Roosevelt University

Coping with Racial Microaggressions: The Moderating Effects of Coping Strategies on Microaggression Distress

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by

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Abstract

Given the pervasiveness, chronicity, and detrimental impact of racial microaggressions, this study examined how coping strategies moderated the relationship between experiencing racial microaggressions and the distress elicited by these experiences. The strength and direction of this relationship might be altered by the use of different coping strategies. Approach coping strategies, used to directly deal with racial microaggressions, might buffer microaggression distress. Conversely, avoidance coping strategies, used to escape dealing with racial microaggressions, might exacerbate microaggression distress. Using quantitative methods, persons of color ($N = 246$) reported the frequency and distress associated with racial microaggressions and the strategies used to cope with these experiences. The approach coping strategies examined were Active Coping, Planning, Positive Reframing, Using Instrumental Support, Religion, Education/Advocacy, Counter Spaces, Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment, and Sanity Check. The coping strategies examined were Denial, Humor, Internalization, and Detachment. As hypothesized, individuals who encountered increased frequency of racial microaggressions experienced increased distress. However, of the moderating relationships found, none supported the proposed hypotheses. For example, high use of education and advocacy (Education/Advocacy) and high involvement in cultural traditions (Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment) exacerbated, rather than buffered, distress when individuals encountered more Environmental Invalidations. Also, high use of distancing oneself or being uncertain of how to respond (Detachment) reduced, rather than increased, distress when individuals encountered more Invisibility. Due to the current findings, future research is encouraged to examine the immediate and long-term use of coping strategies,

when coping strategies are implemented upon encountering racial microaggressions and the experience of implementing coping strategies, the influence of racial identity, and the outcome of coping with racial microaggressions.

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The demographic makeup of America continues to change as the number of individuals living in the United States from historically disenfranchised racial and ethnic backgrounds (i.e., African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans), referred to as *people of color* (Carter, 2007), steadily increases. The numbers of people of color in the U.S. grew substantially from 2000 to 2010 with African Americans increasing 12.3%, Hispanic Americans increasing 43%, and Asian Americans increasing 43.3% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Conversely, numbers of White people have grown at the lowest rates with Non-Hispanic Whites increasing only 4.9%. As populations of people of color increase, racism will be an issue that may invite increased attention. One such issue is how people of color cope with the stress associated with racism. However, racism has undergone a change from hostile and explicit expressions to subtle, less overt forms such as racial microaggressions, a form of racism that has become increasingly common (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010). Thus, understanding the strategies people of color use to cope with racial microaggressions might provide insight into ways to reducing the microaggression distress associated with these increasingly common experiences (Sue et al., 2010).

To fully understand the influence racial microaggressions have on people of color, one must understand how racism manifests in today's society as well as understand how individuals attempt to cope with these experiences. It is also important to understand how people of color cope as it may lead to possible strategies to alter the detrimental influence of racial microaggressions. The current study examines the coping strategies people of

color use to cope and whether these strategies exacerbate or buffer the relationship between the frequency and distress of racial microaggressions.

First, racism will be defined, including the multiple levels on which it occurs. Next, an examination of specific forms of contemporary racism along with an explanation of the racial microaggressions taxonomy and themes will be discussed. Then, the negative influence of racial microaggressions on people of color will be examined. An examination of general coping models, including how they may be limited in describing coping with racism, and an examination of adapted/altered coping models developed to address coping with racism will follow. Lastly, there will be a discussion on recent research that has examined racial microaggressions including how people of color cope with these experiences.

Racism Defined

Defining racism begins with examination of the term *race*, which is defined as a social construct that emphasizes characteristics, including physical (such as skin color, facial features, and hair texture), psychological, and behavioral traits, to rank people into hierarchically distinct groups (Carter, 2007; Jones, 1997; Sue, 2003). The heritably of physical attributes suggests a biological component to race, yet there has not been sufficient scientific support for a distinguishable biological component to differentiate individuals by race (Jones, 1997). Race is theorized to have developed as a means of establishing a systematic hierarchy of superiority between Europeans and Non-Europeans (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Race continues to be a powerful social construct used to categorize and distinguish people as different and inferior (Jones, 1997; Sue 2010). While race is used to categorize individuals based on powerful, socially constructed yet scientifically

unsupported differences, racism is the mechanism that allows race to have a detrimental influence on people of color. Racism may be defined differently depending on the level that it occurs, including individual, institutional, structural, cultural, and intragroup (Carter, 2007; Jones, 1997).

Individual racism is defined as overt, conscious, and deliberate acts of racial hatred and bigotry intended to hurt, place at a disadvantage, or discriminate against people of color (Sue, 2010). Individual racism includes the belief that people of color are inferior to White persons and thereby are deserving of inferior treatment (Carter, 2007; Jones, 1997). Individual racism is often recognized by the general public as overt hatred toward persons of color and may be referred to as *old-fashioned racism* or *traditional racism* (Sue, 2003; Sue, 2010). Although individual racism still exists, historical influences such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 have made overt expressions of racial discrimination punishable by law as well as increasingly socially unacceptable (Dividio & Gaertner, 2000; Jones, 1997).

Institutional racism is defined as any policy, practice, procedure, or structure in government, business, industry, schools, courts, or law enforcement that subordinates or excludes people of color from full participation in the benefits offered to White persons (Jones, 1997; Sue, 2003; Sue, 2010). Similarly, *structural racism* refers to the larger social system of stratification that limits people of color access and opportunity to social, educational, economic, and political participation (Carter, 2007). Institutional racism and structural racism account for the widespread influence of racism on the societal level (Carter, 2007).

Cultural racism is the expression of the belief that the cultural heritage and values, including the traditions, beliefs, language, and history of one's racial group, are superior to other racial groups (Carter, 2007; Sue, 2010). Cultural racism is considered more insidious and damaging because it encompasses and allows individual racism and institutional racism to exist (Sue, 2010). The cultural heritage and values of the dominant group are favored over other racial groups and are prevalent throughout institutional structures, ideological beliefs, and everyday actions of people (Jones, 1997). Given the dominance of White cultural values in our society, White persons have the unique power to impose cultural standards on other groups (Sue, 2010). Cultural racism may be in effect when the cultural values of people of color are viewed as different, abnormal, or inferior. Cultural racism may also be referred to as *intergroup racism* or *between-group racism*.

Intragroup racism, also referred to as *internalized racism*, is defined as a person of color accepting the dominant group's standards, values, and beliefs about one's own group resulting in an aversion towards one's own group (Sue, 2010). Repeatedly being associated with negative and inferior characteristics may influence a person of color to value and identify with qualities and beliefs that are viewed as more acceptable and favorable by the dominant group.

Taking these multiple levels into consideration, *racism*, in the current study, will be defined as attitudes, actions, and beliefs of superiority and inferiority that may be enacted on an individual, institutional, or societal level (Jones, 1997; Sue, 2010). Although people of color may express racist beliefs towards other racial groups or toward their own racial group, White people are considered to have the power to enact these

differences on a larger institutional and societal level (Sue, 2003). Similarly, perpetuating racial microaggressions serves to maintain unearned privileges that place White people at an advantage (Sue, 2010). Therefore, although people of color may commit racial microaggressions, these acts do not benefit them in the same manner.

Contemporary Racism

Racism has undergone a transformation in our society from overt and conscious to subtle and unconscious, which is believed to have begun with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that deemed discrimination on the basis of race as unlawful (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Jones, 1997; McConahay, 1986; Sears, 1988). The expression of individual racism also became increasingly socially unacceptable (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Sears, 1988). Due to widespread legal and societal changes, racism transformed into subtle and unconscious attitudes and beliefs referred to as contemporary racism. Three theories of contemporary racism that account for the transformation and persistence of racism towards people of color are symbolic racism, modern racism, and aversive racism. Each of these theories progressively explains how contemporary racism manifests, the impact it has on perpetrators, and the impact it has when perpetrators interact with people of color. An explanation of these theories provides a greater understanding of how racism has transformed in our society and how the theory of racial microaggressions expands on these theories. Notably, these theories have been developed to account for contemporary racism as manifested toward African Americans yet they are applicable to individuals of other racial/ethnic groups (Jones, 1997; Nelson, 2002; Sue, 2010).

Sears' (1988) theory of *symbolic racism*, considered to be a replacement of individual racism, is composed of prejudice feelings towards persons of color and strong endorsement of traditional values, such as individualism, self-reliance, and hard-work (Jones, 1997; Nelson, 2002). Symbolic racism is expressed as antagonism towards people of colors' demands, resentment towards people of color over special treatment, and denial of continuing discrimination towards people of color (Jones, 1997; Sears, 1988). Symbolic racists believe racism to be conceptualized as individual racism and because they do not engage in overt, hostile racial attacks, they do not consider themselves to be racist (Nelson, 2002). In symbolic racism, a strong prejudice exists under the guise of disapproval toward those who do not adhere to traditional values rather than toward racial groups (Jones, 1997). Thus, symbolic racism allows a more 'socially acceptable' expression of prejudice compared to individual racism, yet is accompanied with feelings of resentment, fear, avoidance, anger, contempt, apprehension, and lack of sympathy (Sears, 1988). Prejudice feelings are derived in part from negative views of people of color learned during pre-adult socialization rather than actual racial threats or through direct interracial contact (Sears, 1988). The pre-adult socialization process is considered to influence White persons' racial attitudes when interacting with people of color in day-to-day interactions, new situations, or when engaging in activities such as voting, serving on juries, and hiring (Jones, 1997; McConahay, 1986).

Another form of contemporary racism is McConahay's (1986) theory of *modern racism*, which asserts that White people experience ambivalence towards people of color because of the conflict between negative feelings towards people of color and the belief that racism and discrimination are wrong (Nelson, 2002). McConahay preferred the term

modern over *symbolic* because he considered contemporary racism and old-fashioned racism to both be symbolic in the sense that they were rooted in early racial socialization rather than personal experience. Modern racists do not consider themselves to be racists because they consider racism to be wrong, they conceptualize racism as individual racism, and the subtle ambivalence they experience is disguised, or unconscious, and instead is recognized as negative attitudes towards anyone who violates traditional values (Jones, 1997; McConahay, 1986; Nelson, 2002). Similar to symbolic racists, modern racists believe in values such as earning through hard work and having a strong work ethic rather than receiving support from economic programs (Nelson, 2002). Modern racists believe that discrimination is a thing of the past and that people of color are pushing their way into places they do not belong or are not wanted. They believe that the tactics and demands of people of color are unfair, and gains made through economic programs that provide employment, housing, and other opportunities, are undeserved, unfair, and give people of color more status than they deserve (Jones, 1997; McConahay, 1986; Nelson, 2002).

Lastly, Gaertner and Dovidio's (1986) theory of *aversive racism* asserts that the subtle, yet common, racist feelings and beliefs held by White people are due to the historical and current racism of American culture combined with the human cognitive processes of categorizing information (Nelson, 2002). Aversive racists have strong egalitarian values that are in conflict with unacknowledged racist feelings towards people of color, thus resulting in feelings of ambivalence (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Jones, 1997). Although symbolic racism also emphasizes feelings of ambivalence, aversive racism focuses more on how ambivalence manifests in interpersonal interactions between

White people and people of color (McConahay, 1986). Egalitarian values are a central aspect to the aversive racists, so much so that they deny conscious awareness of racist feelings (Nelson, 2002). In fact, the aversive racists sympathize with victims of past racial injustices, support public policies promoting racial equality, and identify with a liberal political agenda (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986).

Aversive racists actively engage in pro-social and anti-racist behaviors, at times even over-amplifying their behaviors to affirm their egalitarian values and nonracist beliefs (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986). Aversive racists avoid engaging in overtly prejudice behaviors, especially in situations where the behavior would be clearly attributed to racism (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986). However, in ambiguous situations, aversive racists may unintentionally engage in subtle, covert racism (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Nelson, 2002; Jones, 1997). Unlike other forms of contemporary racism, feelings of ambivalence experienced by the aversive racists may result in feelings of disgust, discomfort, uneasiness, and sometimes fear that can result in avoidance rather than anger or resentment (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Nelson, 2002). Therefore, aversive racists express racist beliefs unknowingly in subtle ways that can be rationalized. The subtle expression of racist beliefs allows individuals who identify as egalitarian to be unaware and unaffected by the negative feelings that they would encounter if faced with the dilemma of subscribing to racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000).

Racial microaggressions are most like aversive racism in that racist feelings are unconscious, rationalized, and often committed by well-intentioned White people (Sue, 2010). However, unlike aversive racism, the theory of racial microaggressions focuses more on examining the interaction between the victim and perpetrator, classifying

everyday manifestations, deconstructing hidden messages, and exploring their societal and psychological influence, including how individuals cope with these experiences (Sue, 2010). Given that symbolic racism, modern racism, and aversive racism focus more on the experiences of the perpetrator, the current study seeks to examine the experiences of people of color, particularly how people of color cope. Therefore, the current study uses the theory of racial microaggressions to examine the experiences of people of color.

Racial Microaggressions Taxonomy and Themes

The study of contemporary racism continues to expand with the revitalization of the term microaggressions. Pierce, Pierce-Gonzalez, and Wills (1977) developed the term *microaggressions* to describe African Americans' experiences with contemporary racism and described these events as "subtle, stunning, often automatic, and nonverbal exchanges which are 'put downs'" (p. 65). Sue et al. (2007) elaborated on the term specifying such acts as *racial microaggressions* defined as "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group" (p. 273). These acts are subtle, making it difficult for people to decipher whether what they experienced was a form of racism and if it was directed toward them (Sue et al., 2007). The power of racial microaggressions lies in the subtleness of the message expressed in these situations. Deciphering the hidden message is complicated by the ambiguous nature of racial microaggressions.

Additionally, the unconscious nature of racial microaggressions may inhibit perpetrators from realizing that their behavior could be interpreted as racism (Sue et al., 2007). The ambiguity of racial microaggressions, coupled with the subtle and unconscious nature of such acts, allows perpetrators to provide rational and seemingly

unbiased alternative explanations (Sue et al., 2007). The ability to rationalize subtle forms of racism, especially if alternative explanations appear plausible, further compounds the ambiguity of such acts for both victims and perpetrators (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Sue et al., 2007). Therefore, the ambiguity and constancy of racial microaggressions leaves individuals questioning their experiences and trying to make sense of interactions with White persons.

Sue et al. (2007) established a taxonomy of the different types of racial microaggressions ranging from more overt forms to more subtle covert forms of racism. In addition to validating the experiences of people of color, labeling racial microaggressions provides a language to describe these experiences and a foundation to discuss how people cope with these experiences (Sue, Capodilupo, Nadal, & Torino, 2008). Therefore, examination of the categories and themes associated with the Sue et al. taxonomy provides a comprehensive explanation of the experiences people of color encounter and a basis for the strategies individuals use to cope with these incidents.

The Sue et al. (2007) racial microaggressions taxonomy was composed of three broad categories: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. The more overt forms of racism are labeled *microassaults*, defined as explicit racial derogations meant to hurt an individual through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions (Sue et al., 2007). Microassaults are similar to individual racism. However, these acts are considered ‘micro’ because, unlike individual racism, manifestation of these privately held thoughts and feelings are expressed publicly only when the individual becomes emotionally labile, feels they are in an environment supportive of such thoughts, or when they are provided with a sense of anonymity (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010).

Microassaults are considered more overt and less common. Therefore, the two more subtle types of racial microaggressions are more commonly encountered.

Microinsults and microinvalidations are more subtle types of racial microaggressions and may manifest behaviorally, verbally or nonverbally, and environmentally. *Microinsults* are defined as subtle snubs that convey rudeness, insensitivity, and demean a person's racial heritage or identity (Sue et al., 2007; Sue 2010). Sue et al. (2007) classified four themes as subsumed under the category of microinsults: Ascription of Intelligence, Second-Class Status, Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communication Styles, and Assumption of Criminal Status.

Ascription of Intelligence referred to assigning either superior or inferior intelligence, competence, or capabilities to a person because of race (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010). For example, the assumption an Asian American is good at math or science is assigning competence. Although this may appear to be a compliment, the individual's intelligence is being ascribed to him or her based solely on being a person of color rather than individual knowledge.

Second-Class Status was when a White person receives preferential treatment over a person of color or when a person of color receives differential treatment, sending the message that people of color are inferior and deserve inferior treatment (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010). For example, when a cabdriver does not stop for a person of color but instead stops for a White person, this demonstrates preferential treatment. Although the cabdriver may be able to rationalize his or her behavior (e.g., "I did not see the person of color"), this type of incident transmits the message that White people deserve superior treatment.

Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communication styles suggested the belief that White cultural values and communication styles are normal and the cultural values and communication styles of people of color are abnormal (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010). For example, commenting to an Asian American that he should 'speak up' may be ignoring culturally congruent communication styles. This type of comment sends the message that cultural values inconsistent with the dominant cultural values are not the ideal way of being.

Lastly, the theme *Assumption of Criminal Status* referred to people of color being considered dangerous, deviant, or likely to break the law (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010). For example, a White woman who clutches her purse when an African American passes her on the street is demonstrating an assumption of criminality. This sends messages such as, 'You are a criminal,' 'You are dangerous,' or 'You do not belong here' (Sue, 2010).

As indicated by these themes, microinsults are frequently outside the conscious awareness of the perpetrator and may be rationalized as unintentional (Sue, 2010). They also send a hidden message devaluing the contributions, importance, and worth of people of color (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010).

Microinvalidations, the other more subtle type of racial microaggressions, were defined as events that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or reality of people of color (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010). The four themes classified under this category are: Alien in One's Own Land, Color Blindness, Myth of Meritocracy, and Denial of Individual Racism.

Alien in One's Own Land was when people of color are assumed to be foreign-born (Sue et al., 2007). For example, asking a person of color, 'Where were you born?' or

commenting, ‘You speak English well’ reveals the assumption that the individual is a foreigner. This sends the message, ‘You are not a true American’ (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010).

Color Blindness referred to statements made by White persons to avoid acknowledging race. For example, comments such as, ‘When I look at you, I do not see color’ or ‘America is a melting pot’ are attempts to avoid discussing or acknowledging race. These comments send the message that race is an undesirable topic of discussion, one’s racial background is not valuable and worth acknowledging, and that racial differences do not have an influence in people of color’s lives (Sue et al., 2007, Sue, 2010).

Myth of Meritocracy were the assertions that race does not influence one’s ability to succeed in life, that people of color have an equal chance to achieve success, and that inability to succeed is due to individual differences (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010). This theme sends the message that people of color are at fault for not succeeding, thereby suggesting people of color are lazy or incompetent (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010).

Lastly, *Denial of Individual Racism* referred to White people denying racial biases (Sue et al., 2007). For example, comments such as ‘I am not a racist, I have several friends who are people of color,’ suggests that White persons, as individuals, are immune to racism and that only those who express overt racism are responsible for the perpetuation and influence of racism (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010). This view attributes racism to individual pathology, thereby minimizing the pervasiveness of racism and the possibility that well-intentioned White people may unconsciously and unintentionally have racist thoughts and feelings (Sue, 2010).

Although organized and described as separate, microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations are interconnected. To emphasize this interconnectivity, *Environmental Microaggressions,* macro-level microaggressions that are apparent on systematic and environmental levels, are considered a mechanism for delivering racial microaggressions (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2009; Sue, 2010).

Racial Microaggressions Research

Research identifying racial microaggressions has primarily examined the experiences of specific racial/ethnic groups. More recent studies have examined experiences of diverse samples of people of color. Using the factors developed by Torres-Harding, Andrade, and Romero-Diaz (2012), which are largely based off of the Sue et al. (2007) taxonomy, the current study sought to examine the experiences of persons of color, not limited to but including African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans. Previous studies have examined racial microaggressions in specific context, typically academic settings. In the current study, the sample included a large number of individuals who are or have been in academic settings. However, the current study did not examine specific context (e.g., at work, on campus, in the classroom). Examination of previous studies and how the themes identified relate to one another supports the use of the factors developed by Torres-Harding et al. (2012), which are derived from a large diverse sample of people of color.

Torres-Harding et al. (2012) developed a quantitative scale to measure how frequently people experienced microaggressions and the distress elicited by these experiences in a sample of 150 African Americans, 149 Hispanic Americans, 47 multiracial individuals, and 31 Asian American, South Asian, or Middle Eastern

individuals. The scale items were developed using the Sue et al. (2007) theoretical taxonomy. In addition, themes identified in the qualitative literature (discussed next) were also used to develop the scale items. Using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, six factors were identified: Foreigner/Not Belonging, Criminality, Sexualization, Low Achieving/Undesirable, Invisibility, and Environmental Invalidations. *Foreigner/Not Belonging* referred to being treated as though one is a foreigner, not a 'true' American, or does not really belong. *Criminality* referred to being treated as if one is aggressive, dangerous, or a criminal. *Sexualization* referred to being treated in an overly sexual manner or being subjected to sexual stereotypes. *Low Achieving/Undesirable* referred to being treated as incompetent, incapable, low-achieving, or dysfunctional and that because of one's background, successes are due to unfair entitlements or special treatment. *Invisibility* referred to being dismissed, devalued, or treated of lower status. Lastly, *Environmental Invalidations* referred to negative perceptions derived from observations that people from one's own racial background are largely absent from various settings (e.g., work, school, community) or positions of power. Several of these factors reflect the findings of Sue et al. (2007) or other researchers yet they are derived from a large and diverse sample of people of color.

Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) identified themes that were similar to the factors identified by Torres-Harding et al. (2012). Solórzano et al. (2000) identified three types of racial microaggressions occurring among African American college students. Solórzano et al. (2000) defined the first theme, *Racial Microaggressions Within the Classroom Setting*, as feeling as if one's experiences were omitted, distorted, or stereotyped in the curriculum. This theme also included feeling as though faculty

maintained low expectations of African Americans. Due to the assumption of intelligence, African Americans described feelings of isolation and frustration. This theme relates to Foreigner/Not Belonging as described by Torres-Harding et al. (2012) given that the experiences of individuals were treated as though they did not belong and the theme Low Achieving/Undesirable because faculty maintained low academic expectations. The second theme, *Racial Microaggressions Outside the Classroom Setting*, is defined as feelings of discomfort on campus and, in particular, in departments on campus (Solórzano et al., 2000). This theme included feeling as though one is unaccepted in academic areas because they are a person of color. This theme also relates to Foreigner/Not Belonging as described by Torres-Harding et al. (2012) due to individuals feeling as though they were unaccepted. Lastly, the theme *Racial Microaggressions Within Social Spaces on Campus* is defined as African Americans experiencing a 'double standard' on campus (Solórzano et al., 2000). This theme included students being questioned by campus police despite not engaging in any illegal or inappropriate actions. This theme relates to Criminality as described by Torres-Harding et al. (2012) because individuals were assumed to be engaging in criminal activity.

Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solórzano (2009) also identified racial microagression themes similar to the findings of Torres-Harding et al. (2012) but among Latino college students. Yosso et al. (2009) identified three racial microaggression themes: Interpersonal Racial Microaggressions, Racial Jokes as Microaggressions, and Institutional Microaggressions. The theme *Interpersonal Racial Microaggressions* referred to verbal and nonverbal racial affronts from students, faculty, teaching assistants, or other

individuals in academic and social spaces (Yosso et al., 2009). This theme included feelings of being intellectually inferior due to White students not allowing Latino students to join a study group under the guise that the group was 'full' (Yosso et al., 2009). This theme relates to Low Achieving/Undesirable as described by Torres et al. (2012) because individuals were treated as intellectually inferior. *Racial Jokes as Microaggressions* referred to witnessing or being the target of compulsive racial joke-telling by White students. This theme included the use of racial stereotypes or epithets that may result in Latino students feeling inferior and threatened. Also, Latino students may feel guilt if, because of these feelings, they decided to ignore the jokes. Although emphasizing joke-telling as the means of expressing racial microaggressions, this theme appears to be similar to Invisibility as described by Torres-Harding et al. (2012) due to the devaluing nature of this theme. Lastly, the theme *Institutional Microaggressions* referred to racially marginalizing actions of the university evidenced in structures, practices, and discourses that endorse a campus climate hostile to people of color (Yosso et al., 2009). This theme included having limited or no physical representations of Latino culture as well as having limited or no faculty or staff who represent Latino culture. This theme is similar to Environmental Invalidations as described by Torres-Harding et al. (2012) because people of one's own background were limited or absent.

The Torres-Harding et al. (2012) factors are also similar to the Sue et al. (2007) racial microaggression themes found to occur among individuals of certain racial/ethnic groups. For example, the themes Assumption of Intelligence, Second-Class Status, Assumption of Criminal Status, and Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communication Styles were identified to occur primarily among African Americans (Sue, Nadal,

Capodilupo, Lin, Tornio, & Rivera, 2008; Sue, 2010). In comparison to Asian Americans who tend to encounter the theme Ascription of Intelligence as intellectual superiority, African Americans appear to encounter the theme Ascription of Intelligence as intellectual inferiority, being inarticulate, and lacking common sense (Sue, Nadal, et al. 2008; Sue, Bucceri, et al. 2009; Sue, 2010). Hispanic Americans appear to experience the theme Ascription of Intelligence in a similar manner as African Americans (Rivera, Forquer, & Rangel, 2010; Sue, 2010). Similar to African Americans, Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans appear to experience the theme Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communication Styles, although different aspects of each group's culture/values are criticized (Rivera et al., 2010; Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2009). Although occurring variably among groups, these themes are similar to several of the Torres-Harding et al. (2012) factors including Foreigner/Not Belonging, Criminality, Low Achieving/Undesirable, and Invisibility.

Similar to African Americans, Asian Americans have been found to encounter the themes Alien in Own Land, Ascription of Intelligence, Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communication Styles, and Second-Class Status (Sue, 2010; Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2009). These themes are similar to Foreigner/Not Belonging and Invisibility as described by Torres-Harding et al. (2012). Additionally, specific themes occurred among Asian Americans such as Exoticization of Asian American women and Invisibility (Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2009). The theme *Exoticization of Asian American Women* equated Asian American women to exotic, sexual objects who are subservient to men (Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2009). Similar to Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans encountered a theme also related to sexuality, referred to as *Childbearing Practices*, which assumed that Hispanic

Americans are illegitimate children, are children of teenage mothers, and that Hispanic Americans have too many children (Rivera et al., 2010). The themes encountered by Asian American and Hispanic American women appear to be similar to Sexualization as described by Torres-Harding et al. (2012). As indicated by examining racial microaggressions that occur among these diverse groups, some themes occur similarly among different racial/ethnic groups while other themes occur differently among different racial/ethnic groups.

Many of the studies examined have been qualitative and identified specific groups of individuals (e.g., African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans). Although qualitative approaches have provided an important initial examination and identification of racial microaggressions, the use of quantitative approaches may provide a comprehensive examination of both the presence and influence of racial microaggressions among larger groups of individuals. While these studies may be internally valid, external validity cannot be assumed. Thus, findings derived from examining only specific groups might not generalize to other racial groups or diverse samples of people of color.

Similar to Torres-Harding et al. (2012), research has increasingly examined the occurrence of racial microaggressions among diverse samples of people of color, rather than specified groups, and has also begun to examine larger groups of individuals. For example, among a group of students, including 8 African Americans, 3 Asian Americans, 2 Hispanic Americans, and 1 bi-racial individual, the racial microaggression themes experienced were Ascription of Intelligence, Alien in Own Land, *Denial of Racial Reality* (defined as rejecting, dismissing, or invalidating students of color's racial reality), and

Assumption of Criminality (Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, & Rivera, 2009). The experiences of this diverse group consisted of previously identified racial microaggression themes. An additional theme arose that appears to provide a broader explanation of the experiences encountered by individuals from different groups and further support the use of the Torres-Harding et al. (2012) factor Invisibility.

Similarly, Torres, Driscoll, and Burrow (2010) used qualitative methods and identified three racial microaggression themes among a group of 97 African Americans: Assumption of Criminality/Second-Class Citizen, Underestimation of Personal Ability, and Cultural/Racial Isolation. The theme *Assumption of Criminality/Second-Class Citizen* referred to negative events associated with race in which the individual is thought to be doing something illegal or the individual was treated as a lesser person. The theme *Underestimation of Personal Ability* included stereotypes and negative perceptions regarding the ability to succeed in academia. This theme included a sense of constantly having to prove one's ability within multiple contexts. Lastly, the theme *Cultural/Racial Isolation* referred to being singled out because of race or feeling marginalized due to lack of same race-peers. The themes identified by Torres et al. (2010) relate to several of the Torres-Harding et al. (2012) factors including Foreigner/Not Belonging, Criminality, Low Achieving/Undesirable, Invisibility, and Environmental Invalidations.

The Racial Microaggressions Scale (Torres-Harding et al., 2012), which this author helped to develop, was created to assess the occurrence of racial microaggressions experienced by people of color. Given that one component of the current study is to examine the frequency and distress of racial microaggressions encountered by people of color, this quantitative measure was appropriate. In addition, the factors composing the

Racial Microaggressions Scale are similar to themes identified in previous studies (as previously discussed). These factors appear to be applicable across a wide range of studies, thus supporting the use of the Racial Microaggressions Scale in the current study. Although Nadal (2011) has since developed a measure examining racial and ethnic microaggressions, no measures were available when developing the current study. Therefore, the Torres-Harding et al. (2012) factors were used in the current study to examine the frequency and distress of racial microaggressions encountered by a large and diverse sample of people of color.

Influence of Racial Microaggressions on Well-Being

Racial microaggressions are considered to have a detrimental influence on the psychological, physiological, and social well-being of people of color, more so than overt forms of racism because they are subtle, unconscious, pervasive, and constant (Solórzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010). Furthermore, experiencing a racial microaggression, or perceiving an experience as a possible racial microaggression, results in the expenditure of cognitive effort, or psychic energy, in deciphering the experience (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010). Psychic energy is expended in an attempt to understand the underlying message of the situation, to protect oneself, and to determine what, if anything, should be done in response (Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2009; Sue, 2010). Racial microaggressions promote thinking defensively, which consists of inner deliberation about what one can do, should not do, or cannot do (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000). The expenditure of psychic energy may influence the person socially and limit or prevent them from fully engaging in their social environment (Sue, 2010). Therefore, racial

microaggressions are considered markedly different and more detrimental than ordinary life stressors (Sue, 2010).

A stressor is an event that is perceived to exceed or strain one's resources, including events that involve harm, present a current or future threat, or present a challenge (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). A stressor is also an event in which an individual's resources are threatened with loss, when resources are lost, and when an individual fails to obtain sufficient resources following significant resource investment (Hobfoll, 2001). Although all people encounter stressors throughout life, racism may be a unique stressor given its pervasive and systematic influence and the influence it can have on one's self-worth (Smith, Steward, Myers, & Latu, 2008). These experiences have been found to be significantly more powerful predictors of psychological distress than stressful life events (Utsey, Giesbrecht, Hood, & Stanard, 2008). Also, the duration of the impact of racism has been found to be long lasting. For example, Carter and Forsyth (2010) found that among a sample of 260 people of color, 78% experienced a racist incident as stressful and 54% stated that the incident had a significant negative impact. Furthermore, 55% of the incidents occurred between 5 and 10 years earlier indicating both the significant and lasting negative impact of racism (Carter & Forsyth, 2010).

General Coping Models

Several terms have been coined to encompass the detrimental influence specific to racism. *Racial/ethnic stress* is defined as a unique form of stress derived from appraising an event as troubling because of one's race or ethnicity resulting in psychological discomfort (Thompson, 2006). Similarly, *racial stress* is defined as psychological discomfort resulting from an event that an individual appraises as troubling because of

one's race (Plummer & Slane, 1996). Carter (2007) defined *race-related traumatic stress* as derived from perceiving a race-related event as negative, sudden, and uncontrollable, with reactions that include some level of intrusion, avoidance, or arousal. As indicated by these different terms, belonging to a racial group and the subsequent racism encountered has a detrimental and troubling impact. In addition, perception of the event as related to one's race appeared to be an important aspect in determining whether one has encountered racism. Therefore, the appraisal of a racism-related stressful event may be considered the first step in attempting to cope with racial microaggressions.

The determination of whether one has experienced a racial microaggression is accompanied by the perception that one has been mistreated (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010). When examining coping, the emphasis on perception or appraisal appeared to be derived from the prominent general stress coping model developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). This coping model focused on how people attempt to manage commonly encountered stressors. The initial step when encountering a stressor was to appraise the event. Lazarus and Folkman described two approaches to appraising an event. The first approach, *primary appraisal*, referred to the process of evaluating whether an event was irrelevant, positive, or stressful. After an event was determined to be stressful (threatening, harmful, or challenging), a process of determining what can be done was defined as *secondary appraisal*. Primary and secondary appraisal processes were not linear but rather an interaction between recognizing one's ability to cope and the appraised threat of an event based on those coping abilities (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

In Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) model, *coping* was defined as cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific demands that are appraised as exceeding or

straining the resources of the person. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identified two strategies to cope with stressors, emotion-focused and problem-focused. *Emotion-focused coping* referred to responses that attempt to change the way an event is experienced because nothing can change the harmful and threatening conditions of the situation. *Problem-focused coping* used a process of recognizing a problem, developing strategies, generating, evaluating, and implementing solutions to resolve the problem encountered. The Lazarus and Folkman model establishes an initial foundation for understanding how people of color may perceive an event as stressful and subsequently appraise whether they can cope with and attempt to manage the stress associated with the event. However, there appears to be limits to this model, including the artificial distinction between emotion-focused and problem-focused coping categories and the usefulness of more accurately identifying and labeling specific coping responses.

The emotion-focused and problem-focused coping categories were limited in several ways. First, emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies may actually co-occur rather than be two distinct strategies (Carver, 2011; Carver & Schier, 1994). The emotion-focused strategy may serve to prepare one for more problem-focused coping and the problem-focused strategy may serve to reduce the emotional impact of a stressor (Carver & Schier, 1994). Secondly, these two strategies may not comprehensively account for possible coping responses (Carver, 2011). For example, seeking social support may be considered to be either strategy, emotion-focused or problem-focused, depending on the desired effect (Carver, 2011). Furthermore, the distinction between emotion-focused and problem-focused does not provide specific information about whether a coping strategy is helpful or unhelpful.

Carver, Weintraub, and Scheier (1989) expanded on the Lazarus and Folkman (1984) model and developed the multidimensional coping model. This model expanded on the problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies to include a subset of specific coping strategies. The expansion of problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping served to extrapolate on the rather stark distinction assumed to exist between the two approaches (Carver et al., 1989). An approach and avoidance distinction, rather than just an emotion and problem distinction, were incorporated into the coping strategies (Carver, 2011). *Approach coping* referred to the efforts made to directly deal with the stressor as well as the emotions elicited because of it (Carver, 2011). These types of strategies corresponded to the Lazarus and Folkman problem-focused coping strategy and were considered active resolution seeking approaches. *Avoidance coping* referred to the efforts made in order to escape from having to deal with the stressor or associated emotions (Carver, 2011). The inclusion of the approach-avoidance distinction served to emphasize the functionality of a coping response. For example, avoidance coping strategies, which are often associated with emotion-focused strategies, were considered to be more useful in the short-term and may allow the opportunity for emotions to calm (Carver et al., 1989). However, some avoidance coping strategies may create problems of their own, such as the use of substances (Carver et al., 1989).

This multidimensional model allows for the identification of specific coping strategies and examination of the functionality that is related to each coping strategy. In the multidimensional model, Carver et al. (1989) conceptualized functionality as an important aspect of coping strategies, with approach coping being more adaptive than avoidance coping, and avoidance coping strategies being more functional than strategies

that may result in secondary problems (e.g., use of substances). Carver et al. recognized that, at times, strategies might be less adaptive, particularly if they interfere with using more adaptive coping and when occurring over long periods. Notably, Carver et al. found that people relied on more active coping strategies when they perceived the situation to be one that they could control or do something about. However, when the situation was one that people perceived they could do nothing about or had less control over, they relied on strategies considered less functional but which may have been adaptive to a situation where attempting to exert control is unrealistic.

The current study examined the degree to which coping strategies were used to determine how they moderate the relationship between the frequency and distress of racial microaggressions. Also, coping strategies were differentiated using the approach-avoidance distinction (Carver, 2011). The current study examined the following general coping strategies because, consistent with approach coping strategies, they are proactive and they are used to directly address racial microaggressions or the feelings associated with racial microaggressions: Active Coping, Planning, Positive Reframing, Using Emotional Support, Using Instrumental Support, and Religion. The general coping strategies Humor and Denial were also examined. Unlike the coping strategies above, these coping strategies appear passive and used to avoid dealing with racial microaggressions or the feelings associated with racial microaggressions. Therefore, they appear consistent with avoidance coping strategies. Examination of these strategies might provide an understanding of how individuals cope with racial microaggressions. However, these general coping strategies alone might not provide a comprehensive

examination of coping with racial microaggressions. Therefore, coping strategies specific to coping with racism, discussed next, must also be considered.

Racism and Discrimination Coping Models

Due to racial stress exceeding general stress and the possibility that general coping models are insufficient in identifying how individuals cope with racism, several researchers have proposed adaptations to general coping models. Slavin, Rainer, McCreary, and Gowda (1991) developed a multicultural model examining the relation of culture, race, socioeconomic class status, and gender to stress. The Slavin et al. (1991) multicultural model elaborated on several elements of the Lazarus and Folkman (1984) model including potential occurrence of a stressful event, primary appraisal, secondary appraisal, coping efforts, and adaptation outcomes. Slavin et al. (1991) described one component of the primary appraisal process as questioning whether the occurrence of the event is related to the person's race. Consistent with the theory of racial microaggressions, the ambiguity and rationalization associated with these events can leave a person questioning whether what occurred was racially motivated (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008).

Furthermore, the secondary appraisal process in the Slavin et al. (1991) multicultural model included beliefs about how one may cope. This included strong beliefs about racism and systematic oppression towards people of color, which may influence the perceived usefulness of some coping strategies. Slavin et al. (1991) indicated that selection of coping strategies might be related to the dominant culture's formal and informal expectation of the individual's culture. Given that the culture, values, and communication styles of people of color are pathologized, it is possible that

White people will also view coping strategies used by people of color as pathological (Slavin, 1991). The adaptations provided by the Slavin et al. multicultural model may be relevant when examining how persons of color cope with racial microaggressions.

Outlaw (1993) also reformulated the Lazarus and Folkman (1984) model to examine the appraisal, stress, and coping strategies of African Americans dealing with racism. Outlaw addressed several limitations of the Lazarus and Folkman coping model. For example, Outlaw claimed that African Americans' appraisal process included only events that are stressful rather than positive or irrelevant. Outlaw stated that all encounters are stressful given that African Americans are constantly aware of the negative effects of racism and that all events contain possible racial implications. Furthermore, Outlaw suggested that the appraisal process in itself might be stressful because of the constant presence of racism.

Outlaw (1993) stated that how African Americans respond to racist events varies. Outlaw proposed that if the event is perceived as threatening, African Americans may develop anticipatory coping responses in which they alter or avoid certain behaviors to reduce or avoid future threats. If the event is perceived as harmful, African Americans might exhibit passive emotional reactions such as withdrawal, depression, and shame (Outlaw, 1993). The theory proposed by Outlaw appears to provide an initial understanding of how African Americans might perceive racism. This theory might also be helpful in understanding how people of color experience and cope with racial microaggressions.

Similar to Outlaw (1993) and Slavin et al. (1991), Wei, Alvarez, Ku, Russell, and Bonett (2010) recognized that utilizing general coping models to understand how people

cope with racism might be insufficient and subsequently developed a measure to examine specific strategies used to cope with racism. Wei et al. examined the Carver et al. (1989) multidimensional model to determine whether racism may be examined using general coping strategies. However, Wei et al. considered the general coping strategies used by the multidimensional model to be insufficient as the models may overlook unique coping strategies used to cope with racism.

Wei et al. (2010) used the term *discrimination* to address the comprehensive influence racism has on people of color, ranging from major life events, differential treatment, and verbal harassment. Consistent with the theory of racial microaggressions, Wei et al. asserted that racial discrimination is pervasive, influences cultural norms, targets both the individual and the group, and occurs on individual and institutional levels. Wei et al. identified five specific racism-specific coping strategies: Education/Advocacy, Internalization, Drug and Alcohol Use, Resistance, and Detachment.

Notably, some of the coping strategies identified by Wei et al. (2010) appear to indicate problematic or pathological coping responses to racism. Although such types of coping strategies are not unconceivable responses to racism, people of color appear to utilize additional coping strategies when encountering racial microaggressions (Hernández et al., 2010; Torres et al. 2010). In addition to using the Wei et al. racism-specific coping strategies, the examination of additional coping strategies derived from studies that have examined racial microaggressions may provide important information regarding strategies people use to cope with racial microaggressions.

Coping with Racial Microaggressions

The nature of racial microaggressions, particularly the subtleness, ambiguity, and pervasiveness of these events, may complicate the coping process (Sue, 2010). Several studies have indirectly alluded to possible strategies to cope with racial microaggressions (Constantine, Smith, Redington, & Owens, 2008; Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2009; Sue, Lin, et al., 2009; Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009). However, few studies (i.e., Hernández et al., 2010 and Torres et al. 2010) have explicitly examined how people of color cope with racial microaggressions. Reviews of studies that have explored coping strategies appear to identify additional strategies worthy of further examination.

Sue, Capodilupo, and Holder (2008) examined how African Americans perceived, interpreted, and reacted to racial microaggressions. Using a qualitative approach among a small sample of 13 African American who were either graduate students in clinical psychology or worked in higher education, they identified five domains in which participants processed racial microaggressions: Incident, Perception, Reaction, Interpretation, and Consequence. Referred to as the racial microaggression process, these domains indicate a sequential nature when encountering racial microaggressions (Sue, 2010). Elaboration of these domains might identify coping strategies used at different points throughout the process. The *Incident* domain reflected the mode of the racial microaggression including verbal, nonverbal/behavioral, and environmental. The *Perception* domain addressed participants' beliefs of whether a racial microaggression occurred or not. The *Interpretation* domain reflected the meaning participants attributed to the racial microaggressions, which appear to be related to racial microaggression themes.

The two domains that appeared to be related to coping were Reaction and Consequence. *Reaction* referred to the immediate response and inner struggle that evokes strong cognitive, behavioral, and emotional reactions. Sue, Capodilupo, and Holder (2008) described the reaction domain as consisting of the following immediate responses: Healthy Paranoia, Sanity Check, Empowering and Validating Self, and Rescuing Offenders. *Healthy Paranoia* referred to suspiciousness, or sense of paranoia, that the person experiences before or after a racial microaggression and is considered necessary due to the frequency of racial microaggressions encountered. *Sanity Check* was defined as using others including friends, families, and coworkers, to evaluate their perception that a racial microaggression occurred. *Empowering and Validating Self* referred to blaming the White aggressor for the occurrence of the incident rather than blaming oneself thereby avoiding self-blame. Lastly, *Rescuing Offenders* referred to feeling a need to take care of the White person's feelings before attending to one's own despite believing that the White person committed a racial microaggression.

The last of the five domains, *Consequence*, referred to the psychological effects of the racial microaggression on the recipient (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). This domain included how racial microaggressions affect behavioral patterns, coping strategies, cognitive reasoning, psychological well-being, and worldview over time (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). The consequence domain consisted of the following feelings as described by participants: powerlessness, invisibility, forced compliance and loss of integrity, and pressure to represent one's group. *Powerlessness* was feeling trapped and having little control over stopping the persistence of racial microaggressions due to feeling forced to accept White people's tendency to constantly define one's racial

reality. *Invisibility* meant feeling unacknowledged and as though one's contributions and presence were considered less valuable and visible than that of White people. This included feeling as though one must impress others to gain recognition. *Forced compliance and loss of integrity* referred to feeling as though one is navigating daily between two worlds, their own world and the White peoples' world. This included feelings of uneasiness, disingenuousness, and self-sacrificing to conform to White standards. Lastly, *pressure to represent one's group* was feeling an increased pressure to represent one's race by not making mistakes or acting in ways that may conform to racial stereotypes.

Although reaction and consequence domains both appeared to relate to coping strategies, the consequence domain of the racial microaggression process focused on the psychological effects of racial microaggressions while the reaction domain focused on the immediate response to racial microaggressions (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Sue, 2010). Sue, Capodilupo, and Holder (2008) recommended that future research identify common coping strategies used in response to encountering racial microaggressions and whether certain responses may be functional or dysfunctional. Furthermore, certain coping strategies might be in response to encountering certain racial microaggression themes. The two responses associated with the reaction domain, Sanity Check and Rescuing Offenders, and the feeling associated with consequence domain, Pressure to Represent One's Group, appear unique to coping with racial microaggressions and do not appear to be represented in existing coping measures. Therefore, as part of the current study, the author developed items to examine the use of these domains as coping strategies.

In an examination of the effects of racial microaggressions on African American faculty members using a qualitative approach, Constantine et al. (2008) identified seven themes among 12 participants' responses: alternating feelings of invisibility/marginalization and hypervisibility; qualifications or credentials questioned or challenged by other faculty colleagues, staff members, or students; receiving inadequate mentoring in the workplace; organizational expectations to serve in service-oriented roles with low-perceived value by administrators or other faculty colleagues; difficulties determining whether subtle discrimination as race or gender based; self-consciousness regarding choice of clothing, hairstyle, or manner of speech; and coping strategies to address racial microaggressions. The theme most prominent to the current study is how African American participants attempted to cope with racial microaggressions.

Constantine et al. (2008) found that coping strategies most commonly used among African American faculty members were: seeking support from colleagues, friends, partners, and family members; making deliberate decisions about when and how to confront racial microaggressions; prayer or other spiritual forms of coping with difficult situations; interpersonal or emotional withdrawal from faculty members perceived to exhibit racial microaggressions; and resignation that subtle racist treatment will always exist to some degree in academia. Many of these coping strategies appeared to be ways to accommodate the presence of racial microaggressions in academia (Constantine et al., 2008). The emphasis on avoidance coping strategies among counseling and psychological counseling faculty appeared to indicate the debilitating and harmful effects of racial microaggressions as well as the limited functional coping strategies (Constantine et al., 2008). The coping strategies identified by Constantine et al. appeared consist with

strategies identified in both general coping models (e.g., Using Instrumental Support, Using Emotional Support, and Religion) and racism coping models (e.g., Resistance, and Detachment). Thus, the coping strategies Using Instrumental Support, Using Emotional Support, Religion, Resistance, and Detachment warrant further consideration using a large sample of participants.

In examining racial microaggressions experienced by a sample of 34 African American students, Solórzano et al. (2000) found that counter spaces were used as a coping strategy. *Counter Spaces* were academic and social sites, on and off campus, where individuals established and maintained a positive collegiate racial climate (Solórzano et al., 2000). These sites served to nurture, validate, and support racial organizations and allow individuals to vent their frustration and experiences with racial microaggressions (Solórzano et al., 2000). Counter Spaces were a form of social support that allowed individuals the opportunity to cope and access resources including educational, emotional, and cultural support (Solórzano et al., 2000). Social support may be considered an important coping strategy used by persons of color, especially in contexts with small populations of color. However, no measures were found that examined the use of Counter Spaces as described by Solórzano et al. (2010). Therefore, items were developed by the author to examine the use of Counter Spaces as a coping strategy in the current study.

Yosso et al. (2009) used a qualitative approach to examine racial microaggressions among a sample of 37 Latino undergraduates. In addition to identifying racial microaggression themes encountered, Yosso et al. discussed the use of community building as a coping strategy. Developing communities provided students with a sense of

cultural nourishment and replenishment, a sense of family, validation, and support (Yosso et al., 2009). As also discussed by Solórzano et al. (2000), Counter Spaces served to provide social support including access to study groups and student organizations and exposure to Latino histories and experiences (Yosso et al., 2009). Latino students expressed feeling as though they had to constantly work hard to prove racial stereotypes wrong, both on and off campus, and felt responsible for improving race relations despite feeling as though they were often met with resistance from White students (Yosso et al., 2009). Therefore, Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment and Attempts to Counter Racial Stereotypes were developed and examined as possible coping strategies in the current study. Similarly, Rescuing Offenders, described by Sue Capodilupo, and Holder (2008) as feeling responsible for improving race relations, was also developed and examined as a coping strategy in the current study.

In addition to identifying racial microaggressions among 14 persons of color (8 African Americans, 3 Asian Americans, 2 Hispanic Americans, and 1 bi-racial individual), Sue, Lin, et al. (2009) also identified several cognitive, behavioral, and emotional reactions that individuals experience in response to racial microaggressions. In the cognitive domain, participants described reactions that included whether or not to verbally respond, evaluating the emotional support available in the classroom, evaluating the potential consequences of responding, and hiding or limiting expression of their true thoughts or feelings. In the behavioral domain, participants described behaving in a particular way so that they may be heard or accepted, often resulting in a threatened sense of integrity. In the emotional domain, participants described emotional reactions to the incidents including feelings of anger, frustration, anxiety, fear, exhaustion, invalidation,

and having their integrity attacked. Sue, Lin, et al. did not explicitly categorize or label the reactions people used as coping strategies. However, several reactions appeared to be attempts to manage or cope with the racial microaggressions experienced, particularly those in the cognitive and behavioral domain. These multiple responses appeared to support the various coping strategies discussed thus far (e.g., Using Instrumental Support, Using Emotional Support, Detachment, and Attempts to Counter Racial Stereotypes). Researchers have suggested from these qualitative investigations that these coping strategies might occur in other groups. However, to date, little research has examined the degree to which these coping strategies are used across people of color from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, empirical examination among a diverse group of people is warranted to test whether these results are generalizable to other people.

Hernández et al. (2010) examined how mental health professionals of color coped with racial microaggressions. U.S. participants consisted of five African Americans, four Latinas, two Asian Americans, and an Asian. Hernández et al. identified eight themes individuals used to cope with racial microaggressions: Identifying Key Issues in Deciding How to Respond to a Racial Microaggression, Self-Care, Spirituality, Confronting the Aggressor, Seeking Support from White Allies, Keeping Records and Documenting Experiences of Microaggressions, Mentoring, and Organizing Public Responses. Several themes, or aspects of these themes, appeared consistent with coping strategies that were examined in the current study.

The theme *Identifying Key Issues in Deciding How to Respond to a Racial Microaggression* referred to the process of identifying thoughts, feelings, and responses to perceived racial microaggressions, the awareness that one must balance the knowledge

that racism exists while distancing oneself from a racist situation, and reminding oneself not to interpret every situation as racial (Hernández et al., 2010). This theme also included responding to one's need for self-care, choosing if, how, and when to respond, whether responding should be done individually or collectively, and responding for the protection of others. This theme appeared to consist of several specific coping strategies previously identified, including the racism-specific coping strategies Sanity Check (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008) and Counter Spaces (Solórzano et al. 2000; Yosso et al., 2009) as well as the general coping strategies Active Coping, Planning, Using Emotional Support, and Using Instrumental Support (Carver, 1997; Carver et al., 1989). Given the multitude of components associated with this theme, it may be unclear which aspects of this strategy might be used to help individuals cope. Thus, the current study examined the coping strategies previously discussed.

The themes Self-Care, Spirituality, and Confronting the Aggressor appeared to be more specific and similar to coping strategies already identified. Thus, examination of the coping strategies previously discussed is further supported. For example, Hernández et al. (2010) defined the theme *Self-Care* as strategies to care for oneself on a regular basis due to the frequency of racial microaggressions, which included taking pride in one's ethnic heritage. This appears similar to the coping strategy Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment (Yosso et al., 2009). The theme *Spirituality* referred to one's faith serving as support to overcome the frustration experienced because of racial microaggressions (Hernández et al., 2010). Religion and spirituality have been identified as coping strategies to cope with racial microaggressions as well as with general stressors (Carver, 1997; Carver, 2011; Carver et al., 1989, Constantine et al., 2008). Lastly, the theme *Confronting the*

Aggressor referenced directly challenging microinsults and microinvalidations, verbalizing the need to address and discuss an issue, being proactive about educating others, and using humor, in a mildly sarcastic, non-threatening manner to confront racial microaggressions (Hernández et al., 2010). The coping strategy Education/Advocacy, as developed by Wei et al. (2010), appears to be worthy of further investigation given the proactive and educational aspect of the theme Confronting the Aggressor. The use of humor, as described by Hernández et al., appears to be similar to the coping strategy of empowering and validating the self, in which the individual shields or empowers oneself by identifying that racial microaggressions are the fault of the aggressor and not themselves (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). In the current study, Humor will be examined using the Brief Cope (Carver, 1997).

Similar to the general coping strategies previously discussed, the degree to which racism-related coping strategies were used was examined to determine how they moderated the relationship between the frequency and distress of racial microaggressions. Racism-related coping strategies were also differentiated using the approach-avoidance distinction (Carver, 2011). The following racism-related coping strategies are consistent with approach coping strategies and address racial microaggressions or the emotions that that occur because of racial microaggressions: Education/Advocacy, Counter Spaces, Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment, and Sanity Check. Conversely, the following racism-related coping strategies are consistent with avoidance coping strategies due to these coping strategies being used to try to avoid or escape racial microaggressions or the emotions associated with racial microaggressions: Internalization, Drug and Alcohol Use,

Resistance, Detachment, Attempts to Counter Racial Stereotypes, and Rescuing Offenders.

The current study examined approach coping strategies and avoidance coping strategies to determine whether they moderated the relationship between the frequency and distress of racial microaggressions, albeit in different directions. A coping strategy serves as a moderator when it affects the direction and/or strength of an effect (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Holmeck, 1997). The effect examined in the current study was the relationship between the frequency of racial microaggressions and microaggression distress. Also, a moderator is considered to interact with the frequency of racial microaggressions in such a way that it influences distress (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Holmbeck, 1997). Although coping strategies may also be examined as mediators, the current study examined them as moderators because, as a mediator, coping strategies would occur as a result of encountering racial microaggressions, which in turn would result in distress (Holmbeck, 1997). However, a relationship may exist between the frequency of racial microaggressions and distress without the presence of coping strategies.

In the current study, approach coping strategies were examined to determine whether they buffered or reduced microaggression distress. As previously discussed, approach coping strategies are used to directly deal with racial microaggressions or the associated feelings. These coping strategies appear to be an active and functional means of dealing with the difficult and upsetting experience associated with frequently encountering racial microaggressions. On the other hand, avoidance coping strategies were examined to determine whether they exacerbated or increased microaggression

distress. Approach coping strategies appear to be less functional, create problems of their own, and are used to escape rather than dealing with racial microaggressions or the troubling feelings associated with racial microaggressions. The use of approach coping strategies and avoidance coping strategies as moderators suggests that coping can alter the relationship between the frequency and distress of racial microaggressions.

To date, only one study has examined how coping strategies moderated the effects of racial microaggressions. Using a mixed methods approach, Torres et al. (2010) examined how African Americans cope with racial microaggressions. After using a qualitative approach to identify types of racial microaggressions (Assumption of Criminality/Second Class Citizen, Underestimation of Personal Ability, and Cultural/Racial Isolation) experienced by participants (as previously discussed), a quantitative approach was used to examine how, among a sample of 174 participants, active coping moderated the relationship between racial microaggressions and perceived stress. Active coping was described as a component of general competence by which individuals take proactive agency and initiative in their life thus facilitating acclimation to and mastering of the immediate environment. Torres et al. found that active coping moderated perceived stress such that individuals who endorsed use of active coping behaviors reported lower perceived stress. Taking action against racial microaggressions might result in the person feeling reaffirmed in their skills, abilities, and perhaps even in their sense of self. Also, individuals may experience an increased ability to navigate and respond to a challenging environment resulting in less perceived stress. The findings of Torres et al. indicate that proactive strategies served as a protective factor against perceived stress when encountering racial microaggressions. Therefore, these findings

support the examination of coping strategies as either buffering or exacerbating microaggression distress, as is the focus of the current study.

In summary, several studies have identified coping strategies used to cope with racial microaggressions. Although labeled uniquely in each study, these coping strategies range from seeking social support, to praying, to confronting the aggressor (Constantine et al, 2008; Hernández et al., 2010; Solórzano et al., 2000; Sue, Bucceri et al., 2009; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Sue, Lin, et al., 2009; Yosso et al., 2000). Some of these coping strategies appeared to be specific to racial microaggressions while others appeared to be strategies used to cope with general stress. Additionally, it is unclear how these coping strategies moderate with the effects of racial microaggressions, specifically whether they reduce or exacerbate the relationship between frequency and distress of racial microaggressions.

Hypotheses

Many of the studies that have identified the coping strategies that people use to cope with racial microaggressions have explicitly examined a particular racial group using qualitative methods. Although previous studies and methodologies provided a rich and in-depth understanding of how racial microaggressions manifest and are experienced in the lives of persons of color, these findings may be limited in generalizability because qualitative studies lack external validity. Several researchers have emphasized the need to further examine coping strategies used by persons of color (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Sue, Bucceri et al., 2009; Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2008).

The current study examines coping strategies used by people of color, including individuals from groups who are commonly examined in psychological research (e.g.,

African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans) and individuals who identify as coming from other racial/ethnic backgrounds. The current literature suggests several possible strategies that individuals might use to cope with racial microaggressions. However, the strategies identified might be specific to the participants examined, usually consisting of a small sample of individuals from one specific racial/ethnic background. Although qualitative studies provide useful and descriptive information, there are several inherent limitations to this approach, including the potential for researcher bias and a small sample size. To reduce the limitations inherent in previous studies using qualitative methods, quantitative measures are used to examine the frequency of racial microaggression themes using the recently developed Racial Microaggressions Scale (Torres-Harding, et al., 2012). Using previous study findings, several coping strategies are examined, particularly, whether and how they moderate the harmful influence of racial microaggressions.

The hypotheses proposed by this study are:

Hypothesis 1. People of color who report experiencing a higher frequency of racial microaggressions will also report more distress.

Hypothesis 2. Approach coping strategies (including Active Coping, Planning, Positive Reframing, Using Emotional Support, Using Instrumental Support, Religion, Education/Advocacy, Counter Spaces, Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment, and Sanity Check) will moderate the severity of racial microaggressions, resulting in less distress for people of color who use these strategies more often.

Hypothesis 3. Avoidance coping strategies (including Denial, Humor, Internalization, Drug and Alcohol Use, Resistance, Detachment, Attempts to Counter

Racial Stereotypes, and Rescuing Offenders) will moderate the severity of racial microaggressions, resulting in more distress for people of color who use these strategies more often.

Methods

This study examined participants' encounters with racial microaggressions and the various strategies used to cope with these experiences. Experiences of racial microaggressions and the coping strategies were assessed with self-report questionnaires.

Procedure

Individuals who participated in the study, both in person and online, were provided with an informed consent statement (Appendix A) that included a description of the study, any risks and benefits of participation, and the contact information of the primary investigator. Upon agreeing to participate, the participant completed the questionnaires. After completing the questionnaires, or upon indicating participation was complete, participants were provided with a debriefing form (Appendix G).

Participants were recruited from Roosevelt University, local Chicago colleges, using word-of-mouth, and 'snowball' sampling. Participants from Roosevelt University were recruited through a computer-based research program (SONA System) available to all students, using fliers with a brief description and a link to the study, by visiting classrooms, and during recruitment sessions in high-traffic areas around campus (e.g., the primary investigator sitting at a table with questionnaires, a poster board informing students about the opportunity to participate in a psychological study, and briefly explaining the study to individuals possibly interested in participating). Furthermore, student organizations were sent an email with a link to the study, a brief description of the study, and the option of having the primary investigator come to discuss how racial microaggressions and the current study might relate to issues encountered by the organization.

In the recruitment of non-Roosevelt University students and non-students, the primary investigator sent emails to current and past colleagues (students and non-students) encouraging them to participate in the study and, if willing, forward a link and a brief description of the study to anyone who they think might be interested in participating. Individuals were also permitted to post a link and a brief description of the study on their social networking webpage (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn). An email was also sent to local Chicago college administrators asking that a link and a brief description of the study be distributed to students who might be interested in participating.

Although people of color in particular were sought, all willing individuals were permitted to complete the study. However, responses of individuals who identified as White or Caucasian were removed prior to analysis. All participants were provided with the opportunity to win one of five $20 Amazon gift cards for their participation.

Participants

In the current study, 246 participants identified as persons of color and provided sufficient responses for analysis (e.g., missing less than two to three, if any, responses per subscale). Among these participants, 86 (35%) were Hispanic American/Latino/Mexican American, 75 (30.5%) were African American/Black, 49 (19.9%) were multiracial, 24 (9.8%) were Asian American/Asian, and 12 (4.9%) were Middle Eastern. Two hundred and three (82.5%) were females and 43 (17.5%) were males. Sixteen (6.5%) participants identified as being LGBTQ, 7 (2.8%) preferred not to answer, and 223 (90.7%) did not identify as LGBTQ. Five (2%) participants identified as having a disability, and 241 (98%) identified as having no disability. In regards to age, the average age of participants was 27.59 (SD = 8.21), and participant ages ranged from 18 to 65 years old. Two hundred

and two (82.1%) participants were enrolled in college, and 44 (17.9%) participants were non-students. Of the 202 students, 175 (71.1%) identified as being enrolled full-time, and 27 (11%) identified as being enrolled part-time. In regards to employment, 188 (76.4%) participants were employed, and 57 (23.3%) were unemployed.

Measures

Demographics. A self-report demographic questionnaire was administered (Appendix B) inquiring about age, gender, race/ethnicity, disability status, sexual orientation, current enrollment in college, status in college, and employment.

Racial Microaggressions Scale (RMAS; Torres-Harding, Andrade, & Romero-Diaz, 2012). This scale (Appendix C) is a 32-item self-report measure used to assess the frequency and the distress evoked by encountering racial microaggressions. The RMAS is composed of two sets of questions. The first set assesses the frequency (*How often does this happen to you?*) of racial microaggressions experienced. Each item is rated using a four-item response set: *Never*, *A little/rarely*, *Sometimes/a moderate amount*, and *Often/frequently*. Six subscales compose the frequency set of questions: Foreigner/Not Belonging measures the extent that people of color were treated as foreigners or that they do not belong. Criminality measures the extent that people of color are treated as though they are dangerous or likely to be involved in criminal behaviors. Sexualization measures the extent that people of color encountered sexual stereotypes or were over-sexualized because of their race. Low Achieving/Undesirable measures the extent that people of color were treated as less because their culture was viewed as dysfunctional, they were considered incapable, low achieving, undesirable, or their successes were considered due to unfair social programs, such as affirmative action.

Invisibility measures the extent that the contributions, views, or culture of people of color were dismissed, minimized, and devalued. Environmental Invalidations measures the extent that people of color experience negative perceptions due to observing that people from their own background are largely absent from work, school, or community settings and positions of authority. Torres-Harding et al. (2012) indicated that the RMAS met a very good level of reliability for each of the six frequency subscales: Foreigner/Not Belonging (α = .78); Criminality (α = .85); Sexualization (α = .83); Low Achieving/Undesirable (α = .87); Invisibility (α = .89); and Environmental Invalidations (α = .81)

Microaggressions distress subscales. The second set of questions in the RMAS consists of the distress subscales that assess how distressing the corresponding frequency items are perceived (*If this does happen to you, how stressful, upsetting, or bothersome is this for you?*). Each item is rated using a four-item response set: *Not at all*, *A little*, *Moderate level*, and *High level*. The distress subscales indicated how stressful, bothersome, or upsetting the racial microaggressions encountered were. The distress subscales are Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress, Criminality Distress, Sexualization Distress, Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress, Invisibility Distress, and Environmental Invalidations Distress. The score for each distress subscale was computed by the means of the items composing each subscale that were answered. However, if a frequency item associated with the distress item was endorsed as *Never*, then the distress response was omitted from the calculation of the distress score. Similar to the frequency subscales, the six distress subscales appear to have very good reliability: Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress (α = .70); Criminality Distress (α = .83); Sexualization Distress (α = .86); Low

Achieving/Undesirable Distress (α = .84); Invisibility Distress (α = .92); and Environmental Invalidations Distress (α = .78) (Torres-Harding & Cochran, 2013).

The Brief COPE (Carver, 1997). This scale (Appendix D) is a self-report measure used to examine how individuals cope with current as well as past situational or dispositional stressors. Because the stressor is not specific, it is adaptable to a range of events including racism. The Brief COPE was derived from the 60-item measure COPE inventory (Carver et al., 1989). However, given the redundancy of the questions and the demand placed on participants because of so many items, Carver revised the measure and developed the Brief COPE (Carver, 1997). Six strategies from the Brief COPE (Acceptance, Self-Distraction, Venting, Substance Use, Behavioral Disengagement, and Self-Blame) were not included in the current study because of the redundancy with the measures assessing racism-specific coping.

The Brief COPE consists of 28 items that examine 14 coping strategies on a 4-point scale: 1 = *I haven't been doing this at all*; 2 = *I've been doing this a little bit*; 3 = *I've been doing this a medium amount*; and 4 = *I've been doing this a lot*. The eight subscales used in this study were Active Coping, Planning, Positive Reframing, Using Emotional Support, Using Instrumental Support, Denial, Humor, and Religion. Active Coping is the process of taking active steps to try to remove or circumvent the stressor or to ameliorate its effects either directly, by increasing one's efforts, or in a stepwise fashion. Planning refers to thinking about how to cope with a stressor including coming up with action strategies, thinking about what steps to take, and how best to handle the problem. Positive Reframing refers to strategies to manage distressing emotions rather than to actively deal with the stressor. Using Emotional Support refers to getting moral

support, sympathy, or understanding. Using Instrumental Support refers to getting advice, assistance, or information. Denial is trying to push the reality of the situation away. Humor refers to making jokes or comments about the situation. Religion refers to the tendency to turn to religion in times of stress.

The score of each subscale was computed by the sum of the items composing the subscale. Higher scores indicate greater degree of use of that particular coping strategy. Carver (1997) indicated that all subscales met an acceptable level of reliability: Active Coping (α = .68); Planning (α = .73); Positive Reframing (α = .64); Using Emotional Support (α = .71); Using Instrumental Support (α = .64); Denial (α = .54); Humor (α = .73); and Religion (α = .82).

Coping with Discrimination Scale (CDS; Wei, Alvarez, Ku, Russell, & Bonett, 2010). This scale (Appendix E) is a 25-item self-report measure that examines strategies individuals use to cope with racial discrimination. Wei et al. (2010) developed the CDS to examine racism as a unique and specific stressor that other, more general measures, may not adequately address. In the development of the CDS, Wei et al. (2010) examined coping theories and measures including Larazrus and Folkman (1984) as well as the COPE inventory (Carver et al., 1989). In addition, focus groups consisting of students of color were interviewed to better understand coping with discrimination, thus resulting in the development of a 36-item measure. This information was combined with further analysis of theories, including the Sue and Sue (2008) racial/cultural identity development model, as well as exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, before resulting in the final 25-item CDS. Although the CDS was not developed to specifically

examine how people of color cope with racial microaggressions, Wei et al. (2010) recognized microaggressions as a racial stressor.

The CDS items are rated on a 6-point scale: 1 = *Never like me*, 2 = *A little like me*, 3 = *Sometimes like me*, 4 = *Often like me*, 5 = *Usually like me*, and 6 = *Always like me*. The CDS is composed of five subscales: Education/Advocacy refers to efforts to deal with experiences of discrimination through educational or advocacy efforts at individual and societal levels. Internalization refers to the tendency to attribute the cause or responsibility of a discriminatory act to oneself. Drug and Alcohol Use refers the use of drugs or alcohol to cope with discrimination. Resistance refers to challenging or confronting individuals for their discriminatory behavior. Detachment refers to distancing oneself from social support and having no idea how to deal with discrimination. The score of each subscale was computed by the sum of the items composing the subscale. Higher scores indicated greater degree of use of that particular coping strategy.

Wei et al. (2010) found a very good level of internal reliability on all five subscales: Education/Advocacy ($\alpha = .90$); Internalization ($\alpha = .82$); Drug and Alcohol Use ($\alpha = .72$); Resistance ($\alpha = .76$); and Detachment ($\alpha = .75$). Also, Wei et al. (2010) found construct validity for the Education/Advocacy, Internalization, Drug and Alcohol Use, and Detachment subscales because these subscales were positively associated the Brief COPE (Carver, 1997). Some of the coping strategies composing the CDS overlap with strategies associated with the Brief COPE. Therefore, the CDS subscales were used. For example, the Brief COPE subscales Acceptance, Self-Distraction, and Behavioral Disengagement appear to be related to Detachment. Also, the Brief COPE subscale Self-Blame appears to be related to Internalization. Unlike other subscales of CDS, Resistance

and Drug and Alcohol Use appear to be substantially influenced by social desirability (Wei et al., 2010). Unfortunately, the current study did not adequately account for the influence of social desirability. Therefore, these two subscales were not included in further analysis.

Racial Microaggressions Coping Scale. Ten questions (Appendix F) were derived from studies discussed in the literature review to measure strategies used to cope with racial microaggressions. The Racial Microaggressions Coping Scale was developed for this study by reviewing studies that discussed potential strategies for coping with racial microaggressions. The questions created attempted to measure five coping strategies: Counter Spaces (Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009), Attempts to Counter Racial Stereotypes (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Yosso et al., 2009), Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment (Yosso et al., 2009), Rescuing Offenders (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008), and Sanity Check (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). After construction of the items, feedback was obtained from academic colleagues on the perceived meaning and readability of the questions. Using the same Likert-rating as the CDS (Wei et al., 2010), the items were rated on a 6-point scale: 1 = *Never like me*, 2 = *A little like me*, 3 = *Sometimes like me*, 4 = *Often like me*, 5 = *Usually like me*, and 6 = *Always like me*. Higher scores indicated greater degree of use of that particular coping strategy. Because these items were created specifically for this study, reliability analyses were conducted and are presented in the results section.

A Priori Power Analysis

An a priori analysis of power was conducted to determine the number of participants needed in the current study to detect a meaningful effect size. As

recommended when conducting a power analysis to determine effect size, estimates were based on previous studies (Aberson, 2010). Therefore, the mean effect value between perceived discrimination and stress of $r = .11$ was used as a guide in the current study (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). To find a power level of .80 in a hierarchical multiple regression analysis with a maximum of 20 predictor variables, using Cohen's (1992) convention of a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$), along with an alpha coefficient of .05 would require a minimum of 156 participants. To ensure adequate power, 300 participants were sought. Although consistent with effect sizes typically found in this area of study and the predictions being theoretically supported, interaction effects are expected to be numerically low despite accounting for a significant amount of variance (Aberson, 2010).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Racial Microaggressions Scale subscales. Each of the Racial Microaggressions Scale frequency and distress subscales were examined for normality. The following subscales were non-normally distributed: Foreigner/Not Belonging; Criminality; and Sexualization, and Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress. A logarithmic 10 transformation was used to transform these variables prior to running the main analyses. In addition to normality, the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the Racial Microaggressions Scale subscales were examined (Table 1).

The reliability of the Racial Microaggressions Scale distress subscales was examined because Torres-Harding et al. (2012) did not test the subscales. Reliability was computed using the Cronbach's alpha to ensure the internal consistency of the subscales within the current study. All of the six subscales had good reliability: Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress ($\alpha = .85$); Criminality Distress ($\alpha = .84$); Sexualization Distress ($\alpha = .91$); Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress ($\alpha = .90$); Invisibility Distress ($\alpha = .90$); and Environmental Invalidations Distress ($\alpha = .87$).

The intercorrelations of the subscales composing the Racial Microaggressions Scale are shown in Table 2. Of these subscales, all were significantly correlated between .16 and .71, except the Foreigner/Not Belonging subscale and the Criminality subscale ($r = .11$, $p = .07$), and the Foreigner/Not Belonging subscale and the Criminality Distress subscale ($r = .02$, $p = .77$).

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Racial Microaggressions Subscales

Subscales	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Foreigner/Not Belonging	244	1.12	.93
Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress	200	.94	.88
Criminality	245	.87	.83
Criminality Distress	175	1.68	.90
Sexualization	246	1.23	1.00
Sexualization Distress	197	1.35	.99
Low Achieving/Undesirable	245	1.62	.77
Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress	245	1.74	.89
Invisibility	246	.95	.76
Invisibility Distress	213	1.82	.86
Environmental Invalidations	246	1.83	.81
Environmental Invalidations Distress	243	1.31	.87

The intercorrelations among the frequency subscales are similar to the values found by Torres-Harding et al. (2012). The intercorrelations in the current study are also similar to the values found by Torres-Harding and Cochran (2013), with the frequency and distress subscales being significantly correlated at a moderate level, as well as the intercorrelations for the distress subscales themselves ranging between .30 and .66.

Also shown in Table 2, all frequency subscales were significantly and positively correlated with their corresponding distress subscales: Foreigner/Not Belonging and Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress ($r = .49$, $p < .01$); Criminality and Criminality Distress ($r = .49$, $p < .01$); Sexualization and Sexualization Distress ($r = .51$, $p < .01$); Low Achieving/Undesirable and Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress ($r = .66$, $p < .01$); Invisibility and Invisibility Distress ($r = .37$, $p < .01$); and Environmental Invalidations and Environmental Invalidations Distress ($r = .57$, $p < .01$). These correlations appear to indicate that as the frequency of racial microaggressions increases, so does the distress associated with these experiences.

Table 2

Intercorrelations of Racial Microaggressions Scale Subscales

	Foreigner[a]	Foreigner Distress[a]	Criminality[a]	Criminality Distress	Sexualization[a]	Sexuality Distress	Low Achieving	Low Achieving Distress	Invisibility	Invisibility Distress	Environmental	Environmental Distress
Foreigner[a]	-											
Foreigner Distress[a]	.49**	-										
Criminality[a]	.11	.27**	-									
Criminality Distress	.02	.39**	.49**	-								
Sexualization[a]	.30**	.30**	.32**	.16**	-							
Sexualization Distress	.22**	.42**	.29**	.44**	.51**	-						
Low Achieving	.18**	.33**	.59**	.33**	.41**	.34**	-					
Low Achieving Distress	.24**	.54**	.46**	.58**	.43**	.56**	.66**	-				
Invisibility	.42**	.48**	.62**	.25**	.39**	.38**	.63**	.50**	-			
Invisibility Distress	.18*	.41**	.31**	.49**	.24**	.37**	.33**	.71**	.37**	-		
Environmental	.40**	.41**	.29**	.26**	.31**	.32**	.43**	.47**	.49**	.28**	-	
Environmental Distress	.30**	.56**	.41**	.40**	.38**	.52**	.47**	.63**	.55**	.48**	.57**	-

Note. [a] = The log 10 transformation of this variable was used.
**$p < 0.01$ level.
*$p < 0.05$ level.

Coping subscales. Normality of each of the coping strategies (Active Coping; Planning; Positive Reframing; Using Emotional Support; Using Instrumental Support; Denial; Humor; Religion; Education/Advocacy; Internalization; Detachment; Counter Spaces; Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment; and Sanity Check) was examined. Attempts to normalize these subscales using transformations were unsuccessful, with the exception of the Counter Spaces coping strategy. Therefore, all of the coping strategies that could not be successfully transformed to approximate a normal distribution, thus indicating degree of use, were dichotomized. Dummy coding was chosen because a *yes*

or *no* distinction allows for an indication of whether or not a particular coping strategy was used. Dummy coding allows for a distinction between not using a particular coping strategy (e.g., endorsing not using or never using the coping strategy) and the most minimal use of a particular coping strategy (e.g., endorsing using the coping strategy at least a little). The coding used for each of the subscales was 0 or *no* for the lowest value indicating no use or never using a particularly coping strategy. Conversely, 1 or *yes* was used for any value indicating even some use of a particular coping strategy.

The Brief COPE subscales. Among the Brief COPE subscales, Active Coping, Planning, Positive Reframing, Using Emotional Support, Using Instrumental Support, Denial, and Humor had a non-normal distribution. The scores for the Brief COPE range from two to eight. A score of two indicates that a particular coping strategy was not used at all and was dichotomized as a *no*. All remaining scores, values of three or more, indicate some use of a particular coping strategy. These scores were dichotomized as a *yes*. Religion, which had a normal distribution, was not dichotomized.

Coping with Discrimination Scale subscales. All of the Coping with Discrimination Scale subscales examined (Education/Advocacy, Internalization, and Detachment) had a normal distribution. Therefore, no transformations or dichotomizations were performed.

Racial Microaggressions Coping subscales. Prior to examining the distribution of the Racial Microaggressions Coping subscales (Counter Spaces; Attempts to Counter Racial Stereotypes; Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment; Rescuing Offenders; and Sanity Check), the reliability of the questions were examined as these items were specifically created for this study.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations or Percentages of Coping Strategy Subscales

Subscales			
Brief COPE	*N*	No (%)	Yes (%)
Active Coping	245	20.0	80.0
Planning	243	22.6	77.4
Positive Reframing	244	21.3	78.7
Using Emotional Support	245	25.3	74.7
Using Instrumental Support	245	28.6	71.4
Denial	245	62.0	38.0
Humor	243	33.3	66.7
Religion	244	33.2	66.8
Coping With Discrimination		*M*	*SD*
Education/Advocacy	245	16.9	6.8
Internalization	243	11.5	5.7
Detachment	243	9.6	4.0
Racial Microaggressions Coping		*M*	*SD*
Counter Space	245	7.8	3.5
Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment	245	7.6	3.1
Sanity Check	240	5.5	2.7

Reliability was examined to determine whether the two items composing each subscale could be combined to accurately measure the proposed coping strategy. Cronbach's alphas were computed for each subscale, and three of the five subscales had acceptable to very good reliability: Counter Spaces ($\alpha = .93$); Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment ($\alpha = .80$); and Sanity Check ($\alpha = .76$). Attempts to Counter Racial Stereotypes ($\alpha = .52$) and Rescuing Offenders ($\alpha = .64$) did not exhibit adequate reliability ($\alpha > .70$) and were excluded from further analysis.

When examining the distribution of the remaining subscales, Counter Spaces was found to have a non-normal distribution. A square root transformation was used to transform this variable closer to a normal distribution prior to running the main analyses. Table 3 shows the means, standard deviations, and the percentages of the coping strategies.

Table 4 shows the intercorrelations between all the coping strategy subscales. Of the Brief COPE subscales, Active Coping, Planning, Positive Reframing, and Using Instrumental Support, were significantly correlated with each other and all of the remaining Brief COPE subscales (Denial, Humor, and Religion), the Education/Advocacy subscale of the Coping with Discrimination scale, and the three Racial Microaggressions Coping subscales (Counter Space, Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment, and Sanity Check). The Denial subscale was significantly correlated with the subscales Religion, Education/Advocacy, Internalization, Detachment, Counter Space, and Sanity Check. Denial was not significantly correlated with Humor and Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment. The Humor subscale was significantly correlated with all subscales except for Denial and Religion. The Religion subscale was significantly correlated with all subscales except Humor, Detachment, and Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment. The Education/Advocacy subscale was significantly correlated with all subscales except Internalization and Detachment. The Internalization subscale was significantly positively correlated with all subscales except Active Coping, Counter Space, and Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment, which were all negative correlations. Also, the Internalization subscale was positively correlated with Education/Advocacy. However, this correlation was not significant. The Detachment subscale was only significantly positively correlated with Denial, Humor, and Internalization. The Counter Space subscale was significantly correlated with all subscales except for Internalization and Detachment. The Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment subscale was significantly correlated with all subscales except Denial, Religion, Internalization, and Detachment.

Table 4

Intercorrelations of Coping Strategy Subscales

	Active Coping	Planning	Positive Reframing	Using Emotional Support	Using Instrumental Support	Denial	Humor	Religion	Education/Advocacy	Internalization	Detachment	Counter Space	Cultural Nourishment/ Replenishment	Sanity Check
Active Coping	-													
Planning	.71**	-												
Positive Reframing	.55**	.61**	-											
Using Emotional Support	.63**	.63**	.48**	-										
Using Instrumental Support	.60**	.70**	.51**	.82**	-									
Denial	.38**	.47**	.40**	.31**	.36**	-								
Humor	.21**	.17**	.36**	.24**	.25**	.12	-							
Religion	.43**	.50**	.54**	.40**	.42**	.40**	-.00	-						
Education/Advocacy	.56**	.53**	.42**	.49**	.48**	.30**	.18**	.31**	-					
Internalization	-.02	.16*	.25**	.04	.08	.28**	.22**	.19**	.03	-				
Detachment	-.02	.10	.06	-.02	.02	.22**	.16*	.03	.04	.30**	-			
Counter Space	.30**	.22**	.25**	.32**	.28**	.14*	.22**	.14*	.51**	-.09	-.12	-		
Cultural Nourishment/ Replenishment	.25**	.19**	.17**	.27**	.26**	.01	.18**	.06	.38**	-.02	.04	.47**	-	
Sanity Check	.26**	.34**	.35**	.35**	.39**	.28**	.29**	.29**	.35**	.36**	.23**	.29**	.43**	-

**$p < 0.01$ level.
*$p < 0.05$ level.

The Sanity Check subscale was significantly positively correlated with all subscales. The coping strategies Using Emotional Support and Using Instrumental Support were highly correlated (.82). Due to correlations exceeding .80 generally being indicative of multicollinearity, Using Emotional Support was excluded from further analysis (Whitley, 1996). Using Instrumental Support was chosen because it had slightly stronger intercorrelations with the other subscales compared to Using Emotional Support. It was also chosen because conceptually it is associated with more proactive or problem-solving behaviors when compared to Using Emotional Support (Carver et al., 1989).

Table 5

Intercorrelations between Racial Microaggressions Distress Scales and Coping Strategies

	Foreigner Distress[a]	Criminality Distress	Sexualization Distress	Low Achieving Distress	Invisibility Distress	Environmental Distress
Active Coping	.19**	.21**	.18*	.42**	.25**	.39**
Planning	.20**	.17*	.15*	.32**	.20**	.31**
Positive Reframing	-.01	.05	.02	.18**	.04	.17**
Using Instrumental Support	.14*	.21**	.27**	.40**	.28**	.37**
Denial	.01	.06	.04	.17**	.02	.11
Humor	-.05	.04	.12	.23**	.10	.12
Religion	-.06	.10	.05	.17**	.01	.10
Education/ Advocacy	.24**	.25**	.22**	.42**	.26**	.37**
Internalization	.03	-.01	.03	-.05	-.16*	-.06
Detachment	.17*	-.09	.09	.13*	.05	.12
Counter Space	.11	.20**	.18*	.27**	.11	.19**
Cultural Nourishment/ Replenishment	.16*	.13	.09	.34**	.26**	.32**
Sanity Check	.17*	.18*	.20**	.36**	.18**	.30**

Note. [a] = The log 10 transformation of this variable was used.
**$p < 0.01$ level.
*$p < 0.05$ level.

The intercorrelations between the Racial Microaggressions Scale distress subscales and the coping strategy subscales were examined and are shown in Table 5. Several of the coping strategies (Active Coping; Planning; Using Instrumental Support, Education/Advocacy; and Sanity Check) were significantly correlated with all six of the Racial Microaggressions Scale distress subscales. Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment was significantly correlated with Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress, Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress, Invisibility Distress, and Environmental Invalidations Distress. Detachment was significantly correlated with the Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress and Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress. Positive Reframing was significantly correlated with Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress and Environmental Invalidations

Distress. Denial was significantly correlated with Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress. Humor and Religion were significantly correlated with Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress. Counter Space was significantly correlated with all of the Racial Microaggressions Scale distress subscales except Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress and Invisibility Distress. Lastly, Internalization was significantly negatively correlated with Invisibility Distress.

Main Analyses

Hypothesis 1. It was hypothesized that people of color who report experiencing a higher frequency of racial microaggressions will also report more distress. In order to test this hypothesis, six separate linear regression analyses were conducted.

Foreigner/Not Belonging Microaggressions. Using the Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale as the independent variable and the Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress subscale as the dependent variable, a linear regression was performed. The Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale significantly predicted scores on the Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress subscale, $R^2 = .24$, $F(1, 198) = 62.60$, $p < .001$. This indicates that individuals who experienced a higher frequency of Foreigner/Not Belonging also reported more distress due to these experiences.

Criminality Microaggressions. Using the Criminality frequency subscale as the independent variable and the Criminality Distress subscale as the dependent variable, a linear regression was performed. The Criminality frequency subscale significantly predicted scores on the Criminality Distress subscale, $R^2 = .24$, $F(1, 173) = 53.20$, $p < .001$. This indicates that individuals who experienced a higher frequency of Criminality also reported more distress due to these experiences.

Sexualization Microaggressions. Using the Sexualization frequency subscale as the independent variable and the Sexualization Distress subscale as the dependent variable, a linear regression was performed. The Sexualization frequency subscale significantly predicted scores on the Sexualization Distress subscale, $R^2 = .26$, $F(1, 195) = 67.91$, $p < .001$. This indicates that individuals who experienced a higher frequency of Sexualization also reported more distress due to these experiences.

Low Achieving/Undesirable Microaggressions. Using the Low Achieving/Undesirable frequency subscale as the independent variable and the Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress subscale as the dependent variable, a linear regression was performed. The Low Achieving/Undesirable frequency subscale significantly predicted scores on the Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress subscale, $R^2 = .44$, $F(1, 243) = 190.14$, $p < .001$.This indicates that individuals who experienced a higher frequency of Low Achieving/Undesirable also reported more distress due to these experiences.

Invisibility Microaggressions. Using the Invisibility frequency subscale as the independent variable and the Invisibility Distress subscale as the dependent variable, a linear regression was performed. The Invisibility frequency subscale significantly predicted scores on the Invisibility Distress subscale, $R^2 = .14$, $F(1, 211) = 33.85$, $p < .001$. This indicates that individuals who experienced a higher frequency of Invisibility also reported more distress due to these experiences.

Environmental Invalidations Microaggressions. Using the Environmental Invalidations frequency subscale as the independent variable and the Environmental Invalidations Distress subscale as the dependent variable, a linear regression was performed. The Environmental Invalidations frequency subscale significantly predicted scores on the Environmental Invalidations Distress subscale, $R^2 = .33$, $F(1, 241) = 116.23$, $p < .001$. This indicates that individuals who experienced a higher frequency of Environmental Invalidations also reported more distress due to these experiences. These findings support the first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2. It was hypothesized that the approach coping strategies (Active Coping, Planning, Positive Reframing, Using Instrumental Support, Religion,

Education/Advocacy, Counter Spaces, Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment, and Sanity Check) would moderate the relationship between the frequency and distress of racial microaggressions such that these coping strategies would buffer distress. Six separate hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to test this hypothesis. Prior to running each analysis, all six of the frequency racial microaggressions subscales were standardized. Also, coping strategies that were not dichotomized (Education/Advocacy, Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment, and Sanity Check) were standardized. Lastly, interaction variables were computed between each Racial Microaggressions Scale frequency subscale and each approach coping strategy.

In each analysis, the first block included the following 10 independent variables: a frequency subscale (either Foreigner/Not Belonging, Criminality, Sexualization, Low Achieving/Undesirable, Invisibility, or Environmental Invalidations), Active Coping, Planning, Positive Reframing, Using Instrumental Support, Religion, Education/Advocacy, Counter Spaces, Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment, and Sanity Check. The second block consisted of the nine interaction variables, composed of the corresponding frequency subscale and each approach coping strategy (e.g., Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale x Active Coping, Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale x Planning, Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale x Positive Reframing, Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale x Using Instrumental Support, Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale x Religion, Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale x Education/Advocacy, Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale x Counter Spaces, Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale x Cultural

Nourishment/Replenishment, and Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale x Sanity Check).

Foreigner/Not Belonging Microaggressions. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed with the Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress subscale as the dependent variable. Independent variables were entered in two blocks. The first block included the Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale and the approach coping strategies as independent variables. The second block consisted of the nine interaction variables. The analysis indicated that Block 1 was significant in the regression model, $R^2 = .28$, $F(11, 180) = 6.88$, $p < .001$. Within this block, Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency was significantly related to Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress (ß = .480, $t = 6.84$, $p = .000$). No other variables in Block 1 were significantly related to Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress. Block 2 was not significant, indicating that none of the approach coping strategies moderated the relationship between Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency and Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress.

Criminality Microaggressions. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed with the Criminality Distress subscale as the dependent variable. Independent variables were entered in two blocks. The first block included the Criminality frequency subscale and the approach coping strategies as independent variables. The second block consisted of the nine interaction variables. The analysis indicated that Block 1 was significant in the regression model, $R^2 = .27$, $F(10, 155) = 5.66$, $p < .001$. Within this block, Criminality frequency was significantly related to Criminality Distress (ß = .458, $t = 6.32$, $p = .000$). No other variables in Block 1 were significantly related to Criminality Distress. Block 2 was not significant, indicating that none of the approach coping

strategies moderated the relationship between Criminality frequency and Criminality Distress.

Sexualization Microaggressions. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed with the Sexualization Distress subscale as the dependent variable. Independent variables were entered in two blocks. The first block included the Sexualization frequency subscale and the approach coping strategies as independent variables. The second block consisted of the nine interaction variables. The analysis indicated that Block 1 was significant in the regression model, $R^2 = .30$, $F(10, 176) = 7.69$, $p < .001$. Within this block, Sexualization frequency was significantly related to Sexualization Distress (ß = .477, $t = 7.08$, $p = .000$). No other variables in Block 1 were significantly related to Sexualization Distress. Block 2 was not significant, indicating none of the approach coping strategies moderated the relationship between Sexualization frequency and Sexualization Distress.

Low Achieving/Undesirable Microaggressions. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed with the Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress subscale as the dependent variable. Independent variables were entered in two blocks. The first block included the Low Achieving/Undesirable frequency subscale and the approach coping strategies as independent variables. The second block consisted of the nine interaction variables. The analysis indicated that Block 1 was significant in the regression model, $R^2 = .48$, $F(10, 222) = 20.12$, $p < .001$. Within this block, Low Achieving/Undesirable frequency was significantly related to Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress (ß = .526, $t = 8.92$, $p = .000$). Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment was also significantly related to Low

Achieving/Undesirable Distress (ß = .137, $t = 2.26$, $p = .025$), indicating that increased use of the Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment coping strategy was associated with more Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress. This finding was opposite to the anticipated direction. No other variables in Block 1 were significantly related to Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress. Block 2 was not significant, indicating that none of the approach coping strategies moderated the relationship between Low Achieving/Undesirable frequency and Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress.

Invisibility Microaggressions. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed with the Invisibility Distress subscale as the dependent variable. Independent variables were entered in two blocks. The first block included the Invisibility frequency subscale and the approach coping strategies as independent variables. The second block consisted of the nine interaction variables. The analysis indicated that Block 1 was significant in the regression model, $R^2 = .22$, $F(10, 192) = 5.53$, $p < .001$. Within this block, Invisibility frequency was significantly related to Invisibility Distress (ß = .273, $t = 3.92$, $p = .000$). Using Instrumental Support was also significantly related to Invisibility Distress (ß = .173, $t = 2.21$, $p = .029$), indicating that increased use of the Using Instrumental Support coping strategy was associated with more Invisibility Distress. Religion was significantly related to Invisibility Distress (ß = -.149, $t = -2.16$, $p = .032$), indicating that, unlike the other coping strategies examined, increased use of the coping strategy Religion, as hypothesized, was associated with less Invisibility Distress.

Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment was significantly related to Invisibility Distress (ß = .206, $t = 2.65$, $p = .009$), indicating that increased use of the Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment coping strategy was associated with more Invisibility

Distress. No other variables in Block 1 were significantly related to Invisibility Distress. Block 2 was not significant, indicating that none of the approach coping strategies moderated the relationship between Invisibility frequency and Invisibility Distress.

Environmental Invalidations Microaggressions. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed with the Environmental Invalidations distress subscale as the dependent variable. Independent variables were entered in two blocks. The first block included the approach coping strategies and the Environmental Invalidations frequency subscale as independent variables. The second block consisted of the nine interaction variables. The analysis indicated that Block 1 was significant in the regression model, $R^2 = .40$, $F(10, 221) = 14.92$, $p < .001$. Within this block, Environmental Invalidations frequency was significantly related to Environmental Invalidations Distress (ß = .443, $t = 7.48$, $p = .000$). No other variables in Block 1 were significantly related to Environmental Invalidations Distress.

In Block 2, a significant interaction between Environmental Invalidations frequency and Education/Advocacy was found (ß = .180, $t = 2.54$, $p = .012$). A significant interaction between Environmental Invalidations frequency and Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment was also found (ß = .178, $t = 2.54$, $p = .012$). The full model accounted for an additional 6% of variance on Environmental Invalidations Distress, $R^2 = .46$, $F(19, 212) = 9.46$, $p < .001$. These findings indicate that Education/Advocacy and Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment significantly moderated the relationship between Environmental Invalidations frequency and Environmental Invalidations Distress.

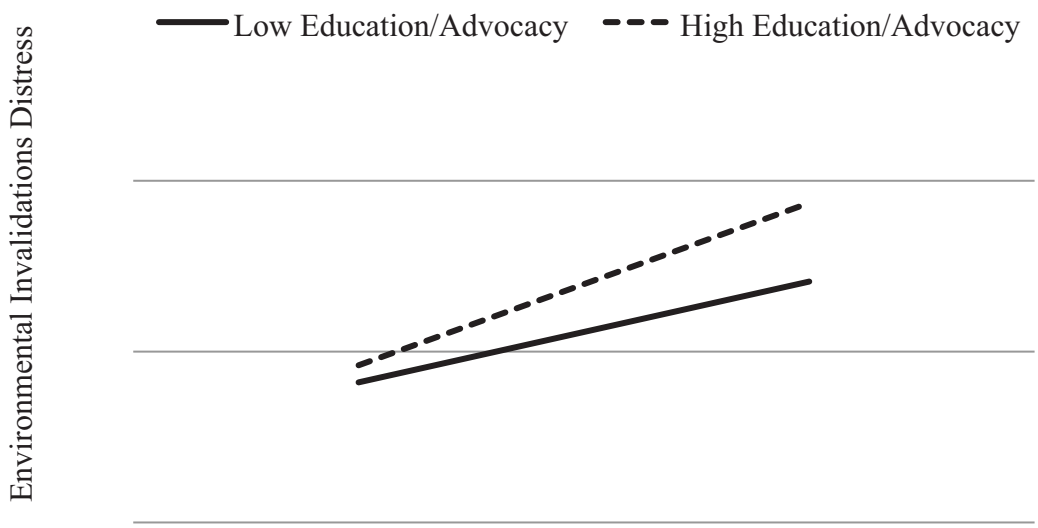

Figure 1. Interaction of Environmental Invalidations frequency and Education/Advocacy Coping Strategy on Environmental Invalidations Distress.

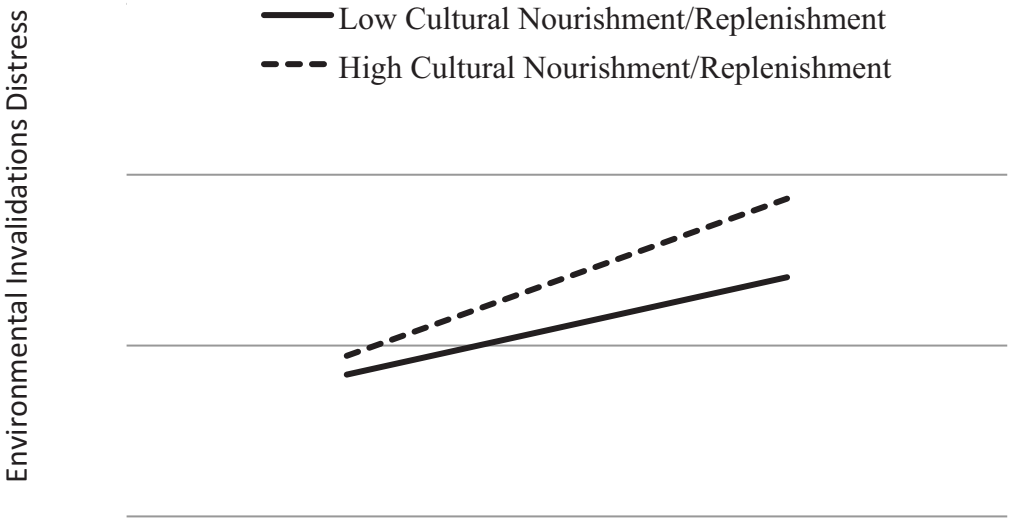

Figure 2. Interaction of Environmental Invalidations frequency and Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment Coping Strategy on Environmental Invalidations Distress.

As indicated by Figure 1, Education/Advocacy moderated the relationship between the frequency of Environmental Invalidations and Environmental Invalidations Distress such that the distress of Environmental Invalidations was exacerbated among individuals who endorsed higher use of Education/Advocacy. Similarly, as indicated by Figure 2, Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment moderated the relationship between the frequency of Environmental Invalidations and Environmental Invalidations Distress such that the distress of Environmental Invalidations was exacerbated among individuals who endorsed higher use of Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment.

Based on these findings, hypothesis two was not supported. The relationship observed revealed that for people who used a high level of education and advocacy, there was a stronger relationship between Environmental Invalidations frequency and Environmental Invalidations Distress. Thus, engaging in a higher level of education and advocacy intensified the original relationship when compared to people using a low level of education and advocacy. While a relationship was also found when using a low level of education and advocacy, it was weaker. A similar intensified relationship between Environmental Invalidations frequency and Environmental Invalidations Distress was observed among people who used a high level of engaging in their cultural traditions. A relationship was also found among people using a low level of engaging in their cultural traditions yet, similar to the use of education and advocacy, it was weaker. Notably, the directionality of the relationships, as stated above, cannot be assumed because the data examined is cross-sectional. Therefore, it is possible that individuals who experienced increased Environmental Invalidations Distress also happened to use a high level of these

coping strategies rather than use of these coping strategies exacerbating Environmental Invalidations Distress.

Hypothesis 3. It was hypothesized that the avoidance coping strategies (Denial, Humor, Internalization, and Detachment) would moderate the relationship between the frequency and distress of racial microaggressions such that these coping strategies would exacerbate distress. Six separate hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to test this hypothesis. Prior to running each analysis, all six of the frequency racial microaggressions subscales were standardized. Also, coping strategies that were not dichotomized (Internalization and Detachment) were standardized. Lastly, interaction variables were computed between each racial microaggressions frequency subscale and each avoidance coping strategy.

In each analysis, the first block included the following five independent variables: the corresponding frequency subscale (Foreigner/Not Belonging, Criminality, Sexualization, Low Achieving/Undesirable, Invisibility, Environmental Invalidations), Denial, Humor, Internalization, and Detachment. The second block consisted of the four interaction variables, composed of the corresponding frequency subscale and each avoidance coping strategy (e.g., Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale x Denial, Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale x Humor, Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale x Internalization, and Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale x Detachment).

Foreigner/Not Belonging Microaggressions. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed with the Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress subscale as the dependent variable. Independent variables were entered in two blocks. The first block

included the Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency subscale and the avoidance coping strategies as independent variables. The second block consisted of the four interaction variables. The analysis indicated that Block 1 was significant in the regression model, R^2 = .25, $F(5, 189) = 12.27$, $p < .001$. Within this block, Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency was significantly related to Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress (ß = .496, $t = 7.36$, p = .000). No other variables in Block 1 were significantly related to Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress. Block 2 was not significant, indicating that none of the avoidance coping strategies moderated the relationship between Foreigner/Not Belonging frequency and Foreigner/Not Belonging Distress.

Criminality Microaggressions. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed with the Criminality Distress subscale as the dependent variable. Independent variables were entered in two blocks. The first block included the Criminality frequency subscale and the avoidance coping strategies as independent variables. The second block consisted of the four interaction variables. The analysis indicated that Block 1 was significant in the regression model, $R^2 = .26$, $F(5, 161) = 11.05$, $p < .001$. Within this block, Criminality frequency was significantly related to Criminality Distress (ß = .500, t = 7.22, p = .000). No other variables in Block 1 were significantly related to Criminality Distress. Block 2 was not significant, indicating that none of the avoidance coping strategies moderated the relationship between Criminality frequency and Criminality Distress.

Sexualization Microaggressions. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed with the Sexualization Distress subscale as the dependent variable. Independent variables were entered in two blocks. The first block included the

Sexualization frequency subscale and the avoidance coping strategies as independent variables. The second block consisted of the four interaction variables. The analysis indicated that Block 1 was significant in the regression model, $R^2 = .26$, $F(5, 184) = 12.67$, $p < .001$. Within this block, Sexualization frequency was significantly related to Sexualization Distress (ß = .501, $t = 7.78$, $p = .000$). No other variables in Block 1 were significantly related to Sexualization Distress. Block 2 was not significant, indicating that none of the avoidance coping strategies moderated the relationship between Sexualization frequency and Sexualization Distress.

Low Achieving/Undesirable Microaggressions. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed with the Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress subscale as the dependent variable. Independent variables were entered in two blocks. The first block included the Low Achieving/Undesirable frequency subscale and the avoidance coping strategies as independent variables. The second block consisted of the four interaction variables. The analysis indicated that Block 1 was significant in the regression model, $R^2 = .47$, $F(5, 230) = 40.52$, $p < .001$. Within this block, Low Achieving/Undesirable frequency was significantly related to Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress (ß = .680, $t = 13.17$, $p = .000$). Denial was significantly related to Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress (ß = -.126, $t = -2.34$, $p = .018$), indicating that increased use of the Denial coping strategy was associated with less Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress. No other variables in Block 1 were significantly related to Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress. Block 2 was not significant, indicating that none of the avoidance coping strategies moderated the relationship between Low Achieving/Undesirable frequency and Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress.

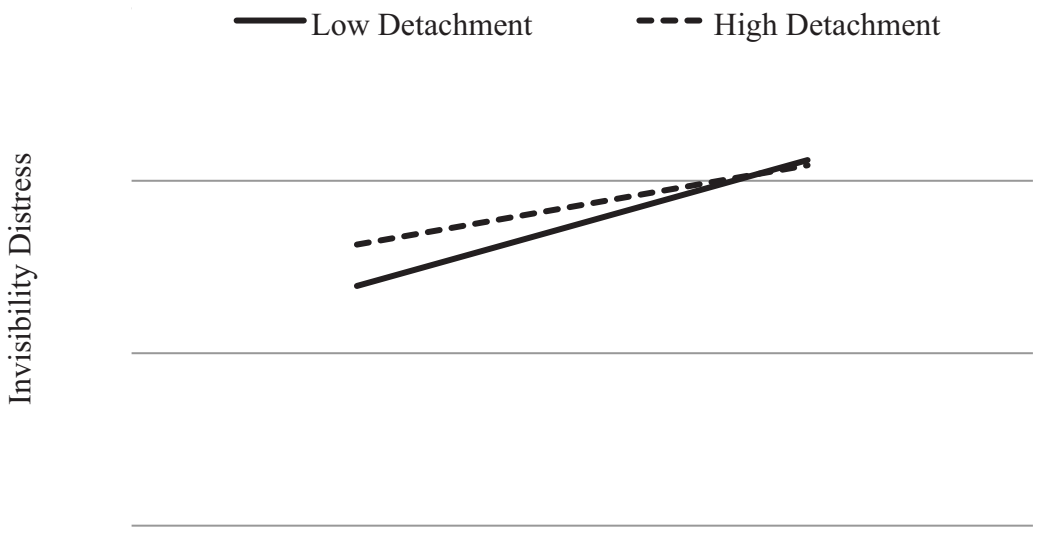

Figure 3. Interaction of Invisibility frequency and Detachment Coping Strategy on Invisibility Distress.

Invisibility Microaggressions. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed with the Invisibility Distress subscale as the dependent variable. Independent variables were entered in two blocks. The first block included the Invisibility frequency subscale and the avoidance coping strategies as independent variables. The second block consisted of the four interaction variables. The analysis indicated that Block 1 was significant in the regression model, $R^2 = .19$, $F(5, 200) = 9.17$, $p < .001$.

Within this block, Invisibility frequency was significantly related to Invisibility Distress (ß = .410, $t = 6.03$, $p = .000$). Internalization was significantly related to Invisibility Distress (ß = -.180, $t = -2.63$, $p = .009$), indicating that increased use of the Internalization coping strategy was associated with less Invisibility Distress. No other variables in Block 1 were significantly related to Invisibility Distress.

In Block 2, a significant interaction between Invisibility frequency and Detachment was found (ß = -.233, $t = -3.03$, $p = .003$). The full model accounted for an additional 4% of variance in the outcome variable, $R^2 = .23$, $F(4, 196) = 2.59$, $p = .038$.

This indicated that Detachment significantly moderated the relationship between Invisibility frequency and Invisibility Distress. As indicated by Figure 3, Detachment moderated the relationship between the frequency of Invisibility and Invisibility Distress such that the distress of Invisibility was slightly reduced among individuals who endorsed higher use of Detachment. As previously mentioned, the directionality of this relationship cannot be assumed due to the cross-sectional nature of the data. Therefore, individuals who experienced less Invisibility Distress might have also used a high level of Detachment rather than use of this coping strategy reducing Invisibility Distress.

Environmental Invalidations Microaggressions. A hierarchical regression analysis was performed with the Environmental Invalidations Distress subscale as the dependent variable. Independent variables were entered in two blocks. The first block included the Environmental Invalidations frequency subscale and the avoidance coping strategies as independent variables. The second block consisted of the four interaction variables. The analysis indicated that Block 1 was significant in the regression model, $R^2 = .33$, $F(5, 229) = 22.71$, $p < .001$. Within this block, Environmental Invalidations frequency was significantly related to Environmental Invalidations Distress ($\beta = .548$, $t = 9.98$, $p = .000$). No other variables in Block 1 were significantly related to Environmental Invalidations Distress. Block 2 was not significant, indicating that none of the avoidance coping strategies moderated the relationship between Environmental Invalidations frequency and Environmental Invalidations Distress.

Based on these findings, hypothesis three was not supported. The relationship observed indicated that for people who used a high level of detachment, there was a slightly weaker relationship between Invisibility frequency and Invisibility distress. Thus,

engaging in a higher level of detachment weakened the original relationship. Conversely, people who used a low level of detachment had a stronger relationship between Invisibility frequency and Invisibility Distress.

Supplementary Analysis

A post hoc power analysis was conducted on each of the significant moderating relationships. First, the moderating relationships between the two approach coping strategies Education/Advocacy and Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment with Environmental Invalidations were examined. The full sample of valid Environmental Invalidations Distress participants (243) was used for the statistical power analysis and a 20 predictor variable equation was used as a baseline. The alpha level used was $p < .05$. The effect size (f^2) found was .06, which, according to Cohen (1992), is between small ($f^2 = .02$) and medium ($f^2 = .15$). Statistical power was found to be .56. This finding indicates there is a 44% chance of a Type II error between the approach coping strategies Education/Advocacy and Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment with Environmental Invalidations. Next, the moderating relationship between the avoidance coping strategy Internalization with Invisibility was examined. The full sample of valid Invisibility Distress participants (213) was used for the statistical power analysis and an eight predictor variable equation was used as a baseline. The alpha level used was $p < .05$. The effect size (f^2) found was .04, which, according to Cohen is between small ($f^2 = .02$) and medium ($f^2 = .15$). Statistical power was found to be .34. This finding indicates there is a 66% chance of a Type II error between the avoidance coping strategy Internalization with Invisibility. This suggests that the study may have been underpowered to detect results if present.

Discussion

People of color have described coping with the deleterious impact of racial microaggressions in an array of ways. These effects ranged from directly challenging the perpetrator to acting in a manner that protects the perpetrator (Constantine et al., 2008; Hernández et al., 2010; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). Given the range of strategies used to cope and the different types of racial microaggressions, understanding the efficacy of coping strategies people of color use when encountering racism is needed. The current study sought to examine whether coping strategies might buffer or exacerbate distress when individuals encounter microaggressions.

In order to examine how coping strategies impact the influence of racial microaggressions, these experiences first had to be identified as distressing. The first hypothesis confirmed that individuals who encountered a greater frequency of racial microaggressions also experienced more distress. Each frequency scale was significantly associated with its corresponding distress subscale. Next, it was anticipated that use of approach coping strategies would buffer the distress individuals experienced when encountering racial microaggressions. However, this hypothesis was not supported. It was found that high use of Education/Advocacy exacerbated distress when an individual encountered Environmental Invalidation more. Also, high use of Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment was found to exacerbate distress when an individual encountered Environmental Invalidation more. Hypothesis 3 anticipated that use of avoidance coping strategies would moderate the distress people of color experienced when encountering racial microaggressions, such that these coping strategies would

exacerbate distress. This hypothesis was not supported. It was found that high use of Detachment reduced distress when an individual encountered Invisibility more.

Hypothesis 1. It was found that as individuals encountered more racial microaggressions, distress increased, thus supporting the hypothesis. Previous studies that examined the link between racial microaggressions frequency and distress found similar findings. For example, Liang, Alvarez, Juang, and Liang (2007) found that among a sample of 336 Asian Americans, individuals who experienced a higher frequency of racial microaggressions also experienced increased distress. In a sample of 107 African Americans, Torres et al. (2010) found that individuals who experienced a higher frequency of racial microaggressions also experienced increased distress. Huynh, Devos, and Dunbar (2012) found, among a sample of 168 Latino/a Americans, that individuals who experienced a higher frequency of perceived discrimination also experienced increased psychological distress. Consistent with previous studies, the current study determined that increased racial microaggressions were associated with more distress. Unlike these studies, the current study also included multiracial and Middle Eastern individuals, which indicates the relationship between the frequency and distress of racial microaggressions is also applicable to these groups of individuals.

Hypothesis 2. The second hypothesis that examined how the approach coping strategies buffered the distress associated with frequently encountering racial microaggressions was not supported. However, it was not due to the lack of a moderating relationship. Rather, when frequently encountering Environmental Invalidations, use of the approach coping strategies Education/Advocacy and Cultural

Nourishment/Replenishment exacerbated, rather than buffered, distress. Several explanations might account for these findings.

Education/Advocacy and Environmental Invalidations. Education/Advocacy moderated the relationship between the frequency and distress of Environmental Invalidations such that high use of Education/Advocacy exacerbated distress when an individual encountered more Environmental Invalidations. This finding indicates that individuals who use more educational or advocacy efforts when they encountered higher levels of environmental microaggressions experienced substantially more distress. This finding contradicted the expectation that education and advocacy would buffer the distress of racial microaggressions as the frequency of racial microaggressions increased.

One potential explanation for Education/Advocacy exacerbating distress is that education and advocacy might lead one to have a stronger sense of ethnic identity. In turn, this positive ethnic identity might result in one becoming more upset or distressed when encountering Environmental Invalidations. Wei et al. (2010) found that Education/Advocacy had a moderate positive relationship with ethnic identity. Individuals with a stronger sense of ethnic identity have reported experiencing more discrimination (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). As perceived discrimination increases, a stronger sense of ethnic identity has been shown to be a less effective buffer against distress than when encountering lower levels of perceived discrimination (Lee, 2005; Yoo & Lee, 2005). For individuals with a stronger sense of ethnic identity, encountering more Environmental Invalidations might be experienced as a greater threat, leading one to experience more distress.

Another potential explanation for Education/Advocacy exacerbating distress is that it may be more of a long-term coping strategy. Therefore, as hypothesized in the current study, to buffer the distress of racial microaggressions, Education/Advocacy might need to be implemented later in the racial microaggression process, particularly during the last phase. As previously discussed, the Consequence domain of the racial microaggression process consists of implementing coping strategies after having determined that a racial microaggression occurred and having had time to interpret the meaning of the incident (Sue, 2010; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). After being able to analyze, interpret, and process the incident, the individual might have access to resources such as books or media discussing the detrimental impact of racism on victims. In addition, individuals might become involved in antiracist organizations that include support networks that inform the person how to disseminate educational information about racism with people they know and within the community they live in. Use of these resources may serve to buffer the distress of racial microaggressions in the long-term because it allows one to attribute responsibility towards systemic causes rather than inappropriately internalizing these experiences. Additionally, it might allow one to learn how to better identify and address the emotional consequences following racial microaggressions. However, upon immediately encountering these incidents, Education/Advocacy may be impossible or infeasible to implement. Therefore, this strategy may not be effective as a means of coping with immediate distress, as in the current study, but it may instead be more of a long-term coping strategy.

Also, educating one's self and others about racism and advocating for change might be a result of encountering a high level of racial microaggressions. For example, an

individual who experiences these microaggressions on a recurring basis might be even more motivated to seek out resources in order to make sense of their experience, help prevent others from experiencing similar experiences, and educate perpetrators about the impact of these experiences. Through this process, which might not have been a concern prior to encountering racial microaggressions, individual's awareness of these experiences may increase. Also, as individuals become more involved in education and advocacy efforts, they might become more visible as an individual of a racial/ethnic group. This might result in encountering more racial microaggressions and lead to increased distress. Individuals might also become more likely to report distress when witnessing and encountering racial microaggressions because they are more aware of these pervasive and detrimental experiences. However, due to the cross-sectional data, it is possible that individuals who experienced increased Environmental Invalidations Distress also used a high level of education and advocacy rather than the use of Education/Advocacy exacerbating Environmental Invalidations Distress.

Lastly, the perception that one's environment is unwelcoming and that individuals are unreceptive to changing it might explain why Education/Advocacy exacerbates distress when Environmental Invalidations are encountered more frequently. Environmental Invalidations consists of negative perceptions people of color experience due to observing that people from their own background are largely absent from work, school, or community settings and positions of authority. Due to the environmental nature of Environmental Invalidations, the use of Education/Advocacy may include an attempt to challenge or alter the setting in which the incident occurred. However, the resources needed to implement and sustain a more accepting and diverse environment (e.g., other

persons of color, including persons of color in authority or high-ranking positions) might be limited, thus permitting the manifestation and continuation of Environmental Invalidations. For example, discussing racial microaggressions at work might be unthinkable if people of color feel that raising these concerns with White supervisors will not be adequately addressed. Therefore, people of color might repeatedly experience their attempts to proactively educate others in such an environment as futile, thereby exacerbating distress. As will be discussed later, this may have important clinical implications, particularly as people of color strive to challenge oppression.

Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment and Environmental Invalidations. Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment moderated the relationship between the frequency and distress of Environmental Invalidations such that high use of Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment exacerbated distress when an individual encountered more Environmental Invalidations. This finding suggests that individuals who engage in their cultural traditions more when they encountered higher levels of environmental microaggressions experienced substantially more distress. This finding contradicts the expectation that engaging in one's cultural traditions would buffer the distress of racial microaggressions as the frequency of racial microaggressions increased.

One potential explanation for why Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment exacerbates distress is that engaging in one's own cultural traditions might lead one to have an increased sense of cultural pride, leading to a positive view's of one's culture. Similar to a strong sense of ethnic identity, a sense of cultural pride may result in becoming more distressed when encountering environmental microaggressions. Utsey et al. (2008) found that African Americans who reported use of more cultural resources also

reported higher levels of race-related distress. Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment is intended to validate one's experiences and nurture one's resilience through interactions with peers and engagement in cultural activities (Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009). However, involvement in cultural traditions and heritage appears to exacerbate distress among individuals who encounter more Environmental Invalidations. A possible explanation may be that individuals who engage in cultural traditions might experience more distress when their culture, which they have come to value and identify with, is devalued. Also, individuals who engage more in their cultural traditions might become more identifiable as a person of color, making them more susceptible to encountering racial microaggressions. This in turn might result in more distress. Individuals might also experience more distress due to an absence of people from one's own culture within the environment. This may be because the individual feels isolated, unsupported, or tokenized. In the current study, more or less use of Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment did not differ the amount of distress experienced among individuals who encountered less Environmental Invalidations. This may be because individuals, regardless of their connection with their culture, do not feel as dejected when encountering these experiences less frequently.

Another reason why Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment might exacerbate distress is because it may be more of a long-term coping strategy. Similar to Education/Advocacy, the use of Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment might buffer the distress that occurs during the consequences and impact phase, which occurs after the individual has had some time to analyze, interpret, and process the incident (Sue, 2010; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). At this time, the individual may have access to

cultural resources and be able to engage in their cultural traditions, thus buffering the impact of racial microaggressions. However, upon immediately encountering a racial microaggression, the individual may not be able to seek validation and support from other individuals of their same cultural background and such strategies may be impossible or infeasible to implement given the environment in which the racial microaggression occurred. Individuals who use Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment might also become more prone to experience distress when witnessing and experiencing Environmental Invalidations. The increased involvement in one's cultural traditions and heritage might lead one to have a stronger connection with their culture. Following experiencing Environmental Invalidations, this may replenish the individual. Yet, it may also make individuals more susceptible to distress in the moment when encountering frequent Environmental Invalidations. As previously mentioned, cross-sectional data prohibits directionality from being determined. Therefore, it is possible that individuals who experienced increased Environmental Invalidations Distress also reported more engagement in their cultural traditions rather than the use of Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment exacerbating Environmental Invalidations Distress.

Lastly, the perception that one's environment is inconsistent and intolerant of one's culture might explain why Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment exacerbates distress when Environmental Invalidations are encountered more frequently. Upon encountering Environmental Invalidations, the individual experiences the environment as unsafe, unsupportive, and devoid of aspects related to one's own cultural background. As this coping strategy consists of being connected and validated through involvement in one's cultural traditions, using Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment may leave one

feeling increasingly isolated and threatened. Individuals who endorse a greater sense of cultural connectedness might feel invalidated and isolated when in environments void of their cultural heritage, resulting in increased distress. Being in a racial climate that is intolerant towards people of color results in feelings of self-doubt, frustration, and isolation (Solórzano et al., 2000). Distress may be exacerbated when one engages in their cultural traditions, activities that provide the individual with a sense of identity, worth, and community. For example, individuals who do not typically speak the language of their cultural background at work might observe snide looks and remarks from coworkers when they do speak their language of origin. Therefore, they might feel as though they are in an environment that is intolerant of qualities related to their cultural heritage, resulting in increased distress.

Hypothesis 3. Detachment moderated the relationship between the frequency and distress of Invisibility such that high use of Detachment slightly reduced distress when an individual encountered more Invisibility microaggressions. This finding indicates that individuals who distanced themselves from social support and had no idea how to deal with discrimination when encountering higher levels of Invisibility microaggressions experienced slightly less distress. This finding contradicts the expectation that distancing from one's social support and not knowing how to deal with the incident would exacerbate the distress of Invisibility racial microaggressions as the frequency increased. However, due to the cross-sectional data, the directionality of this relationship cannot be assumed. Therefore, it is possible that individuals who experienced less Invisibility Distress might have also used a high level of distancing from social support and having

no idea how to deal with discrimination rather than the use of Detachment reducing Invisibility Distress.

***Detachment and Invisibility*.** One potential explanation for Detachment slightly reducing distress when encountering high frequency of Invisibility is that individuals attempt to avoid the uncomfortable feelings associated with Invisibility. Detachment consists of two components, distancing oneself from social support and having no idea how to deal with discrimination (Wei et al., 2010). Both of these components might account for how use of this coping strategy reduces Invisibility Distress. Invisibility consists of an individual feeling devalued, dismissed and minimized simply because they are a member of a racial/ethnic group. Individuals who experience invisibility might feel anger, internalized rage, frustration, and worthlessness (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000). As these experiences and unpleasant feelings increase, individuals might distance themselves as an attempt to avoid acknowledging the impact of encountering these experiences. This response may be adaptive because acknowledging stressful experiences or emotions may impede functioning (West et al., 2010). Detachment might also be similar to Denial, also examined in the current study, which consisted of trying to push the situation away as a means of coping. Although quite similar to Detachment, Denial was not found to moderate distress, despite being association with Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress. In addition to distancing oneself from social support, individuals might be uncertain of how to respond. A common response to trauma is that one's judgment might be clouded (Waters, 2002). Similarly, increased racially-traumatic events such as Invisibility might also have an impact on one's judgment. The use of Detachment might reflect an individual's uncertainty of how to respond due to one's

judgment being impaired as the frequency of Invisibility increases. However, rather than this leading to more distress, the individual might feel as though there are no apparent strategies available to cope with the incident. This response might allow the individual to avoid self-criticism regarding how they could have responded, resulting in reduced distress.

Another potential explanation for Detachment slightly buffering distress when encountering high frequency of Invisibility might be because it appears to be a normal immediate coping response when encountering a traumatic event. Invisibility includes one's talents, abilities, and character not being acknowledged or valued by others or by the larger society (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000). Similar to a traumatic event, Invisibility might be perceived as threat to one's sense of self. Therefore, distancing oneself or being uncertain of how to respond might be a reasonable immediate coping response. This response might serve as a self-protective response, thereby reducing distress. For example, Smith et al. (2007) indicated that upon encountering a racially-traumatic event, an individual might distance himself or herself as a form of emotional self-defense. Distancing one's self can be helpful in the short-term because it may provide an opportunity for emotions to calm (Carver et al., 1989). Also as a result of trauma, individuals might immediately distance themselves due to distrusting others (Waters, 2002). Distancing one's self might protect one's self-image, derived from one's talents, abilities, and character, thereby reducing the distress associated with being unacknowledged and devalued when they occur frequently. Following a racially-traumatic event, feelings of detachment, emotional numbness, or distorted reality are

expected (Smith et al., 2007). Similar to responses of a traumatic event, these feelings, which would typically be considered abnormal, can be considered normal (Waters, 2002).

Associations Between Distress and Approach Coping Strategies

In addition to the moderating relationships between frequency and distress, associations between the Racial Microaggressions Scale distress subscales and approach coping strategies were found. Four approach coping strategies were found to be associated with the Racial Microaggressions Scale distress subscales.

Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment and Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress. Individuals who reported high use of Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment also experienced more Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress. This indicates that individuals who experienced more distress due to being treated as interchangeable, incompetent, incapable, low achieving, and dysfunctional, or as though their accomplishments were not because of their own merit also reported seeking a sense of family, validation, and support by engaging in cultural traditions. Individuals who encounter Low Achieving/Undesirable microaggressions may feel self-conscious about personal qualities related to their cultural heritage such as their hairstyle, clothing, manner of speech, and communication style (Torres-Harding et al., 2012). If aspects of one's culture are continuously treated as abnormal, inferior, or deviant, one may feel that immersion into their culture cannot provide the resources necessary to counteract these devaluing experiences. People who use Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment may experience more distress due to Low Achieving/Undesirable microaggressions because they have a stronger sense of connection with their culture. Therefore, when they or their culture is treated as dysfunctional it may have a greater negative impact on them.

Using Instrumental Support and Invisibility Distress. Individuals who experienced more Invisibility Distress also reported high use of Instrumental Support. This indicates that individuals who experienced more distress due to being treated as lower status, not visible, dismissed, or devalued also reported getting advice, assistance, or information. Upon encountering Invisibility microaggressions, an individual may experience an inner struggle with feelings and beliefs about one's talents, abilities, and character (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000). The individual must choose ways to make him or herself visible (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000). However, individuals might be unsure of how to counteract these experiences. Therefore, they may seek guidance from other people of color. However, seeking and obtaining this support might increase distress. In the process of learning how to deal with these experiences, individuals may become increasingly aware of the pervasive nature of these incidents. Furthermore, individuals who are sought for advice or information may not be aware of, or be willing to, acknowledge such experiences, leaving the individual feeling further invalidated. Also, the individual might have been seeking more emotional support, including moral support, sympathy, and understanding rather than advice or information. Using Emotional Support was not examined because of concerns about multicollinearity, as it was highly correlated with Using Instrumental Support. Although Using Instrumental Support was chosen over Using Emotional Support, these coping strategies tend to co-occur despite being conceptually different (Carver et al., 1989). Thus, it is likely that individuals who used instrumental support were also using emotional support. Consequently, accessing social support in general might lead to increase distress when encountering Invisibility microaggressions. However, it is also possible that individuals

who experienced more distress due to being treated as if they were invisible were more likely to seek out social support.

Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment and Invisibility Distress. Individuals who experienced more Invisibility Distress also reported high use of Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment. This indicates that individuals who experienced more distress due to being treated as lower status, not visible, dismissed, or devalued also reported seeking a sense of family, validation, and support by engaging in cultural traditions. Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, and Lalonde (1990) found that minority group members tended to perceive a higher level of discrimination to be directed at their group as a whole rather than at the individual. Similarly, encountering incidents in which aspects of one's abilities, talents, and character are devalued because one belongs to a racial/ethnic group might be perceived as a threat that extends beyond the individual. These incidents might also be perceived as a threat directed toward one's culture. Therefore, if one obtains a sense of validation through a connection with their culture, they may experience increased distress due to encountering Invisibility. Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment is intended to validate and nurture (Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009). However, it is also possible that individuals who experienced higher levels of distress due to invisibility microaggressions might also be more likely to seek out cultural nourishment and replenishment.

Religion and Invisibility Distress. Individuals who reported high use of Religion experienced less Invisibility Distress. This suggests that individuals who reported a tendency to turn to religion in times of stress experienced less distress when being treated as lower status, not visible, dismissed, or devalued. Turning to one's religion or

spirituality in times of stress may maintain or replenish a sense of worth, including the worth of one's race and culture. For example, people of color described the use of spirituality as playing a major role in overcoming frustrations associated with racial microaggressions (Constantine et al., 2008; Hernández et al., 2010). Turning to religion might be associated with decreased distress because it consists of a wide range of strength-based strategies, such as a source of positive interpretation and growth (Carver et al., 1989). The use of religious or spiritual coping strategies might provide individuals with a sense of identity within their place of worship or with individuals who share their same spiritual beliefs. This sense of connectedness might protect or replenish individuals from the negative depictions of their race and culture experienced as a result of encountering Invisibility.

Associations Between Distress and Avoidance Coping Strategies

In addition to the moderating relationships between frequency and distress, associations between the Racial Microaggressions Scale distress subscales and avoidance coping strategies were found. Two avoidance coping strategies were determined to be associated with the Racial Microaggressions Scale distress subscales.

Denial and Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress. Individuals who reported high use of Denial also experienced less Low Achieving/Undesirable Distress. This indicates that individuals who experienced less distress due to being treated as interchangeable, incompetent, incapable, low achieving, and dysfunctional or as though their accomplishments were not because of their own merit also reported trying to cope by pushing the situation away. Deciphering racial microaggressions and coping with the harmful impact of these experiences may be challenging (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010).

Therefore, denying the experience may be an immediate response when encountering a negative message regarding one's culture or capabilities. Denial is a somewhat controversial coping strategy, as it may be useful by initially minimizing distress to facilitate coping (Carver et al., 1989). The use of this coping strategy might avoid the negative feelings that are associated with racial microaggressions, which provides a momentary benefit of reducing distress. However, denial is more often considered a problematic coping strategy because it often creates additional issues, such becoming more serious, making it more challenging to deal with later on (Carver et al., 1989). Therefore, initially reducing distress, or trying to push the situation away, may not be an effective long-term coping strategy. There is also the possibility that individuals demonstrated a response bias, acting as though the incident did not happen and that it did not bother them. Thus, individuals who use this coping strategy might have been more motivated to underreport distress.

Internalization and Invisibility Distress. Individuals who experienced less Invisibility Distress also reported higher use of Internalization. This indicates that individuals who experienced less distress due to being treated as lower status, not visible, dismissed, or devalued also reported a tendency to attribute the cause or responsibility of the incident to oneself. Attributing the cause of the incident to oneself might be an attempt to reduce the impact of being devalued simply because one is a person of color. Individuals may attribute the cause of the incident to themselves because they believe they should have been able to do something about the situation or they should have not gotten so upset, which might allow the incident to feel more controllable. If an individual is able to feel in control when being devalued or dismissed, he or she may experience

reduced distress. However, repeatedly attempting to cope with racial microaggressions in this way may be problematic over time. For example, individuals might experience feelings such as guilt, shame, and worthlessness. Individuals might not acknowledge that other factors, such as their race, might be contributing to the cause of the incident. Therefore, use of Internalization when frequently encountering racial microaggressions might be a less effective long-term coping strategy.

Clinical Implications

Many of the coping strategies examined did not moderate the relationship between the frequency and distress of racial microaggressions nor were they associated with the Racial Microaggressions Scale distress subscales. Yet, a few significant results were found. Among these findings, coping strategies infrequently buffered or exacerbated distress for a majority of the microaggression themes examined. Nonetheless, these few findings may provide therapists with useful information when helping people of color cope with racial microaggressions.

The findings observed in the current study appear to indicate that people cope more successfully with the immediate distress associated with racial microaggressions when using the avoidance coping strategies Detachment, Denial, or Internalization. Alternatively, it is possible that individuals who encountered high levels of microaggression distress might be more likely to use Detachment, Denial, or Internalization. Although these strategies appear to buffer or reduce immediate distress, they are considered more problematic ways of coping and might not help the individual cope with the emotions associated with racial microaggressions. In addition, it was found that use of the approach coping strategies Education/Advocacy, Cultural

Nourishment/Replenishment, and Using Instrumental Support were not as helpful as anticipated. On the surface, these approach coping strategies appeared to be related to increased distress. However, it may not be that these coping strategies are completely ineffective. Rather, it may be that these coping strategies are insufficient when attempting to cope with the immediate distress associated with racial microaggressions. Use of approach coping strategies might be more effective if used as a long-term approach to dealing with microaggression distress, after the individual has examined the implications of the incident and his or her connection with his or her racial/ethnic background, and following access to information, including organizations, which promote anti-racist views as well as encourage one's cultural traditions and heritage.

Challenging Oppression. In discussing the troubling emotions experienced when encountering racial microaggressions, the therapist can elaborate on how acknowledging these emotions can be an initial step towards challenging oppression. When individuals encounter racial microaggressions, they are being made aware of the oppression directed towards their racial/ethnic group. This awareness is tremendously painful, consisting of feelings such as anger, betrayal, and objectification, which may be directed toward the oppressor and toward oppressive societal structures (Freire, 1970). Acknowledgment of oppression and the feelings associated with this awareness appear to account for the increased distress experienced when encountering racial microaggressions. This awareness can further oppress individuals if they absorb the oppressive reality that occurs around them (Freire, 1970). The avoidance coping strategies Detachment, Denial, and Internalization, strategies that attempt to disengage or push away reality and turn the blame on oneself, appear to reflect accepting the oppressive reality. Self-deprecation,

which is considered internalization of the opinion of the oppressors, is considered a characteristic of oppressed individuals and groups (Freire, 1970).

An alternative to accepting the oppressive reality is to challenge oppression. It is not until individuals are aware of oppression that they are able to overcome it (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). To overcome oppression, individuals must be aware of it, emerge from it, and act against it (Freire, 1970). As previously mentioned, tremendously painful emotions may be associated with the awareness of oppression. Yet, these emotions may be utilized to motivate people to advocate for their rights, to seek change, and to work toward changing oppressive social conditions (Freire, 1970; Zimmerman, 2000). Thus, therapists may similarly seek to utilize distress exhibited by their clients to ultimately foster empowerment and positive change.

Empowerment. The therapist can help the client overcome oppression through the process of empowerment. The empowerment process includes beliefs about one's competency, ability to exert control, and understanding one's socio-political environment (Zimmerman, 2000). It is a process by which oppressed individuals and groups gain greater control over their lives and environments (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). It consists of a critical awareness, described as the capability to analyze and understand one's socio-political environment, knowing when to engage in conflict and when to avoid it, and the ability to identify and cultivate resources (Zimmerman, 2000). Empowerment occurs through the development of skills that encourage independent problem-solving and decision-making (Zimmerman, 2000). These skills may be cultivated through participation in organizations and activities that provide opportunities for learning new skills, a sense of control and confidence, and a sense of being involved with and

improving one's community (Zimmerman, 2000). Organizations and activities that relate to one's race/ethnicity or culture might be especially important given that racial microaggressions are directed towards one's racial/ethnic background and culture. Also, therapists can inform clients that involvement in groups, movements, or organizations have a reciprocal effect, which can leave individuals feeling empowered and connected, which contribute to increased well-being (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). For example, in addition to helping clients engage in emotional regulation when negative emotions occur, therapists might also seek to help clients manage negative emotions by fostering connections with people from their own race/culture or by joining groups that are engaged in anti-racist actions, such as multicultural student groups. Similarly, non-students or individuals with limited socioeconomic resources might benefit from participation in programs at cultural centers that fight against inequality.

Stress Inoculation Training Combined with an Ecological Perspective. Using a cognitive therapy treatment, therapists can acknowledge the difficult emotions that can arise from racial microaggressions within the safety of the therapeutic setting. A therapist providing treatment from a cognitive therapy perspective seeks to help the client recognize, examine, and adjust their maladaptive responses to more realistic adaptive thinking (Beck & Weishaar, 2005). This can be an important step towards coping with these experiences as well as becoming empowered. Also, by incorporating an ecological perspective into treatment, the therapist can help the individual learn and practice coping strategies that also acknowledge the influence of the environment. This combined therapeutic approach could prevent pathologizing the individual while addressing the systemic influence of racial microaggressions.

One example of beneficial cognitive behavioral approach is stress inoculation training. An essential starting point of this model is developing a warm, collaborative relationship with the client (Meichenbaum & Deffenbacher, 1988). A collaborative relationship is especially important in a cross-racial therapeutic relationship, otherwise the client might perceive the therapeutic interventions suggested to be racial microaggressions and an indication that the therapist lacks multicultural competence (Constantine, 2007). Therefore, therapists are encouraged to examine and challenge the stereotypes, perceptions, and beliefs held about people of color that might hinder their ability to form a helpful and effective therapeutic relationship (Sue, 2010). Through a collaborative relationship, the therapist can begin to explore how the individual made sense of the racial microaggression, how it impacted him or her, and how the individual attempted to cope with the experience, immediately as well as over time. As part of this dialogue, the therapist can provide psychoeducation about racial microaggressions, such as emotional responses to racial microaggressions might include depression, anxiety, hopelessness, frustration, and anger (Sue, 2010). This might allow the individual to understand why he or she may have experienced a range of emotions. Psychoeducation would also include discussing the importance of experiencing, expressing, and accepting emotions (Allen, McHugh, & Barlow, 2008). Increased emotional awareness might be an initial step in helping the individual cope with racial microaggressions.

Another critical aspect of the initial phase of therapy is addressing the nature and complexity of the client's presenting concern (Meichenbaum & Deffenbacher, 1988). In preparing to help people of color cope with racial microaggressions, the therapist must also acknowledge that the environments that people of color live and work in are where

these incidents occur. Incorporating an ecological perspective into therapy acknowledges that some problems are environmentally-based (Greenleaf & Williams, 2009). This perspective also serves to protect against blaming the victim, which can occur with intrapsychic therapy approaches, and encourages environmentally-based solutions when dealing with environmentally-based problems (Greenleaf & Williams, 2009). When discussing racial microaggressions, the therapist and client can discuss the interplay between the individual's experiences and the environment in a manner that the client does not feel blamed, criticized, or pathologized. Incorporating an ecological perspective allows the therapist and client to identify what in the environment is inhibiting the client from effectively functioning (Greenleaf & Williams, 2009).

The next phase of therapy consists of increasing self-awareness, interpretation of the stressor, and developing coping skills (Meichenbaum & Deffenbacher, 1988). Increased self-awareness of one's emotional responses upon encountering racial microaggressions may provide insight into how one interprets the incident. For example, the client might be unaware that they try to deny the experience or they tend to question what they might have done to cause the incident. Given the client's increased knowledge about the impact of racial microaggressions and oppression, they might be better able to interpret and identify these incidents. Identifying the types of racial microaggressions experienced might help the therapist and client develop specific coping strategies (Carter, 2007). In regards to the findings of the current study, the use of Education/Advocacy and Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment with an awareness of the oppression in one's environment might have been more fruitful after identifying how these strategies could be implemented on the individual, group, and systemic level. For example, one might be

better aware of how to inform those in authority positions about the occurrence of such incidents, be better informed of ways to discuss these issues within a group or at a meeting, and be more aware or have access to cultural organizations that support and advocate against racism. The empowerment gained through skill building and involvement in community organizations and activities might increase the likelihood that these coping strategies buffer and reduce, rather than exacerbate and increase, distress. The second phase also consists of the therapist and client devising how and when to implement coping strategies as well as practicing coping strategies. Also, the client and therapist could discuss the long-term process of coping, which might prepare the client for the last phase of treatment.

In the last phase, coping strategies are rehearsed and refined in session, eventually being applied outside of therapy, with further refinement based on feedback (Meichenbaum & Deffenbacher, 1988). During this phase, the client would practice implementing coping strategies when encountering racial microaggressions using techniques such as role-playing or imagery. This phase might allow the client to practice coping with the distress associated with racial microaggressions within a safe environment to evaluate the effectiveness of coping strategies. Also, this phase might allow the therapist to provide the client with feedback about and reinforce the information learned during the previous phases.

During this last phase, the client would also become involved in empowering organizations, described as organizations that provide opportunities for individuals to gain control over their lives (Zimmerman, 2000). Empowering organizations consists of a culture of growth and community building, opportunities for meaningful involvement,

peer-based support systems that develop a social identity, and shared leadership with a commitment to members and the organization (Zimmerman, 2000). As the client becomes involved in empowering organizations, the therapist and client can identify and evaluate social, political, and economic supports available. Utilization of these resources might help the client to endure the challenges encountered as he or she strives towards overcoming oppression. Upon becoming involved in empowering organizations and available support systems, the therapist and client might discuss these experiences to ensure they serve to empower and support the client. Also during the last phase, consistent with an ecological perspective, the therapist and client would identify and implement environmentally-based solutions. As with individual coping strategies, the therapist and client would develop or research ways to address racial microaggressions at the group, institutional, or systemic level. This might happen through affiliation with an empowering organization or through individual advocacy. The last phase of treatment also allows the individual to prepare for encountering racial microaggressions in the future, with the awareness that coping with these incidents may continue to be challenging. Following the termination of treatment, the therapist is able to meet with the client for follow-up sessions. Follow-up sessions might provide the client with a sense of continued support (Meichenbaum & Deffenbacher, 1988). Also, these sessions might increase the client's comfort re-initiating therapeutic services if they need additional guidance when attempting to cope with racial microaggressions, especially given that racial microaggressions are stressors that extend beyond the individual.

Academic and Curricular Implications

The inclusion of racial microaggression research in multicultural psychology courses in masters and doctoral training programs might prepare graduate students when working with clients who are striving to overcome oppression. Beginning in the classroom, students can practice engaging in dialogue with the teacher. In the typical teacher-as-knowledgeable and student-as-unknowledgeable interaction, teachers bestow students with information and students are considered to know nothing (Freire, 1970). This type of communication projects ignorance on to others and negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry (Freire, 1970). If perpetuated within the therapeutic relationship, the client's experiences might be dismissed and the therapist's views might be inadvertently imposed on the client, essentially reenacting the oppression associated with racial microaggressions. Instead, by engaging in dialogue, teachers and students can become more aware of their experiences and the experiences of others as contributing to a process in which both parties contribute to and are responsible for growth (Freire, 1970). The learning process is transformed from learning from the teacher to learning with the teacher (Freire, 1970). Engaging in a dialogue about multicultural topics, including racial microaggressions, might result in students feeling increasingly empowered as their experiences, concerns, and views are reflected in the classroom discussion. Through this process, teachers demonstrate the importance of consulting with the individual and respecting the individual's worldview (Freire, 1970). As students experience the benefits of dialogue, they might be better prepared to explore and address the needs of their clients.

Research Implications

In examining moderating relationships between the frequency and distress of racial microaggressions, future research should examine how immediate and long-term use of coping strategies influence distress. One possibility might be to design a study similar to that developed by Carver and Scheier (1994), in which coping was examined at when dealing with the general stressor of taking an exam, using three different intervals (before, after, and upon) grades for an exam being posted. Individuals might describe coping with a mild racial microaggression that could be perpetrated by a confederate such as overhearing someone use a racial-loaded term or name. Another possibility might be to have the participant pick and describe in detail a real microaggression experience that they encountered in their everyday life. The specifics of the study would have to be designed with ethical considerations in mind to avoid undue distress. Individuals have reported feeling stressed for days, to months, to years, after encountering racial discrimination (Carter & Forsyth, 2010). Therefore, intervals might include examining distress and coping immediately following the incident, a day after the incident, a week after the incident, a month after the incident, three months after the incident, six months after the incident, and a year after the incident.

The current study did not test the microaggression process model. Research examining the microaggression process model might provide researchers with an understanding of which coping strategies are used, how they influence distress, and when they are most effective. Different demands might exist at different stages of the coping process (Carver et al., 1989; Carver & Scheier, 1994). Therefore, use of different coping strategies, and when they are used, might result in different level of distress. A mixed methods study might be conducted using quantitative measures to examine the racial

microaggressions encountered by a sample of individuals and the coping strategies used. Then, using open-ended questions to explore the quantitative information, researchers might be able to obtain detailed information about the coping process including how the coping strategies were implemented. This type of study might provide an in-depth understanding of the sequential nature of racial microaggressions, the coping strategies used, and the affective experience of individuals as they implement different coping strategies.

Future research should also examine racial/ethnic identity, as it was not included in the current study. Studies have shown that higher levels of ethnic identity have been associated with increased well-being, whereas lower levels have been associated with less well-being (Franklin-Jackson & Carter, 2007). Studies have also shown that higher levels of ethnic identity buffer the distress associated with perceived discrimination (Mossakoski, 2003). However, studies have also shown that people of color with higher ethnic identity report more discrimination (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Having a strong ethnic identity, which may be a central aspect of one's identity, may lead one to interpret racial discrimination as a threat to a core aspect of one's self as these encounters increase (Yoo & Lee, 2005). However, ethnic identity might influence approach coping strategies, especially culturally based approach coping strategies such as Education/Advocacy and Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment, which were found in the current study to predict more distress. Future research should examine whether ethnic identity influences coping strategies used to cope with racial microaggressions.

Also, the current study examined distress, which appeared to be similar to findings associated with psychological distress, including depression (e.g., West et al.,

2010). However, the current study did not examine specific emotional reactions nor whether an individual developed long-term psychological reactions. Future research should examine the specific effects associated with racial microaggression coping. Also, based on the findings of the current study, future research should further examine the influence of social support, involvement in cultural traditions, advocacy and education, detachment, denial, internalization, and religion, as these coping strategies appeared to affect different types of microaggression distress in the current study.

Limitations

There are several limitations in the current study. The Racial Microaggressions Coping Scale, which includes the Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment coping strategy, is a new scale developed for the current study. Due to limited examination as to its reliability and with no validity information, interpretations of this scale should be made with caution. Also, the current sample is biased in terms of a disproportionate ratio of women to men, with 82.5% (203) females and only 17.5% (43) males. Therefore, these findings may not generalize well to males. The sample consisted of 202 (82.1%) persons of color enrolled in college and 44 (17.9%) individuals not enrolled in college. Also, 188 (76.4%) participants indicated being currently employed and 57 (23.2%) were not currently employed. Therefore, these findings may not generalize well to persons of color who are not currently university students or individuals who are unemployed.

Several factors may have negatively contributed to reduced power in the current study. First, the reliability of the measures used to examine the main effect and interactions might have had reduced power due to limited psychometric properties (Aberson, 2010; Frazier et al., 2004). Also, despite an a priori power analysis indicating

that an anticipated sample size of 156 would provide sufficient power for a hierarchical multiple regression analyses, the reduced power in the current study might have been impacted by the level of power commonly found in this area of study. The current study sought to obtain 300 participants to ensure sufficient power, yet after accounting for missing values and incomplete responses, the final total sample was 246. For the approach coping strategies (Education/Advocacy and Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment) and Environmental Invalidations to achieve a power level of .80 in the current study, given the observed effect size (f^2) of .06, the 20 predictors in the model, and an alpha coefficient of .05, an additional 122 participants would be needed to have a total of 365. Similarly, for the avoidance coping strategy Internalization and Invisibility to achieve a power level of .80 in the current study, given the observed effect size (f^2) of .04, the 8 predictors in the model, and an alpha coefficient of .05, an additional 326 participants would be needed to have a total of 539 to achieve an adequate level of power (.80). Also, the effect sizes in the current study were much lower than anticipated, closer to what Cohen (1992) identified as a small effect size (f^2 = .02), rather than a medium effect size (f^2 = .15). Therefore, the power observed in the hierarchical multiple regression analyses of the current study was lower than the recommended power level of .80.

Also, the current study examined 13 coping strategies, including interactions between each of the six racial microaggressions frequency subscales and each coping strategy. A more narrowed approach might reduce concerns with power and allow researchers to easily obtain larger sample sizes.

Despite providing examination of a large sample of individuals, the use of self-report measures is another limitation. Self-report measures require individuals to provide accurate and self-revealing responses (Whitley, 1996). The nature of the items in the current study required individuals to reflect on racial microaggressions. Because these experiences can be emotionally-laden, some people might consciously avoid thinking about these kind of experiences, while others might be sensitized towards acknowledging these experiences. Thus, responses might have been impacted by one's level of self-awareness around these experiences, and individuals might have either minimized or exaggerated their experiences. For example, individuals who used the coping strategies Education/Advocacy and Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment might have over-reported the frequency of racial microaggressions and the resulting distress because a stronger sense of ethnic identity might lead them to be more aware of these incidents. Similarly, individuals who used the coping strategy Detachment might have been more likely to under-report racial microaggressions and minimize the distress elicited by these experiences because they were motivated to try to deny any aspect of these experiences. This might have affected their willingness to accurately report both the frequency of these experiences and the resulting distress levels.

Lastly, this study was cross-sectional in nature, which prohibits causal predictions from being made. For example, it is unclear whether the use of coping strategies was in response to racial microaggressions or whether experiencing a high level of microaggression distress resulted in the use of coping strategies.

Summary

As racism in American society has transformed, racial microaggressions have become increasingly prevalent (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010). The current study examined how coping strategies moderated the relationship between the frequency and distress of racial microaggressions, particularly how approach coping strategies buffered distress and how avoidance coping strategies exacerbated distress.

As anticipated, individuals who encountered more racial microaggressions also experienced increased distress. When individuals used the approach coping strategies that emphasized educational or advocacy efforts (Education/Advocacy) and involvement in one's cultural traditions (Cultural Nourishment/Replenishment), the relationship between the frequency and distress of Environmental Invalidations was moderated such that high use of these coping strategies exacerbated distress when Environmental Invalidations were encountered more frequently. The unanticipated exacerbation of distress associated with these approach coping strategies might be due to individuals having a stronger sense of ethnic identity, these being long-term rather than immediate coping strategies, or because one's environment is perceived as unalterable. Also, when individuals distanced themselves or were uncertain of how to respond (Detachment), the relationship between the frequency and distress of Invisibility was moderated such that high use of Detachment slightly reduced distress when Invisibility was encountered more frequently. Individuals might have experienced slightly reduced distress at high levels because of increased attempts to avoid the distress associated with Invisibility or avoidance being a normal response to trauma, including racially-traumatic events such as racial microaggressions. Additional findings suggest that coping strategies that immediately avoided or disengaged from the experience associated with encountering a racial

microaggression resulted in reduced or decreased immediate distress. Conversely, coping strategies that acknowledged the incident appeared to experience increased or exacerbated immediate distress.

Through a collaborative therapeutic relationship, the therapist and client can acknowledge and challenge the oppressive nature of racial microaggressions so that the client can strive towards becoming empowered. Also, therapists can also use stress inoculation training that incorporates and addresses the environmental-nature of racial microaggressions. Students in graduate programs might benefit including racial microaggression theory in multicultural psychology courses. Acknowledging the reality of these experiences will help students to know that perspectives may differ in terms of what gets labels as ‘racism,’ and instructors could facilitate cross-racial dialogue around these different perspectives into the classroom itself. Future research should examine the immediate and long-term use of different coping strategies, when coping strategies are implemented upon encountering racial microaggressions and the experience of implementing coping strategies, the influence of racial identity, and the effects of coping with racial microaggressions.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Statement

Coping with Racial Microaggressions: The Moderating Effects of Coping Strategies on Microaggression Distress

Principal Investigator: Alejandro L. Andrade Jr. aandrade@mail.roosevelt.edu

Supervising Investigator: Susan Torres-Harding storresharding@roosevelt.edu

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this study is to examine how people of color might cope with racism-related experiences, called racial microaggressions. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are 18 years of age or older and are a person from a racial or ethnic minority background. The study is being conducted by Alejandro L. Andrade Jr. as part of his dissertation research.

What I will be asked to do if I agree to participate in this research?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey that will take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete. The survey will ask about your experiences with subtle racism, including how often you experience subtle racism and how much distress it causes you, and what you might do to cope with these racism-related experiences. You will also be asked to complete a brief demographics questionnaire.

Who will have access to my information, and how will my privacy be protected?

Youwill not be asked for any identifying information in this study. Your responses will be completely anonymous—you will not be asked for any identifying information, and it will be impossible to link your survey responses back to you.

Are there any benefits for participating in this study?

Your participation will increase knowledge regarding how persons of color cope with racial microaggressions, which are more subtle, hidden, or ambiguous mistreatment due to one's race. Also, participants may enter into a random raffle for a chance to win one of five $20 Amazon.com gift cards for participating.

Are there any risks to participating in this study?

This study poses minimal risk to you. It is possible that completing the survey may be stressful or cause distress because it asks about experiences of racism. However, if you are uncomfortable answering any questions, feel free to skip the question. In addition, if are distressed, you can contact the researcher, Alejandro L. Andrade Jr., or his research supervisor, Dr. Susan Torres-Harding, for assistance or to discuss your participation.

What are my rights as a research participant?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study anytime or skip any questions without negative consequences.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this research?

For questions about this project, you may contact the principal investigator, Alejandro L. Andrade Jr., at aandrade@mail.roosevelt.edu, or the research supervisor, Dr. Susan Torres-Harding, at storresharding@roosevelt.edu. If you would rather speak with someone other than the researchers, contact the Roosevelt University Institutional Review Board at 312-341-3753. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the Faculty Research Ethics Officer at 312-341-3890.

You will be given a copy of this consent statement for you to keep.

By completing the survey, I affirm I have read and understand the above information, including my rights as a research participant. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary.

Appendix B

Demographics

What is your age? _____

Are you: _____ male _____ female

How do you identify your racial/ethnic background? (If you are biracial/multiracial, please list your multiple backgrounds) _____

Are you a person with a disability? ____ yes _____ no

If yes, what is your disability? _____

Do you identify as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, or questioning?

_____ yes _____ no _____ prefer not to answer

Are you currently enrolled in college? _____ yes _____ no

If yes, what year/level? _____

If yes, what school do you attend? _____

Are you enrolled _____ full-time _____ part-time

Are you currently employed? _____ yes _____ no

If yes, what is your profession/job title? _____

Appendix C

Racial Microaggressions Scale (Torres-Harding, Andrade, Romero Diaz, 2012)

Instructions: The following questions ask whether you feel that you have been treated a certain way by others because of your race. For each question, please mark how often you feel you have experienced the event described, and whether the incident caused you to feel stressed, upset, offended, or frustrated. If you have never noticed or experienced the interaction listed, please check 'never' and go on to the next question. If you are biracial or multiracial, please think about whether people treat you as described below because of your biracial or multiracial backgrounds.

	How OFTEN does this happen to you?				If this does happen to you, how STRESSFUL, UPSETTING, or BOTHERSOME is this for you?			
	Never	*A little/ rarely*	*Sometimes /a moderate amount*	*Often/ frequentl y*	*Not at all*	*A little*	*Moderate level*	*High level*
1. Because of my race, other people assume that I am a foreigner.								
2. Because of my race, people suggest that I am not a 'true' American.								
3. Other people often ask me where I am from, suggesting that I don't belong.								
4. Other people treat me like a criminal because of my race.								
5. People act like they are scared of me because of my race.								
6. Others assume that I will behave aggressively because of my race.								
7. I am singled out by police or								

security people because of my race.								
8. People suggest that I am 'exotic' in a sexual way because of my race.								
9. Other people view me in an overly sexual way because of my race.								
10. Other people hold sexual stereotypes about me because of my racial background.								
11. Other people act if they can fully understand my racial identity, even though they are not of my racial background.								
12. Other people act as if all of the people of my race are alike.								
13. Others suggest that people of my racial background get unfair benefits.								
14. Others assume that people of my background would succeed in life if they simply worked harder.								
15. Other people deny that people of my race face extra obstacles when compared to Whites.								
16. Other people assume that I am successful because of affirmative action, not because I earned by accomplishments.								
17. Others prefer that I assimilate to the White culture and downplay my racial background.								
18. Others hint that I should work hard to prove that I am not like other people of my race.								
19. Others suggest that my								

racial heritage is dysfunctional or undesirable.								
20. Others focus only on the negative aspects of my racial background.								
21. I am mistaken for being a service worker or lower-status worker simply because of my race.								
22. I am treated like a second-class citizen because of my race.								
23. I receive poorer treatment in restaurants and stores because of my race.								
24. When I interact with authority figures, they are usually of a different racial background.								
25. I notice that there are few role models in my racial background in my chosen career.								
26. Sometimes I am the only person of my racial background in my class or workplace.								
27. Where I work or go to school, I see few people of my racial background.								
28. I notice that there are few people of my racial background on the TV, books, and magazines.								
29. Sometimes I feel as if people look past me or don't see me as a real person because of my race.								
30. I feel invisible because of my race.								
31. I am ignored in school or work environments because of								

my race.								
32. My contributions are dismissed or devalued because of my racial background.								

Appendix D

Brief COPE (Carver, 1997)

Instructions: This is a list of strategies that some people use to deal with their experiences of discrimination. Different people deal with things in different ways, but I'm interested in how you've tried to deal with it. I want to know to what extent you've been doing what the item says. Don't answer on the basis of whether it seems to be working or not—just whether or not you're doing it. Use these response choices. Make your answers as true FOR YOU as you can.

1	2	3	4
I haven't been doing this at all	I've been doing this a little bit	I've been doing this a medium amount	I've been doing this a lot

1. I've been concentrating my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in..... _____
2. I've been saying to myself "this isn't real".....…. _____
3. I've been getting emotional support from others.…..... _____
4. I've been taking action to try to make the situation better.…..... _____
5. I've been refusing to believe that it has happened.…..... _____
6. I’ve been getting help and advice from other people.…..... _____
7. I've been trying to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive..... _____
8. I've been trying to come up with a strategy about what to do.…..... _____
9. I've been getting comfort and understanding from someone..... _____
10. I've been looking for something good in what is happening..... _____
11. I’ve been making jokes about it.....…..... _____
12. I’ve been trying to find comfort in my religion or spiritual beliefs..... _____
13. I’ve been trying to get advice or help from other people about what to do..... _____

14. I've been thinking hard about what steps to take..... _____

15. I’ve been praying or meditating..... _____

16. I’ve been making fun of the situation..... _____

Appendix E

Coping with Discrimination Scale (Wei, Alvarez, Ku, Russell, & Bonett, 1997)

Instructions: This is a list of strategies that some people use to deal with their experiences of discrimination. Please respond to the following items as honestly as possible to reflect how much each strategy best describes the ways you cope with discrimination. There are no right or wrong answers.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never Like me	A little Like me	Sometimes Like me	Often Like me	Usually Like me	Always Like me

In the discrimination situations,

1. I try to educate people so that they are aware of discrimination.……..... _____
2. I do not talk with others about my feelings.……... _____
3. I try to stop thinking about it by taking alcohol or drugs.……..... _____
4. I respond by attacking others' ignorant beliefs.……..... _____
5. I wonder if I did something to provoke this incident.……..... _____
6. I educate myself to be better prepared to deal with discrimination.……... _____
7. I've stopped trying to do anything.……..... _____
8. I use drugs or alcohol to take my mind off things.……..... _____
9. I get into an argument with the person.……... _____
10. I wonder if I did something to offend others.....…….. _____
11. I try to stop discrimination at the societal level.……..... _____
12. It's hard for me to seek emotional support from other people.……....._____
13. I do not use drugs or alcohol to help me forget about discrimination……..... _____
14. I do not directly challenge the person.……..... _____

15. I wonder if I did something wrong…….. _____

16. I help people to be better prepared to deal with discrimination…….._____

17. I do not have anyone to turn to for support……..._____

18. I do not use alcohol or drugs to help me deal with it…....……..._____

19. I try not to fight with the person who offended me.…..... _____

20. I believe I may have triggered the incident.…..._____

21. I educate others about the negative impact of discrimination.....….._____

22. I have no idea what to do..... _____

23. I use drugs or alcohol to numb my feelings.…..._____

24. I directly challenge the person who offended me.…..... _____

25. I do not think that I cause this event to happen.…..._____

Appendix F

Racial Microaggressions Coping Scale

Instructions: The following section includes questions about coping strategies that individuals might use to deal with experiencing a racist event and/or discriminatory event. Please respond to the following questions as honestly as possible to reflect how much each strategy best describes the ways you cope. There are no right or wrong answers.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never Like me	A little Like me	Sometimes Like me	Often Like me	Usually Like me	Always Like me

1. I am involved in culturally-related activities, socially, professionally, or academically._____
2. I feel part of a supportive environment through my involvement in culturally-related activities……..…..…..... _____
3. I work hard to "prove" racial stereotypes wrong. ……..…..... _____
4. I alter my mannerism to be considered "more acceptable" to others. ……..... _____
5. I feel reassured being around people of my own race. ……..……..... _____
6. I feel replenished engaging in my cultural traditions. ……..... _____
7. I alter my mannerisms to make others more comfortable.……...._____
8. I feel a pull to take care for the other person, despite believing they discriminated against me……..….....….... _____
9. I try to determine, from people of my own race, if I am alone in what I experienced.... _____
10. I question whether I was misreading the situation or my experience of it. ….……... _____

Appendix G

Debriefing Form

Coping with Racial Microaggressions: The Moderating Effects of Coping Strategies on Microaggression Distress

Thank you for your participation in the study. The purpose of this research is to better understand the strategies persons of color use to cope with brief, subtle forms of racism, referred to as racial microaggressions. These pervasive yet subtle slights, indignities, or offenses are considered to occur frequently, sometimes daily, in the lives of persons of color. Racial microaggressions are considered to be detrimental, more so than traditional, more overt forms of racism, to persons of color; however, thus far limited research has examined how people of color attempt to cope with these unique stressors.

Your input is valuable in promoting an increased understanding of coping strategies that are commonly used, including strategies that may reduce the distress that occurs as a result of racial microaggressions encountered by persons of color.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study, please do not hesitate to contact Alejandro L. Andrade Jr. at (312) 307-9875 or aandrade@mail.roosevelt.edu. You may also contact Dr. Susan Torres-Harding in the Psychology Department at (312) 341-3754 or storresharding@roosevelt.edu. The Roosevelt Counseling Center can be reached at (312) 341-3548.

Thanks again for your participation!