Second-Class Citizen and Assumptions of Criminality, α = .89 for Microinvalidations, α = .85 for Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity, α = .85 for Environmental Microaggressions, and α = .85 for Workplace and School Microaggressions). In terms of concurrent validity, the REMS was positively correlated (r = .46) with the Racism and Life Experience Scales–Brief version (Utsey, 1998), a measure of race-related stress (Nadal, 2011). For the current study, a total score was calculated by summing all of the items of this scale, and this score represented the construct of reported experiences of racial microaggressions.

**Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS).** The CRIS is a 40-item self-report measure designed to assess Black racial identity attitudes described in the expanded Nigrescence theory (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Items are scored using a 7-point Likert response scale to indicate the extent to which participants agreed or disagreed (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 7 = strongly agree) with statements representing racial identity attitudes (see Appendix
C for a list of the CRIS items). The CRIS has six subscales that represent six racial identity statuses: Pre-encounter Assimilation (PA), Pre-encounter Miseducation (PM), Pre-encounter Self-hatred (PSH), Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW), Internalization Afrocentricity (IA), and Internalization Multiculturalist (IM). Each of the subscales consists of five items and there are 10 additional filler items. Scores can range from 5 to 35 on each of the subscales, with high scores indicating attitudes consistent with that particular identity. The PA subscale assesses the extent to which individuals endorse a pro-American identity, in which race is not salient. The PM subscale assesses the extent to which individuals endorse negative stereotypical beliefs about Blacks in general. The PSH subscale assesses the extent to which individuals identify personally with negative stereotypes about Blacks and exhibit attitudes of hatred towards Blacks in general as well as hatred towards themselves (because they are Black). The IEAW subscale assesses the extent to which individuals endorse attitudes of disdain and rejection toward White people and White culture. The IA subscale assesses the extent to which individuals endorse Afrocentric attitudes and a desire to empower Black people and the Black community. The IM subscale assesses the extent to which individuals endorse attitudes of acceptance and camaraderie towards people both within and outside of the Black community. In a study of college students, Vandiver et al. (2002) reported the following estimates for Cronbach’s alpha for each of the six subscales: \( \alpha = .85 \) for PA, \( \alpha = .78 \) for PM, \( \alpha = .89 \) for PSH, \( \alpha = .89 \) for IEAW, \( \alpha = .83 \) for IA, and \( \alpha = .82 \) for IM.

**Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21).** The DASS-21 is the short form of the DASS-42 (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). The DASS-21 is a 21-item measure designed to assess the severity and frequency of symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress within the past week. Items are scored using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*did not apply to me at all*) to
3 (applied to me very much, or most of the time). Scores can range from 0 to 63, with higher scores indicating more severe and frequently occurring negative emotional states (see Appendix D for a list of the DASS-21 items). The DASS-21 can be scored as a single measure of general negative psychological health (i.e., one simply sums all of the scores for all 21 items), or each of its three, 7-item subscales—i.e., (1) depression, (2) anxiety, and (3) stress subscales. The depression subscale assesses dysphoria, hopelessness, self-deprecation attitudes, lack of interest or involvement, devaluation of life, and anhedonia. The anxiety subscale assesses autonomic arousal, muscular tension, situational anxiety, and anxious affect. The stress subscale assesses general tension, difficulty relaxing, negative emotional lability, and nervous arousal. The internal consistency reliability of the DASS-21 is well established, with estimates of Cronbach’s alpha ranging from .83 to .96 for the Depression scale, .79 to .89 for the Anxiety scale, and .87 to .93 for the Stress scale, and .86 to .93 for the total scale (Yusoff, 2013; Henry & Crawford, 2005; Antony et al., 1998; Norton, 2007; & Brown et al., 1997). In addition, Norton (2007) found adequate internal consistency reliability in an investigation with an African American sample for each of the scales of the DASS-21 ($\alpha = .84$ for Depression, $\alpha = .81$ for anxiety, and $\alpha = .88$ for stress).

**Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI).** The MIBI is a 56-item self-report measure designed to measure the three stable dimensions of African American racial identity: centrality, ideology, and regard as conceptualized in the multidimensional model of racial identity (Sellers et. al, 1997). Sellers and colleagues (1997) specify that the salience dimension was not included in the MIBI because of its susceptibility to situational influences. The MIBI consists of a centrality scale, four ideology subscales (Nationalist, Oppressed Minority, Assimilationist, Humanist), and two regard subscales (Public Regard and Private
Regard). Items (see Appendix E for a list of the MIBI items) are scored using a 7-point Likert response scale to indicate the extent to which participants feel each statement accurately describes their present beliefs (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree). Because the MIBI is based on a multidimensional conceptualization of racial identity, Sellers and colleagues (1997) believed it was inappropriate to calculate a composite score for the entire scale. The MIBI produced a Cronbach’s alpha of .77, .60, .73, .70, .76, and .79 for the subscales of Centrality, Private Regard, Assimilation, Humanist, Minority, and Nationalist respectively (Sellers et al. 1997).

**Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS).** The Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) was developed by Neville and colleagues (2000) to measure contemporary racial attitudes, or a lack of awareness or denial of racism in the United States. The CoBRAS consists of 20 items (see Appendix F for a list of the CoBRAS items), which are rated on a 5-point scale that ranges from 1 (not at all appropriate or clear) to 5 (very appropriate or clear). The total scale is comprised of three subscales: (a) Racial Privilege (RP), which refers to the denial of White Privilege (seven items); (b) Institutional Discrimination (ID), which suggests that individuals are unaware of discriminatory institutional practices (seven items); and (c) Blatant Racial Issues (BRI), which suggests the denial of the pervasiveness of discrimination and racism in our society (six items). Scores are determined by summing item responses, and total scores range from 20 to 100. Higher total scores reflect higher levels of color-blind attitudes in participants. Higher scores on the BRI subscale indicate higher levels of denial of blatant racial discrimination. Higher scores on the ID subscale reflect greater unawareness of institutional discrimination, and higher scores on the RP subscale mean that an individual has higher levels of
denial about racial privilege. The COBRAS produced a Cronbach’s alpha of .83 for the RP subscale, .81 for the ID subscale, .76 for the BRI subscale, and .91 for the total score.

**Racism-Related Coping Scale (RRCS).** The Racism-Related Coping Scale was developed by Forsyth and Carter (2014) to measure specific coping strategies employed by Black individuals to respond to race-related stress. The ACS consists of 59 items (see Appendix G for a list of the RRCS items) across eight subscales: racially conscious action, empowered action, constrained resistance, confrontation, hypervigilance, bargaining, spiritual coping, and anger regulation. Respondents are asked to rate how often they used each behavior to deal with a racist situation using a 4-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 0 (did not use) to 3 (used a great deal). Scores of each subscale are summed, with higher scores being indicative of a higher likelihood of using the particular coping strategy in dealing with racism-related stress. For each of the RRCS subscales, Cronbach’s alpha was acceptable, ranging from .80 to .90 (.80 for bargaining; .90 for hypervigilance; Forsyth & Carter, 2014).

**Study Design**

This study employed a one-group, correlational design with path analysis in order to assess the correlations among the variables (racial microaggressions, racial identity attitudes, color-blind racial attitudes, racial coping, and depression/anxiety/stress) and test for moderation of these relationships. Participants were not assigned to groups and no controls were utilized.

**Statistical Analyses**

In this study, multiple regression was used to test all moderation hypotheses (Hayes, 2013). Pearson bivariate correlations were used for preliminary analyses. To test for moderator effects, procedures outlined by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007) were implemented.
Accordingly, the Hayes PROCESS macro for SPSS was utilized. This macro tests for moderation by running a series of OLS regressions. Bias-corrected confidence intervals were generated using bootstrapping with 1,000 resamples. Based on a review of the literature in the content area of racial identity, a medium effect size (an $f^2$ of .15 as suggested by Cohen, 1992) was a reasonable expectation for the proposed study. A minimum sample size of 76 is needed to achieve adequate power (.80) with alpha set at .05 when three independent variables are employed.

Results

Before conducting the analyses for this study, the data were reviewed to assure accurate entry, account for missing values, and ensure that the distribution of the data fit with the basic assumptions of multivariate analysis. In order to confirm that the pattern of data was missing completely at random, Little’s Missing Completely at Random test (MCAR) was used. The Little’s MCAR test obtained for this study’s data resulted in a chi-square = 17692.25 ($df = 24760$; $p = 1.00$), which indicates that the data were indeed missing at random (i.e., no identifiable pattern exists to the missing data). After completing Little’s test, expectation maximization was used to impute the missing data from the sample. This procedure estimates means, variances, and covariances from cases that have no missing data. Maximum likelihood procedures are then used to accurately estimate regression equations that relate the variables based on the previously mentioned estimates of means, variances, and covariances (Dempster, Laird, & Rubin, 1977). The resulting regression equations are used to predict missing values. The estimation of missing values provides new data, which is then used to estimate means, variances, and covariances again to further approximate maximum likelihood estimates for each variable. All study variables fell within acceptable ranges of skew and kurtosis to allow for
assumption of normal distribution of the data. As mentioned previously, 64 participants were dropped from the sample due to failure to identify as Black/African American. A summary of intercorrelations, mean values, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis of the major study variables are provided in Table 1. Some of the noteworthy correlations were the moderately strong, positive association between the REMS and the DASS, the positive associations between pre-encounter self-hatred attitudes and the REMS and the DASS, and the negative associations between private regard attitudes and the REMS and the DASS. Additionally, the CoBRAS was only found to be significantly correlated with one other variable, a positive correlation with private regard. It is also worth noting that the mean score for the CoBRAS for this sample was indicative of higher overall color-blind attitudes than might be expected in light of a study that previously employed this measure with an African American sample (Neville et al., 2005).
Table 1

**Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness, and Kurtosis for Scores on the Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale (REMS), Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS), Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS; Pre-encounter Self-Hatred Subscale), Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Private Regard Subscale), Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS), and the Racism-Related Coping Scale (RRCS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. REMS (total score)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. DASS (total score)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. CRIS- Pre-encounter Self-Hatred</td>
<td>.53**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. MIBI-Private Regard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CoBRAS (total score)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. RRCS (total score)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).  * Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed) Cronbach’s alpha coefficients are in parentheses on the diagonal.
Hypothesis 1

To test the hypothesis that the association of experiencing racial microaggressions with endorsing symptoms of depression/anxiety/stress would vary as a function of color-blind racial attitudes, Model 1 of Hayes’s (2013) PROCESS macro for SPSS was utilized (this macro allows researchers to test instances of moderation). DASS (Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale) total scores were designated as the outcome variable, racial microaggression total scores were designated as the focal predictor, and color-blind racial attitudes were designated as the moderator variable. Bias-corrected confidence intervals were generated using bootstrapping with 1,000 resamples. The regression coefficient for the interaction term in this analysis was significant, supporting the hypothesis, $b = -0.01$, $t(214) = -3.36$, $p = 0.0009$, CI [-0.015, -0.004].

Thus, color-blind racial attitudes appear to moderate the association between experiencing racial microaggressions and endorsing experiences of generalized negative emotional states (depression, anxiety, and stress). To further explore the meaning of this interaction, Hayes’ variant of the pick-a-point approach was utilized. This approach examines the possibility of a significant interaction between experiencing racial microaggressions scores and depression/anxiety/stress scores at three levels of color-blind racial attitudes—i.e., these interactions were tested at the mean of color-blind racial attitudes as well as one standard deviation above (+1 SD) and below (-1 SD) this mean. These analyses revealed significant interactions at the lower, mean, and higher levels of color-blind racial attitudes (see Table 2). In brief, color-blind racial attitudes appear to moderate the association of experiencing racial microaggressions and experiencing general negative emotional states at low, moderate, and high levels of color-blind racial attitudes.
Table 2

*Conditional Effects of Racial Microaggressions at Low, Medium, and High Levels of Color-Blind Racial Attitudes as Predictors of General Negative Emotional States*\(^1\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color-Blind Racial Attitudes ((M = 70.052; SD = 9.996))</th>
<th>Effect (Racial Microaggressions X DASS(^1))</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>(t)</th>
<th>(P)</th>
<th>LLCI</th>
<th>ULCI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low ((M-1SD))</td>
<td>.337</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>8.637</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.260</td>
<td>.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium ((M))</td>
<td>.244</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>9.632</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.194</td>
<td>.294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High((M+1SD))</td>
<td>.151</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>4.221</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>.222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Significant results \((p < .05)\) indicate levels (i.e., high, medium, or low) at which color-blind racial attitudes moderate the association of racial microaggressions with general negative emotional states. \(^1\)General negative emotional states were measured by total scores on the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS). SE = standard error. LLCI = 95% Lower level confidence interval. ULCI = 95% Upper level confidence interval.
In further examining the data, the following simple effects were revealed. At low, moderate, and high levels of color-blind racial attitudes, there appeared to be a significant, positive association between experiencing racial microaggressions and negative emotional states—i.e., higher racial microaggression scores were significantly associated with higher endorsement of general negative emotional states across all three levels of participants’ color-blind attitude endorsement (see Table 2). It is interesting to note that the strongest positive association between experiencing racial microaggressions and experiencing depression/anxiety/stress symptoms was found at lower levels of color-blind racial attitudes (i.e., the lower that color-blind racial attitudes are, the stronger that the relationship between experiencing racial microaggressions and experiencing depression/anxiety/stress was found to be). To explain this more simply, if participants reported experiencing relatively “high” levels of racial microaggressions (e.g., 1 SD above the mean on this variable) and relatively “low” levels of color-blind attitude endorsement (e.g., 1 SD below the mean on this variable), this pattern of scores was predictive of relatively higher levels of psychological distress (see Figure 5). Conversely, if participants reported experiencing relatively “low” levels of racial microaggressions (e.g., 1 SD below the mean on this variable) and relatively “low” levels of color-blind attitude endorsement (e.g., 1 SD below the mean on this variable), this pattern of scores was predictive of relatively lower levels of psychological distress (see Figure 5). Additionally, Figure 5 also highlights the fact that an inverse association to what has just been described exists for when the endorsement of color-blind attitudes is relatively high. That is, if participants reported experiencing relatively “high” levels of racial microaggressions (e.g., 1 SD above the mean on this variable) and relatively “high” levels of color-blind attitude endorsement (e.g., 1 SD above the mean on this variable), this pattern of scores was predictive of relatively
lower levels of psychological distress (see Figure 5). Conversely, if participants reported experiencing relatively “low” levels of racial microaggressions (e.g., 1 SD below the mean on this variable) and relatively “high” levels of color-blind attitude endorsement (e.g., 1 SD below the mean on this variable), this pattern of scores was predictive of relatively higher levels of psychological distress (see Figure 5).
Figure 5. Conditional effects of racial microaggressions at low, medium, and high levels of color-blind racial attitudes as predictors of general negative emotional states.
Hypothesis 2

Based on the study’s first hypothesis that color-blind racial attitudes would moderate the association between experiencing racial microaggressions and endorsing symptoms of negative emotional states, as well as previous research that has demonstrated a moderating effect of racial identity attitudes on this association (Harper, 2014), it was further hypothesized that color-blind racial attitudes and racial identity attitudes would additively moderate the association between racial microaggression scores and depression/anxiety/stress scores. This two-part hypothesis posited that pro-Black (private regard) and anti-Black (pre-encounter self-hatred) attitudes would each independently serve as additive moderators with color-blind racial attitudes. Model 2 of Hayes’s (2013) PROCESS macro for SPSS was again utilized to test this hypothesis. DASS scores were again designated as the outcome variable and racial microaggression scores were designated as the predictor variable. For Hypothesis 2A, pre-encounter self-hatred attitudes served as the primary moderator, and color-blind racial attitudes served as a secondary moderator. Bias-corrected confidence intervals were generated using bootstrapping with 1,000 resamples. As was the case in Hypothesis 1, the regression coefficient for the interaction term involving color-blind racial attitudes as a predictor of general negative emotional states was significant, $b = -.01, t(212) = -3.53, p = .0005, CI [-.015, -.004]$. Thus, in this test of moderation, color-blind racial attitudes were found to uniquely account for 3.91% of the variance in DASS scores, $F(1, 212) = 12.48, p < .001$. However, the regression coefficient for the interaction term involving pre-encounter self-hatred attitudes was non-significant, failing to support the hypothesis that anti-Black attitudes and color-blind racial attitudes additively moderate this association, $b = .001, t(212) = .468, p = .640, CI [-.004, .007]$. Pre-encounter self-hatred attitudes
only accounted for .07% of the unique variance in DASS scores in this test of moderation, F(1, 212) = .22, p = .640.

For Hypothesis 2B, private regard attitude scores replaced Black self-hatred attitude scores as the primary moderator in same procedure utilized in the previous analyses. Thus, color-blind racial attitudes, DASS scores, and racial microaggression scores remained as the secondary moderator, outcome, and predictor variables, respectively. The interaction term involving color-blind racial attitudes was significant, $b = -.01, t(212) = -3.27, p = .0013, CI [-.015, -.004]$, revealing that in this test of moderation, color-blind racial attitudes uniquely accounting for 3.41% of the variance in DASS scores, F(1, 212) = 10.69, $p = .001$. However, the regression coefficient for the interaction term involving private regard attitudes was non-significant, failing to support the hypothesis that pro-Black attitudes and color-blind racial attitudes additively moderate this association, $b = -.002, t(212) = -.405, p = .686, CI [-.009, .006]$. Thus, private regard attitudes were found to only accounted for .05% of the unique variance in DASS scores in this test of moderation, F(1, 212) = .16, $p = .686$.

**Hypothesis 3**

The third hypothesis of this study posited that the racial coping styles of bargaining and hypervigilance would moderate the association of experiences of racial microaggressions with Black (pre-encounter) self-hatred attitudes. Model 2 of Hayes’s (2013) PROCESS macro for SPSS was again utilized to test this hypothesis. Pre-encounter self-hatred attitudes were designated as the outcome variable, racial microaggression total scores were designated as the focal predictor, and bargaining and hypervigilance coping styles were each designated as the additive moderator variables. Bias-corrected confidence intervals were generated using
bootstrapping with 1,000 resamples. The regression coefficient for the interaction term involving the bargaining coping style was not significant, $b = -0.01$, $t(212) = 1.71$, $p = .089$, CI [-.021, -.002]. The regression coefficient for the interaction term involving the hypervigilance coping style was also not significant, $b = .01$, $t(212) = .004$, $p = .185$, CI [-.003, .014]. Thus, the data did not support the hypothesis that bargaining and hypervigilance coping styles additively moderated the association of experiencing racial microaggressions and endorsing pre-encounter self-hatred attitudes.

**Hypothesis 4**

The final hypothesis of this study posited that racism-coping style would mediate the association of racial microaggression scores with general negative emotional states (DASS scores). This hypothesis was based on the theory that the psychological impact of racial microaggressions should be influenced by the ways that individuals cope with racism. This hypothesis examined the potential mediating effect of the total score for the Racism-Related Coping Scale (RRCS) as well as for the subscales of the RRCS. The relationship between racial microaggression scores and DASS scores was not mediated by RRCS total scores. The standardized regression coefficient between REMS total scores and RRCS total scores was statistically significant, $b = .53$, $t(216) = 8.68$, $p = .000$. However, the standardized regression coefficient between RRCS total scores and DASS total scores was not significant, $b = .02$, $t(215) = .77$, $p = .441$. There was not a significant indirect effect of racial microaggressions (REMS scores) on negative emotional states (DASS scores) through racism-related coping (RRCS scores), $b = .012$, BCa CI [-0.019, 0.046]. As this was the case, these results did not support the mediation hypothesis.
For exploratory purposes, the RRCS subscales were also individually examined for their potential mediating effect on the association between experiencing racial microaggressions and endorsing symptoms of negative emotional states. Only one subscale, the anger regulation coping style, was found to have a significant mediating effect. The relationship between REMS total scores and DASS total scores was found to be mediated by the anger regulation coping style scores. As Figure 6 illustrates, the standardized regression coefficient between REMS total scores and anger regulation scores was statistically significant \((b = .02, t[216] = 4.57, p = .000)\), as was the standardized regression coefficient between anger regulation scores and DASS total scores \((b = .87, t[215] = 8.19, p = .017)\). There was a significant indirect effect of racial microaggressions (REMS scores) on negative emotional states (DASS scores) through the anger regulation coping style (RRCS subscale scores), \(b = .019, BCa CI [0.004, 0.044]\).
Figure 6. Standardized regression coefficients for the relationship between racial microaggressions and depression, anxiety, and stress as mediated by anger regulation coping. The regression coefficient of the indirect effect of racial microaggressions on depression, anxiety, and stress, through anger regulation coping, is in parentheses. *p < .05.
**Discussion**

The present study attempted to further elucidate relationships among the experience of being the target of racial microaggressions, Black racial identity statuses, color-blind racial attitude endorsement, coping with racism strategies, and experiences of symptoms of general psychological distress. Before reviewing the main findings of this study, I wish to briefly highlight some of the more interesting preliminary results of this study. Some of these findings lay the foundation for some of the key assumptions underlying the main focus of this paper. Thus, I wish to note that, as expected (though not formally hypothesized), pro-Black and anti-Black racial identity attitudes were found to be negatively correlated with each other. Further, it should be noted that simple correlations between the major study variables affirmed and extended previous findings in the literature that indicated that being the target of racial discrimination is psychologically painful for African Americans. What is particularly noteworthy with the latter finding is that the current study is one of the first to examine this association using microaggressions as the operationalization of racism (i.e., previous studies have used more blatant forms of racial discrimination). Further, these simple correlations also indicated that the racial identity measures, private regard and pre-encounter self-hatred, were also significantly correlated with both affirmatively endorsing that one has been the target of racial microaggressions and also expressing that one is currently experiencing symptoms of general psychological. As would be expected, pro-Black (private regard) attitudes were negatively correlated with endorsing symptoms of general negative affect. Given this finding, it was also unsurprising that anti-Black (pre-encounter self-hatred) attitudes were positively associated with endorsing symptoms of psychological distress. These findings align with previous research that suggests that positive racial identification can be protective and negative racial identification can
be harmful (Carter, 2007) to the mental health of African Americans. However, an unexpected and interesting correlational finding uncovered during these analyses was that while pro-Black attitudes were negatively correlated with reporting that one had experienced racial microaggressions, anti-Black attitudes were positively associated with respondents’ reporting that they had experienced racial microaggressions. This seems surprising because it seems logical to expect that individuals with pro-Black attitude might be more sensitive to experiencing racial microaggressions than individuals with anti-Black attitudes due to being more aware of institutional discrimination. A potential hypothesis regarding this result could be that with greater awareness of racial microaggressions that might accompany pro-Black attitudes, there might also be a greater awareness of the situations in which one might experience a racial microaggression, which could mean that individuals with pro-Black attitudes have developed strategies to avoid or protect against these experiences. Whereas for individuals who espouse anti-Black attitudes, awareness of racial microaggressions might be more limited, meaning that there is not as much savvy developed with regard to avoiding racial microaggressions as well as subsequent challenges in dealing with racial microaggressions because of the confusion and self-loathing that these experiences may result in due, at least in part to the anti-Black attitudes.

These findings also lend credence to the notion that correlational data must be interpreted cautiously, as unaccounted for additional variables and/or more complex explanatory models may provide even greater clarity in understanding the relationships among these variables.

The correlations involving color-blind racial attitudes were more unexpected in light of previous research. This study found no significant correlations between color-blind racial attitudes and experiencing racial microaggressions. Insofar as color-blind racial attitudes are associated with awareness of institutional discrimination, dynamics of oppression and privilege,
and blatant racism, it stands to reason that racial microaggressions, which communicate subtle, derogatory meta-messages to people of color based on their racial status, would be correlated. The meta-messages communicated within racial microaggressions are, in fact, emblematic of systemic racism. However, as was mentioned in the results (and will be further elaborated upon), the role of color-blind racial attitudes in these relationships is likely more complex than this initial correlational finding would suggest. Perhaps even more intriguing were the associations between color-blind racial attitudes and racial identity attitudes. Though there was not a significant correlation between color-blind racial attitudes and anti-Black racial identity attitudes, there was a significant positive relationship between color-blind racial attitudes and pro-Black attitudes. As this correlation examined the relationship between the total score of the CoBRAS and the MIBI private regard subscale, further examination of the possible association of the subscales of the CoBRAS with the private regard subscale was warranted. Private regard was positively associated with the racial privilege subscale, negatively associated with the institutional discrimination subscale, and positively associated with the blatant racial issues subscale. These findings suggest that participants with higher pro-Black attitudes were more likely to be aware of institutional discrimination and less likely to be aware of White racial privilege and blatant racial issues. These findings may relate to the notion that, at their core, color-blind racial attitudes refer to the idea that race should not and does not matter. These correlations suggest that the participants who endorsed pro-Black racial identity attitudes in this study recognize, to a certain extent, that race does matter in affecting the life experiences of Black people (as demonstrated by the negative correlation with the institutional discrimination subscale). However, the participants in this study may also hold more aspirational beliefs about the notion that race should not matter, which might explain the moderate correlation between
private regard attitudes and racial privilege scores. Still these associations may warrant further questions about positive racial identification. For example, is a prerequisite to feeling positively about being Black the assumption that one has the same opportunities as members of other racial groups? There also may be particularities about this sample that relate to the interesting association between private regard attitudes and color-blind racial attitudes. As college students, it may be important for Black students to believe that they have the same opportunities as their non-Black contemporaries because to believe otherwise might result in feelings of helplessness that might compromise students’ motivation to achieve the same or better academic success as those who do not face similar institutional barriers. It might also be the case that their status as college students, which affords a certain amount of educational and class privilege, may also potentially be related to less awareness of cases in which others may not have had the same opportunities.

It also bears mentioning that this study is one of few to examine color-blind racial attitudes in a sample made up exclusively of Black-identified participants. While color-blind racial attitudes have been found to be associated with racial prejudice and racist ideology in mostly White samples (Barr & Neville, 2014), it may be the case that these attitudes do not automatically equate to internalized racism when the CoBRAS is used with Black samples. The literature base would benefit from more studies exploring the meaning of color-blind racial attitudes in non-White samples to determine what kind of conclusions can be drawn from instances in which people of color endorse color-blind racial attitudes.

Finally, a significant association between experiencing racial microaggressions and coping with racism strategies was found in this study. This finding also makes intuitive sense, as
one might expect that the more one experiences racial microaggressions, the more that one might be invested in employing a range of coping strategies particular to the experience of racism.

Throughout the posited hypotheses, it also bears mentioning that the regression coefficients in this study’s analyses suggested that experiencing racial microaggression was predictive of experiencing symptoms of psychological distress, further lending credence to the notion that the experience of racial microaggressions has a deleterious effect on the mental health of Black individuals. As the aforementioned literature review suggested, it is often the case that racial microaggressions are misunderstood as having negligible impact on the health and well-being of people of color. These findings lend yet additional support to the notion that racial microaggressions influence the lives of Black people, as the receiving of these routine derogatory messages can result in multiple manifestations of mental distress, from navigating how to respond authentically and protectively to these commonplace assaults to living with the meaning of a society that consistently undervalues one’s personhood.

As hypothesized, color-blind racial attitudes moderated the relationship between experiencing racial microaggressions and endorsing symptoms of psychological distress (depression, anxiety, and stress). These findings indicated that for those participants who reported that they experienced relatively low levels of microaggression incidents, the endorsement of high color-blind racial attitudes was associated with experiencing more psychological distress than participants who were lower in their endorsement of color-blind racial attitudes. However, for those participants who reported experiencing higher levels of microaggression incidents, the endorsement of high color-blind racial attitudes was associated with experiencing less psychological distress as compared to those who endorsed lower levels of color-blind racial attitudes. What do these findings suggest? To explain this finding, let us briefly
review what we understand about color-blind attitudes. As has been mentioned previously, a
color-blind racial stance is one that asserts that race should not and does not matter in how
people treat each other in society. Thus, individuals who endorse low levels of color-blind racial
attitudes are more likely to recognize the impact of race, racism, and White privilege in daily
lives because they acknowledge that these factors play a role in the sundry interactions of people
in the US. We speculate that the pattern of associations described at the beginning of this
paragraph likely results from a dynamic wherein individuals who are low in color-blind attitudes
and who see that racism is a problem for Black people in the US may be less distressed at lower
levels of racial microaggressions because they are already primed to understand that when small
racist transgressions are directed at them, it is likely not the result of anything they have done;
rather, it is just another example of how racial bias still influences how people treat African
Americans in our world. Upon experiencing a negative interaction with someone, individuals in
this group may say, “I was not treated poorly because I deserved it; I was treated poorly because
that person is mildly racist.” In contrast, people with higher color-blind racial attitudes may have
difficulty explaining and understanding their experiences of low level racial microaggressions
because they assume that race is not a factor in such interactions; therefore, they are left to
explain the negative feelings they may have after a mildly racist event without making reference
to or attributions of racism as a potential contributory variable. The ambiguity in explaining such
interactions may contribute to elevated feelings of negative affect among folks in this condition.
When individuals report experiencing relatively high levels of racial microaggressions, for those
individuals who are lower in their endorsement of color-blind racial attitude, they may
experience more psychological distress in this situation because the pervasiveness of the number
of racially-biased incidents may wear upon the mental stamina of this subset of individuals who
see these incidents for what they are and they may begin to feel overwhelmed by how frequently these events happen. In contrast, for those individuals who strongly endorse a color-blind stance while simultaneously experiencing high levels of microaggression incidents, these individuals may redouble their commitment to a color-blind stance and repress and deny the negative effects of such events in their lives. It also could be the case that individuals who endorse higher levels of color-blind racial attitudes in such circumstances are unaware of certain instances of racial microaggressions, perhaps due to the fact that they may not have developed the heightened perceptual awareness that Sue (2010) posits assists targets of discrimination in determining if a racial microaggression has occurred. In this way, heightened perceptual awareness can be seen as both a strength that assists in the identification of racial microaggressions and a means through which more deleterious racial microaggressions are understood. This counterintuitive relationship was the basis behind the reasoning of establishing this hypothesis as two-tailed.

Awareness of racial microaggressions, which is inconsistent with high color-blind racial attitudes, may be adaptive because it likely allows individuals to recognize people and spaces that may unduly expose them to deleterious meta-messages. However, it is this same awareness that suggests that one will be more cognizant of racial microaggressions occurring, in ways that individuals with high color-blind racial attitudes will not. These explanations are, of course, merely speculative and will need additional research to validate. Such research might explore how levels of color-blind attitudes and microaggression exposure are associated with physiological measures of stress (e.g., blood pressure and/or cortisol levels). It may be that part of what explains the above findings is the fact that a self-report scale, rather than more implicit measures, were used to assess psychological distress.
There is an important question posed by these data: How can mental health providers work best to diminish the effects of racism, especially the effects associated with experiencing racial microaggressions? There are those who would interpret these findings as justification for attempting to inculcate color-blind attitudes and just world beliefs in clients who may be encountering racial microaggressions, since higher levels of color-blind attitudes resulted in lower psychological distress when compared to those with lower color-blind attitudes. Such an interpretation is problematic for a number of reasons. The first, and perhaps most obvious reason that this would be an irresponsible approach, is that the data do not suggest that adopting color-blind racial attitudes effectively protects individuals from the deleterious psychological consequences of experiencing racial microaggressions. Experiencing racial microaggressions was positively associated with psychological distress at all levels of color-blind racial attitudes. Additionally, the inculcation of color-blind racial attitudes could serve to deny the experiential reality of the individual who has experienced a racial microaggression, which is itself a type of racial microaggression that could compound the individual’s experience of alienation. Adopting color-blind racial attitudes would not address the cause of the psychological distress associated with racial microaggressions. An awareness of the impact of sociocultural forces on client well-being is essential in recognizing what appropriate intervention would look like for clients experiencing racism-related psychological distress. To begin with the indoctrination of these attitudes and beliefs is to err in establishing the core problem as intrapsychic in nature (which also could be a microaggression). Such an approach would also be irresponsible because it would attempt to utilize this finding in isolation from other findings associated with the experience of microaggressions.
In building on previous research that found that the relationship between psychological distress and experiencing microaggressions was moderated by racial identity attitudes (Harper, 2014), this study hypothesized that racial identity attitudes and color-blind racial attitudes would additively moderate the relationship between experiencing microaggressions and endorsing symptoms of psychological distress. Interestingly, this hypothesis was not supported by this study, as racial identity attitudes (specifically pre-encounter self-hatred and private regard) were not found to exclusively or additively moderate this relationship. One hypothesis as to why racial identity did not moderate the association between experiencing racial microaggressions and psychological distress relates to the zeitgeist in which participants in this study find themselves. Even though the Harper (2014) study collected data less than three years ago, it is likely the case that influences on racial identity and racial self-understanding have changed since that time. The university from which participants were sampled for this study experienced a number of publicly-visible racist incidents during the time of data collection. In older versions of Cross’s racial identity theory (Vandiver et al., 2002), it was posited that individuals developed racial identity linearly, and that movement from less adaptive, anti-Black attitudes required the experience of an “encounter” that would propel individuals into considering alternative, positive definitions of Black identity. Though this linear understanding of racial identity development is outdated, the events at Eastern Michigan University in the Fall 2016 semester could have understandably influenced the racial identity development of participants in this study in ways that participants in the Harper (2014) study may not have been influenced. If these events were related to a general shift in the racial identity attitudes of Black students at Eastern Michigan, then it is possible that such a shift might potentially alter the relationship between racial identity attitudes and the variables measuring racial microaggressions and psychological distress.
Another potential influence on the relationship between racial identity and the association between experiencing racial microaggressions and psychological distress could be related to a potential difference in understanding among students regarding the meaning of microaggressions. Specifically, the term and meaning of the word microaggression have become a part of popular culture. It’s possible that reporting on experiences of racial microaggressions could be affected by a participants’ understanding of the phenomena as being related to a legitimate research base or as being a manifestation of oversensitivity or “political correctness.” Further research is certainly warranted to elucidate the interrelationships among racial identity, experiencing racial microaggressions, experiencing psychological distress, being affected by significant situational racial phenomena, and cultural shifts in prevailing attitudes about race.

For the third hypothesis in this study, it was posited that bargaining and hypervigilance coping styles would additively moderate the association of anti-Black attitudes with experiences of racial microaggressions. This hypothesis was not supported by the data. These attitudes were hypothesized to moderate this relationship because previous research demonstrated that passive coping strategies (like bargaining and hypervigilance) tend to be less effective than active coping strategies (e.g., conscious and empowered action). This hypothesis also assumed that anti-Black attitudes might result in less directly coping with experiences of racial microaggressions, since active coping strategies would entail addressing a negative meta-communication with others. Consequently, engaging in such an active coping strategy could be antithetical in that the individual receiving the negative meta-communication could very well believe it, thus undermining the need to address the slight in any manner that was not passive. Previous allusions were made to the complexity of racism-related coping as a construct. It may be the case that more complex models of moderation and/or mediation could better predict relationships
among racism-related coping, racial identity attitudes, and the experience of racial microaggressions. Further research is warranted to elucidate the interrelationships among these variables.

Finally, partial support for the fourth hypothesis that racism-related coping strategies would mediate the relationship of experience of racial microaggressions with psychological distress was found. Although the total score for the RRCS was not found to mediate this relationship, the anger regulation coping style was found to partially mediate the association of racial microaggressions with psychological distress. This finding should, however, be interpreted cautiously, as the anger regulation subscale is composed of three items. It is unlikely that such a small subscale adequately captures the nuance of an anger regulation coping style.

The results of this study provide additional insight into the interrelationships among racial identity, racial ideology, racial coping, and psychological well-being. With that said, interpretation of this data requires caution, in light of certain limitations. As mentioned previously in the participant section, this study surveyed Black/African American students who attended a Midwestern, mid-sized, predominantly-White university. While the sample was derived from a diverse, non-traditional student body, it is unlikely that the sample is fully representative of the diversity of attitudes and experiences of Black communities across the country. Additionally, the results of this study lend credence to the notion that the interrelationships among racial identity, racial ideology, racial coping, and psychological well-being are complex. With this being the case, the investigation of the study questions with simple moderation and mediation using hierarchical multiple regression, while elucidating, may not be sufficient to further explore the complexity of these relationships. Future studies may do well to
employ structural equation modeling to further understand the connections among these variables.

Another limitation is that the data gathered in this study were collected via retrospective self-report. This is especially noteworthy in considering the measurement of experiences of racial microaggressions. Specifically, the commonplace nature of racial microaggressions can make the accurate recall of the number of racial microaggressions experienced difficult to recall. The nebulous nature of racial microaggressions also influences the degree to which an individual might be able to state conclusively that a racial microaggression has occurred. Self-report measures can also be susceptible to social desirability bias. To the extent that different racial identity, color-blind attitudes, and psychological outcomes are deemed to be desirable, it is possible that participants might be inclined to endorse attitudes representative of adaptive functioning. This could be especially relevant to participants with strong group identities, as conveying positive representations of their group might supersede the desire to respond to questionnaires in individually-specific ways that might differ from a positive group representation.

Further investigation of the role of different racial coping strategies is certainly necessary. The RRCS was developed to inquire about blatant experiences with racism. Given some of the correlations between the REMS and the RRCS, an important question might be to explore the meaning of the use of strategies developed to cope with old-fashioned, blatant racism in attempting to cope with modern racism. Future investigations might do well to explore how new (and possibly different and more effective) strategies may have developed to cope with modern manifestations of racism. For example, research has not yet elaboratively explored the role of social media in coping with experiences of racism. With community building occurring
on “Black twitter” via the use of hashtags such as #blackboyjoy and #blackgirlmagic, there may be ways in which younger generations are engaging in self-love and coping strategies that would also relate to the variables of interest in this study.

It is also worth noting that the data collection of this study could also conceivably have been influenced by the election of the 45th president of the United States. One of the more divisive elections of recent times resulted in the election of an individual who has been consistently described as xenophobic, sexist, and racist. While this event is certainly significant, some would argue that the election represents a manifestation/culmination of latent oppressive (racist) sentiment—which may not constitute much of a significant change. In the introduction to this study, the idea that a post-racial society had arrived was challenged. While the concept of microaggressions certainly challenges the notion of the post-racial society, the election of the 45th president may in some ways further solidify this notion. It is likely in the coming years that research will examine the impact of this election and presidency on many of the variable of interest in this study, as has been done in the past with studies examining the impact of the first Black president on racial identity and associated variables (Fuller-Rowell et al., 2011).

Future research endeavors would be well served to examine the potential impact of additional variables on the relationships investigated in this study. For example, since racial microaggressions can often be attributionally ambiguous, it stands to reason that the task of discerning if a racial microaggression has occurred can be cognitively rigorous. The subtlety of a microaggression often implies that it could be attributed to any one of a variety of situational and dispositional factors. A determination that racism is a potential factor in the experience of a microaggression requires that an individual first is capable of entertaining the possibility that implicit racial bias may be influencing the actions of another. The construct of attributional
complexity may serve as another way of understanding the extent to which individuals are able to consider the impact of racism in the experience of racial microaggressions, which may in turn influence individuals’ racial ideology (both in terms of one’s racial identity as well as the extent to which color-blind attitudes are endorsed). Tam and colleagues (2008) define attributional complexity as a “stronger motivation to explain human behavior, stronger preference for complex rather than simple explanations, and stronger awareness of the power of social situation on human behavior” (p. 1075). These authors also found that individuals who were more attributionally complex were less likely to endorse punitive and racist attitudes. Further exploration of constructs such as attributional complexity can only serve to enrich the collective understanding of the interrelationships among racial identity, racial ideology, and racial microaggressions.

Future research may also benefit from exploring the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of a more diverse sample of Black individuals. While there are advantages to exploring the racial identity attitudes and experiences of Black college students, these attitudes and experiences only represent a fraction of the diverse experience of members of Black communities. Such research endeavors will likely entail building trust within Black communities and using a range of research and data collection methods. While quantitative methods are certainly invaluable, qualitative methods may allow for capturing of more nuanced and rich conceptualizations of racial identity and experiences of racial microaggressions that cannot be fully achieved without such methods. As our collective understanding of the multiplicity of Black identity increases, it is likely that our conceptualization of Black identity models will need to expand as well.

The complexity of the interrelationships among racial identity and ideology, racial microaggressions, racial coping, and psychological distress has been emphasized throughout this
paper. As much research as has proliferated over the past few decades, there is still much more to discover about how these variables and others are related. The stakes are especially high for clinicians, who see individuals who are routinely affected by racial microaggressions. A better understanding of these relationships will lead to more effective individual- and community-level interventions that can serve to reduce health disparities that adversely impact Black communities. This work has not been easy, and likely will never be easy–but it is worth it. In closing, I’m reminded of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1958):

Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable….Every step towards the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals….This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action.
References


doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0190272514554043


http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2007.11.002


http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1099-9809.13.3.250


APPENDICES
Appendix A: Study approval letter from the Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee

RESEARCH @ EMU

UHSRC Determination: EXEMPT

DATE: April 1, 2016

TO: Terrence Harper
Department of Psychology
Eastern Michigan University

Re: UHSRC: #878119-1
Category: Exempt category 2
Approval Date: April 1, 2016

Title: Exploring Racial Ideology, Coping, and Attributional Complexity as Moderators of the Association Between Experiencing Racial Microaggressions and Psychological Outcomes in African American College Students

Your research project, entitled Exploring Racial Ideology, Coping, and Attributional Complexity as Moderators of the Association Between Experiencing Racial Microaggressions and Psychological Outcomes in African American College Students, has been determined Exempt in accordance with federal regulation 45 CFR 46.102. UHSRC policy states that you, as the Principal Investigator, are responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of your research subjects and conducting your research as described in your protocol.

Renewals: Exempt protocols do not need to be renewed. When the project is completed, please submit the Human Subjects Study Completion Form (access through IRBNet on the UHSRC website).

Modifications: You may make minor changes (e.g., study staff changes, sample size changes, contact information changes, etc.) without submitting for review. However, if you plan to make changes that alter study design or any study instruments, you must submit a Human Subjects Approval Request Form and obtain approval prior to implementation. The form is available through IRBNet on the UHSRC website.

Problems: All major deviations from the reviewed protocol, unanticipated problems, adverse events, subject complaints, or other problems that may increase the risk to human subjects or change the category of review must be reported to the UHSRC via an Event Report form, available through IRBNet on the UHSRC website.
Follow-up: If your Exempt project is not completed and closed after three years, the UHSRC office will contact you regarding the status of the project.

Please use the UHSRC number listed above on any forms submitted that relate to this project, or on any correspondence with the UHSRC office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 734-487-3090 or via e-mail at human.subjects@emich.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Alissa Huth-Bocks, Ph.D.
Chair
CAS Human Subjects Review Committee
Appendix B: Items from the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS)

1. I was ignored at school or at work because of my race.
2. Someone’s body language showed they were scared of me, because of my race.
3. Someone assumed that I spoke a language other than English.
4. I was told that I should not complain about race.
5. Someone assumed that I grew up in a particular neighborhood because of my race.
6. Someone avoided walking near me on the street because of my race.
7. Someone told me that she or he was color-blind.
8. Someone avoided sitting next to me in a public space (e.g., restaurants, movie theaters, subways, buses) because of my race.
9. Someone assumed that I would not be intelligent because of my race.
10. I was told that I complain about race too much.
11. I received substandard service in stores compared to customers of other racial groups.
12. I observed people of my race in prominent positions at my workplace or school.
13. Someone wanted to date me only because of my race.
14. I was told that people of all racial groups experience the same obstacles.
15. My opinion was overlooked in a group discussion because of my race.
16. Someone assumed that my work would be inferior to people of other racial groups.
17. Someone acted surprised at my scholastic or professional success because of my race.
18. I observed that people of my race were the CEOs of major corporations.
19. I observed people of my race portrayed positively on television.
20. Someone did not believe me when I told them I was born in the U.S.
21. Someone assumed that I would not be educated because of my race.
22. Someone told me that I was “articulate” after she/he assumed I wouldn’t be.
23. Someone told me that all people in my racial group are all the same.
24. I observed people of my race portrayed positively in magazines.
25. An employer or co-worker was unfriendly or unwelcoming toward me because of my race.
26. I was told that people of color do not experience racism anymore.
27. Someone told me that they “don’t see color.”
28. I read popular books or magazines in which a majority of contributions featured people from my racial group.
29. Someone asked me to teach them words in my “native language.”
30. Someone told me that they do not see race.
31. Someone clenched her/his purse or wallet upon seeing me because of my race.
32. Someone assumed that I would have a lower education because of my race.
33. Someone of a different racial group has stated that there is no difference between the two of us.
34. Someone assumed that I would physically hurt them because of my race.
35. Someone assumed that I ate foods associated with my race/culture every day.
36. Someone assumed that I held a lower paying job because of my race.
37. I observed people of my race portrayed positively in movies.
38. Someone assumed that I was poor because of my race.
39. Someone told me that people should not think about race anymore.
40. Someone avoided eye contact with me because of my race.
41. I observed that someone of my race is a government official in my state.
42. Someone told me that all people in my racial group look alike.
43. Someone objectified one of my physical features because of my race.
44. An employer or co-worker treated me differently than White co-workers.
45. Someone assumed that I speak similar languages to other people in my race.
CROSS SOCIAL ATTITUDE SCALE

Appendix C: Cross Racial Identity Scale

2. How old are you?

3. Please indicate your ethnic background by circling the answer that applies to you. Choose only one category.

| a. African | e. Hispanic Black |
| b. African-American | f. Mixed |
| c. Black | g. Other |
| d. West Indian/Caribbean Black |

4. If you are currently a student, are you a high schooler □ an undergraduate □ or a graduate student □?

5. Name of School: ____________________________ 5b. City where school is located: ____________________________

6. What is your semester standing in the school you listed in #5?

7. What is the racial composition of the school listed in #5? Mostly Black □ Mixed □ Mostly White □

8. What is your current grade point average? ______

9. If you are attending college, what is your major? ____________________________

10. If you are no longer a student, what is the highest education level obtained? Circle one.

| a. Elementary school | d. Business or trade school | g. Bachelor’s or four-year degree |
| b. Some high school | e. Some college | h. Some graduate/professional school |
| c. High school diploma/equivalent | f. Associate or two-year degree | i. Graduate or professional degree |

11. If you are no longer a student, what is your current occupation? ____________________________

12. What religious affiliation do you hold? ____________________________

13. How often do you attend religious services? Seldom □ Sometimes □ Often □

14. How important is your religion to you? Not Important □ Somewhat Important □ Very Important □

15. What is the best estimate of your/your family’s yearly income before taxes? Circle “Y” for yours and “F” for family.

| a. Less than $10,000 | d. Between $30,000 and $40,000 |
| b. Between $10,000 and $20,000 | e. Between $40,000 and $60,000 |
| c. Between $20,000 and $30,000 | f. Over $60,000 |

16. How would you describe the primary community in which you were raised?

Rural □ Suburban □ Urban □ Other ____________________________

17. What is the racial composition of the community listed in #16? Mostly Black □ Mixed □ Mostly White □

18. Are you a United States citizen □ a permanent resident of the US □ or Other □ ____________________________?
19. How many ethnic organizations do you belong to? 1 2 3 4 5 5+

20. What is the highest education level obtained by your mother (or female guardian) and father (or male guardian)?
   For mother, circle the “M” in the appropriate box; for father, circle the “F.”
   | a. Elementary school | M F |
   | b. Some high school   | M F |
   | c. High school diploma or equivalent | M F |
   | d. Business or trade school | M F |
   | e. Some college        | M F |
   | f. Associate or two-year degree | M F |
   | g. Bachelor’s or four-year degree | M F |
   | h. Some graduate or professional school | M F |
   | i. Graduate or professional degree | M F |

21. How would you describe your family’s socioeconomic status?
   Poor □ Working Class □ Middle Class □ Upper Middle □ Wealthy □

22. How would you describe your current physical health?
   Very Poor □ Poor □ Fair □ Good □ Very Good □

23. How would you describe your current mental health?
   Very Poor □ Poor □ Fair □ Good □ Very Good □

**Section II**

*Instructions:* Read each item and indicate to what degree it reflects your own thoughts and feelings, using the 7-point scale below. There are no right or wrong answers. Base your responses on your opinion at the present time. To ensure that your answers can be used, please respond to the statements as written, and place your numerical response on the line provided to the left of each question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>somewhat disagree</td>
<td>neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>somewhat agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. As an African American, life in America is good for me.

2. I think of myself primarily as an American, and seldom as a member of a racial group.

3. Too many Blacks “glorize” the drug trade and fail to see opportunities that don’t involve crime.

4. I go through periods when I am down on myself because I am Black.

5. As a multiculturalist, I am connected to many groups (Hispanics, Asian-Americans, Whites, Jews, gays & lesbians, etc.).

6. I have a strong feeling of hatred and disdain for all White people.

7. I see and think about things from an Afrocentric perspective.

8. When I walk into a room, I always take note of the racial make-up of the people around me.
9. I am not so much a member of a racial group, as I am an American.

10. I sometimes struggle with negative feelings about being Black.

11. My relationship with God plays an important role in my life.

12. Blacks place more emphasis on having a good time than on hard work.

13. I believe that only those Black people who accept an Afrocentric perspective can truly solve the race problem in America.

14. I hate the White community and all that it represents.

15. When I have a chance to make a new friend, issues of race and ethnicity seldom play a role in who that person might be.

16. I believe it is important to have both a Black identity and a multicultural perspective, which is inclusive of everyone (e.g., Asians, Latinos, gays & lesbians, Jews, Whites, etc.).

17. When I look in the mirror at my Black image, sometimes I do not feel good about what I see.

18. If I had to put a label on my identity, it would be “American,” and not African American.

19. When I read the newspaper or a magazine, I always look for articles and stories that deal with race and ethnic issues.

20. Many African Americans are too lazy to see opportunities that are right in front of them.

21. As far as I am concerned, affirmative action will be needed for a long time.

22. Black people cannot truly be free until our daily lives are guided by Afrocentric values and principles.

23. White people should be destroyed.

24. I embrace my own Black identity, but I also respect and celebrate the cultural identities of other groups (e.g., Native Americans, Whites, Latinos, Jews, Asian-Americans, gays & lesbians, etc.).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>disagree</td>
<td>somewhat disagree</td>
<td>neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>somewhat agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25. Privately, I sometimes have negative feelings about being Black.

26. If I had to put myself into categories, first I would say I am an American, and second I am a member of a racial group.

27. My feelings and thoughts about God are very important to me.

28. African Americans are too quick to turn to crime to solve their problems.

29. When I have a chance to decorate a room, I tend to select pictures, posters, or works of art that express strong racial-cultural themes.

30. I hate White people.

31. I respect the ideas that other Black people hold, but I believe that the best way to solve our problems is to think Afrocentrically.

32. When I vote in an election, the first thing I think about is the candidate’s record on racial and cultural issues.

33. I believe it is important to have both a Black identity and a multicultural perspective, because this connects me to other groups (Hispanics, Asian-Americans, Whites, Jews, gays & lesbians, etc.).

34. I have developed an identity that stresses my experiences as an American more than my experiences as a member of a racial group.

35. During a typical week in my life, I think about racial and cultural issues many, many times.

36. Blacks place too much importance on racial protest and not enough on hard work and education.

37. Black people will never be free until we embrace an Afrocentric perspective.

38. My negative feelings toward White people are very intense.

39. I sometimes have negative feelings about being Black.

40. As a multiculturalist, it is important for me to be connected with individuals from all cultural backgrounds (Latinos, gays & lesbians, Jews, Native Americans, Asian-Americans, etc.).
For each statement below, please circle the number in the column that best represents how you have been feeling in the last week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Did not apply to me at all</th>
<th>Applied to me to some degree or some of the time</th>
<th>Applied to me a considerable degree or a good part of the time</th>
<th>Applied to me very much or most of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I found it hard to wind down</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I was aware of dryness of my mouth</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I experienced breathing difficulty (eg, excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I tended to over-react to situations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I experienced trembling (eg, in the hands)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I felt that I had nothing to look forward to</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I found myself getting agitated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I found it difficult to relax</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I felt down-hearted and blue</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I felt I was close to panic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I felt I wasn't worth much as a person</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I felt that I was rather touchy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (eg, sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I felt scared without any good reason.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I felt that life was meaningless</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix E: Scoring Instructions and Items from the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity

Reverse score all items that have a (R) next to them by subtracting 8 from each individuals’ score on the item. Next, average the scores for each of the items within a particular subscale. DO NOT CREATE A SUM SCORE FOR THE ENTIRE SCALE. Because the MIBI is based on multidimensional conceptualization of racial identity, a composite score from the entire scale is inappropriate.

CENTRALITY ITEMS (8): 1(R), 6, 9, 13 (R), 19, 33, 48, 51 (R)

PRIVATE REGARD ITEMS (6): 4, 7, 8, 24 (R), 54, 55

PUBLIC REGARD ITEMS (6): 5, 15, 17 (R), 52 (R), 53, 56

ASSIMILATION ITEMS (9): 10, 18, 37, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 46

HUMANIST ITEMS (9): 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35

MINORITY ITEMS (9): 20, 34, 36, 38, 42, 45, 47, 49, 50

NATIONALIST ITEMS (9): 2, 3, 11, 12, 14, 16, 21, 22, 25

### Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI)

1. Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself.  
   | Strongly Disagree | Neutral | Strongly Agree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

2. It is important for Black people to surround their children with Black art, music and literature.  
   | Strongly Disagree | Neutral | Strongly Agree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

3. Black people should not marry interracially.  
   | Strongly Disagree | Neutral | Strongly Agree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

4. I feel good about Black people.  
   | Strongly Disagree | Neutral | Strongly Agree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

5. Overall, Blacks are considered good by others.  
   | Strongly Disagree | Neutral | Strongly Agree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

6. In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image.  
   | Strongly Disagree | Neutral | Strongly Agree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

7. I am happy that I am Black.  
<p>| Strongly Disagree | Neutral | Strongly Agree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. I feel that Blacks have made major accomplishments and advancements.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Blacks who espouse separatism are as racist as White people who also espouse separatism.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Blacks would be better off if they adopted Afrocentric values.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Black students are better off going to schools that are controlled and organized by Blacks.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Being Black is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Black people must organize themselves into a separate Black political force.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. In general, others respect Black people.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Whenever possible, Blacks should buy from other Black businesses.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Most people consider Blacks, on the average, to be more ineffective than other racial groups.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. A sign of progress is that Blacks are in the mainstream of America more than ever before.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I have a strong sense of belonging to Black people.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The same forces which have led to the oppression of Blacks have also led to the oppression of other groups.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. A thorough knowledge of Black history is very important for Blacks today.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Blacks and Whites can never live in true harmony because of racial differences.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Black values should not be inconsistent with human values.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1  2</td>
<td>3  4</td>
<td>5  6  7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 24. I often regret that I am Black.                           | 1  2             | 3  4    | 5  6  7        |

| 25. White people can never be trusted where Blacks are concerned. | 1  2             | 3  4    | 5  6  7        |

| 26. Blacks should have the choice to marry interracially.       | 1  2             | 3  4    | 5  6  7        |

| 27. Blacks and Whites have more commonalities than differences. | 1  2             | 3  4    | 5  6  7        |

| 28. Black people should not consider race when buying art or selecting a book to read. | 1  2             | 3  4    | 5  6  7        |

| 29. Blacks would be better off if they were more concerned with the problems facing all people than just focusing on Black issues. | 1  2             | 3  4    | 5  6  7        |

| 30. Being an individual is more important than identifying oneself as Black. | 1  2             | 3  4    | 5  6  7        |

| 31. We are all children of a higher being, therefore, we should love people of all races. | 1  2             | 3  4    | 5  6  7        |

| 32. Blacks should judge Whites as individuals and not as members of the White race. | 1  2             | 3  4    | 5  6  7        |

| 33. I have a strong attachment to other Black people.          | 1  2             | 3  4    | 5  6  7        |

| 34. The struggle for Black liberation in America should be closely related to the struggle of other oppressed groups. | 1  2             | 3  4    | 5  6  7        |

| 35. People regardless of their race have strengths and limitations. | 1  2             | 3  4    | 5  6  7        |

<p>| 36. Blacks should learn about the oppression of other groups.   | 1  2             | 3  4    | 5  6  7        |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Because America is predominantly white, it is important that Blacks go to White schools so that they can gain experience interacting with Whites.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Black people should treat other oppressed people as allies.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Blacks should strive to be full members of the American political system.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Blacks should try to work within the system to achieve their political and economic goals.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Blacks should strive to integrate all institutions which are segregated.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>The racism Blacks have experienced is similar to that of other minority groups.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Blacks should feel free to interact socially with White people.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Blacks should view themselves as being Americans first and foremost.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>There are other people who experience racial injustice and indignities similar to Black Americans.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>The plight of Blacks in America will improve only when Blacks are in important positions within the system.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Blacks will be more successful in achieving their goals if they form coalitions with other oppressed groups.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Being Black is an important reflection of who I am.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Blacks should try to become friends with people from other oppressed groups.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
50. The dominant society devalues anything not White male oriented.  
   | Strongly Disagree | Neutral | Strongly Agree |
   | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7    |

51. Being Black is not a major factor in my social relationships.  
   | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7    |

52. Blacks are not respected by the broader society.  
   | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7    |

53. In general, other groups view Blacks in a positive manner.  
   | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7    |

54. I am proud to be Black.  
   | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7    |

55. I feel that the Black community has made valuable contributions to this society.  
   | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7    |

56. Society views Black people as an asset.  
   | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7    |
Appendix F: Items from the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS)

Racial Privilege:
1. White people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin (R).
2. Race is very important in determining who is successful and who is not (R).
3. Race plays an important role in who gets sent to prison (R).
4. Race plays a major role in the type of social services (such as type of health care or day care) that people receive in the U.S. (R).
5. Racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as white people in the U.S. (R).
6. Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich.
7. White people are more to blame for racial discrimination than racial and ethnic minorities (R).

Institutional Discrimination:
8. Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against white people.
9. White people in the U.S. are discriminated against because of the color of their skin.
10. English should be the only official language in the U.S.
11. Due to racial discrimination, programs such as affirmative action are necessary to help create equality (R).
12. Racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.
13. It is important that people begin to think of themselves as American and not African American, Mexican American, or Italian American.
14. Immigrants should try to fit into the culture and values of the U.S.

Blatant Racial Issues:
15. Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations.
16. Talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tension.
17. Racism is a major problem in the U.S. (R).
18. It is important for public schools to teach about the history and contributions of racial and ethnic minorities (R).
19. It is important for political leaders to talk about racism to help work through or solve society’s problems (R).
20. Racism may have been a problem in the past, it is not an important problem today.
Appendix G: Items from the Racism-Related Coping Scale (RRCS)

Racially Conscious Action:

1. I participated in organized efforts to combat racism and/or support Black people.
2. I worked to educate others about racism.
3. I sought out relationships/alliances with other people of color who are not Black.
4. I made a conscious decision to try to patronize only Black-owned businesses and establishments.
5. I spoke my mind about race and racism, even if others were uncomfortable.
6. I participated in more activities that celebrated Blackness.
7. I supported other people in similar situations.
8. I surrounded myself with people who can relate to my experience.
9. I started to dress or wear my hair in ways that celebrate my African heritage.

Empowered Action:

10. I informed external sources (media, civil rights organizations, etc.).
11. I took legal action.
12. I sought legal advice.
13. I made a formal complaint.
15. I threatened the person(s) or organization involved with legal action.
16. I told my story in a public forum (“testified”).
17. I demanded to speak to someone with greater authority (manager, supervisor, etc.).
18. I organized a group response (boycott, demonstration, etc.).

Constrained Resistance:

19. I threatened the person(s) or organization involved with violence.
20. I exaggerated my anger in order to intimidate the person(s) involved.
21. I only did the bare minimum to get by in my job as a form of resistance.
22. I did my job much slower or at my own pace as a form of resistance.
23. I exaggerated behaviors that are perceived to be “Black” in order to intimidate people who are not in my racial group.
24. I got revenge.

Confrontation:

25. I talked about it with the person(s) involved in order to express my feelings.
26. I talked about it with the person(s) involved in order to educate them.
27. I talked about it with the person(s) involved in order to understand their perspective.
28. I got into an angry verbal conflict with the person(s) involved.
29. I expressed my anger to the person(s) involved.
30. I confronted the person(s) involved and told them that their actions were racist.
31. I told the person(s) involved off.
32. I tried to defend myself in some way.
Hypervigilance:

33. I became more cautious around people in positions of authority.
34. I avoided anything that might bring about a similar situation (people, places, topics of conversation, etc.)
35. I became more careful about what I say and do around people who are not Black.
36. I avoided contact with White people unless absolutely necessary for a period of time.
37. I became more sensitive or cautious about interacting with people who are not Black.
38. I decided that I could no longer trust White people (or people who are not Black).
39. I withdrew from people.
40. I continue to avoid contact with White people unless absolutely necessary.
41. I thought constantly about why this happened to me.
42. I blamed myself for trusting people who are not Black.
43. I was careful to never reveal my true feelings around White people.

Bargaining:

44. I tried to understand the perspective of the perpetrator.
45. I looked for an explanation other than racism.
46. I tried to make something positive out of it.
47. I gave the person(s) involved the benefit of the doubt.
48. I tried to convince myself that it wasn’t that bad.
49. I made a conscious decision not to assume all non-Black people are racist.

Spiritual Coping:

50. I read passages in the Bible (or other religious text) to give me strength and/or guidance.
51. I relied on my faith in God or a higher power.
52. I prayed about it.
53. I sought spiritual guidance in books or other media.
54. I started going to church (or other religious institution) more often.
55. I meditated.
56. I tried to stay positive no matter what.

Anger Regulation:

57. I fantasized about getting revenge.
58. I fantasized about harming the person(s) involved or damaging/destroying their property.
59. I reacted with humor or sarcasm, or mocked the person(s) involved.