

## Background and Significance

### Background

- Racial microaggressions are subtle forms of racial discrimination experienced by marginalized groups during day-to-day interactions.
- Research suggest that these experiences are common among racial minority young adults on college campuses, particularly at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) (Boysen, 2012).
- Although racial microaggressions are subtle (and sometimes unintentional), past research has indicated that the exposure to racial microaggressions can impact one's psychological and physical well-being (Forrest-Bank & Cuellar, 2018; Huynh, 2012; Nadal et al., 2017; Sue et al., 2007).
- Less is known, however, about how racial microaggressions may impact academic belonging within the college setting.
- The purpose of this study was to investigate if racial microaggressions were associated with three aspects of academic belonging—belonging with peers, faculty members, and administrators.
- We utilized a 4-week diary study to link week-to-week fluctuations in microaggressions to young adults' belonging.

### Hypotheses

- H1:** On weeks that college students experienced higher than average levels of microaggressions, they would report less academic belonging among peers, faculty members, and administrators (within-person effect).
- H2:** On average, racial microaggressions would be related to lower belonging among peers, faculty members, and administrators (between-person effect).

## Method

**Participants:** Latino and African American college students ( $N = 145$ ) attending a Midwestern PWI participated in a four-week diary study.

### Sample characteristics

#### Race/Ethnicity:

African American: 91 (62.8%)

Latino: 54 (37.2%)

#### Gender:

Female: 101 (69.4%)

Male: 44 (30.6%)

## Method Contd.

**Age:** Participants were between 18 and 25 years old ( $M = 20$ ;  $SD = 1.24$ ).

### Academic year:

**Freshman:** 26 (17.9%)

**Sophomore:** 36 (24.8%)

**Junior:** 35 (24.1%)

**Senior:** 48 (33.1%)

### Measures

**Racial Microaggressions.** Participants completed the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS) (Nadal, 2011).

- 35 items total- 5 subscales
  - Assumptions of Inferiority
    - "Someone acted surprised at my scholastic or professional success."
  - Second-Class Citizen and Assumptions of Criminality
    - "Someone clenched her/his purse or wallet upon seeing me."
  - Microinvalidations
    - "Someone told me they 'don't see color.'"
  - Exoticization and Assumptions of Similarity
    - "Someone told me that all people in my racial/ethnic group are all the same."
  - Workplace/School
    - "I was ignored at school or at work."
- Respondents reported whether the event occurred in the past seven days (*yes or no*).

**Academic belonging.** Participants completed the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) (Strayhorn, 2008).

- Assessed the quality of relationship and sense of belonging with their peers, faculty members, and administrative personnel.
- 3 items on a 7-point Likert scale
  - Participants were asked, "thinking of your own experience, rate the quality of your relationships with other students/ faculty/administrators."
- Responses ranged from 1 ("competitive, uninvolved, sense of alienation") to 7 ("friendly, supportive, sense of belonging").

## Results

- Multi-level modeling was used to estimate both within-person and between-person effects of racial microaggressions.

Table 1  
Effects of Racial Microaggressions on Academic Belonging with Peers, Faculty, and Administrator Personnel

	Belonging with Peers			Belonging with Faculty			Belonging with Administrators		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	5.33	0.18	<.0001	4.96	0.21	<.0001	5.24	0.20	<.0001
Age	-0.05	0.09	0.54	-0.01	0.10	0.89	0.09	0.09	0.38
Race/Ethnicity	-0.81	0.02	<.0001*	-0.78	0.24	0.001*	-0.61	0.22	0.007*
Gender	0.36	0.2	0.09*	0.002	0.26	0.99	0.05	0.24	0.83
Time	0.03	0.04	0.38	-0.05	0.04	0.25	-0.06	0.04	0.13
WP Microaggressions	-0.98	0.4529	0.03*	-0.79	0.51	0.12	0.15	0.48	0.76
BP Microaggressions	-2.07	0.7495	0.0064*	-2.26	0.90	0.01*	-2.65	0.84	0.0019*

Note. Race/Ethnicity was coded 0 = Latino; 1 = African American. Gender was coded 0 = female, 1 = male. Time is included in the model to control for changes in the DV (i.e., peer, faculty, or administrator belonging) across the four weeks. WP = Within-Person effect; BP = Between-Person effect.]

- Across the study, young adults reported an average of 4 racial microaggressions a week.
- Nearly 90% of all young adults reported at least 1 racial microaggression across the 4 weeks.
- Multi-level regressions indicated a within-person effect on peer belonging; on weeks that students reported more microaggressions, they reported lower academic belonging with peers (Table 1).
- Within-person effects on faculty or administrator belonging were not significant.
- Between-person effects emerged for all aspects of belonging; on average, students who reported more microaggressions reported lower academic belonging with peers, faculty, or administrators

## Conclusions and Implications

- Racial microaggressions can impact one's sense of belonging with others.
- College institutions must acknowledge that these subtle, yet impactful forms of discrimination, are still very prominent on college campuses have implications for young adults' academic belonging.

## Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges funding from the Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth, and Families.

