The Racial Microaggressions Scale (RMAS):
A New Scale to Measure Experiences of Racial Microaggressions in People of Color
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Purpose of the Study
- To develop a scale examining the occurrence and distress elicited by incidents of racial microaggressions.
- To examine the reliability and validity of the RMAS.

What are Racial Microaggressions?
- Brief, subtle slights directed towards persons of color, intentionally or unintentionally, that occur, verbally, behaviorally, and environmentally, on a frequent basis.

Sue et al. (2007) identified three categories:
- Microassaults are more overt, hostile, and blatant forms of racism.
- Microinsults and microinvalidations are subtle and ambiguous forms of racism perceived to offend, insult, devalue, ignore, or delegitimize persons of color.
- Sue et al. (2007) identified nine themes across three categories: alien in own land, ascription of intelligence, color blindness, criminality, assumption of criminal status, denial of individual racism, myth of meritocracy, pathologizing cultural values/communication styles, second-class citizen, and environmental invalidation.

Other themes identified elsewhere include: eroticization, invalidation of interethnic differences, and invisibility.

Most research into racial microaggressions has been qualitative. Quantitative studies of racial microaggressions are limited, often focusing on specific racial groups and professions (i.e., Constantine, 2007) or using measures not derived from the Sue et al. (2007) taxonomy (Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010).

Rationale for study
To date, no scale exists to measure racial microaggressions more generally in people of color. This scale was developed to measure the occurrence of and distress elicited by racial microaggressions. The purpose of this study is to examine the reliability and validity of this scale. The scale items were developed using themes identified in the qualitative literature. The development of this scale will allow researchers to further examine the impact of racial microaggressions on persons of color.

Participants
- 377 persons of color: 50 (39.8%) African Americans, 149 (39.5%) Latinos, 47 (12.5%) multiracial, and 31 (8.2%) Asian Americans, South Asians, or Middle-Easterners. Seventy-four percent were women and 25% were men. Two hundred and two (53.6%) students comprised the majority of participants in the study. One hundred and seventy White persons also participated in the study, but their results were excluded from the main analyses. Participants were recruited from university and community settings.

Measures
- The Racial Microaggression Scale (RMAS). The scale consisted of 52 items rated on a four-point Likert-type scale. Each item was evaluated on two domains: frequency (0 = never, 1 = a little/rarely, 2 = sometimes/a moderate amount, 3 = often/ frequently) and distress (0 = not at all, 1 = a little, 2 = moderate level, 3 = high level). The scale included items that assessed the nine racial microaggression themes identified by the Sue et al. (2007) taxonomy and themes identified in studies examining racial microaggressions.
- Schedule of Racist Events (SRE; Landrine & Klonoff, 1996). This scale assesses specific, negative life events and race-related stressors experienced by African Americans during the past year, during their entire lifetime, and the level of stress evoked by the experience. This scale consisted of 18-items rated on a six-point Likert-type scale (1 = never, 2 = once in a while, 3 = sometimes, 4 = a lot, 5 = most of the time, 6 = almost all of the time). The scale was modified to be applicable more generally to all persons of color (e.g., changing ‘because you are Black’ to ‘because of your race’).

Methodology
To examine the reliability and validity of the RMAS. To develop a scale examining the occurrence and distress elicited by incidents of racial microaggressions. Using measures not derived from the Sue et al. (2007) taxonomy.

Results
- The RMAS was positively correlated with SRE subscales at p < .05 with correlations ranging from (r = .61) to (r = .70). The 6 factors of the RMAS were positively correlated with the subscales of the SRE scale at p < .05 or p < .01 with correlations ranging from (r = .20) to (r = .70). This indicated good convergent validity.

- Using White persons’ responses to examine concurrent validity of the RMAS indicated that persons of color reported higher scores on all factors than White respondents.

Discussion and Conclusions
The 32-item Racial Microaggressions Scale was found to evidence very good internal reliability and correlated positively with a measure examining specific, negative life events and race-related stressors. The RMAS appears to be a reliable and valid scale to quantitatively measure racial microaggressions in people of color. Limitation of the study included a modest sample size of only 25% men and few Asian Americans and Middle-Easterners. Future research should further explore the physical and psychological impact of racial microaggressions on persons of color as well as microaggressions experienced by women, sexual minorities, and persons with disabilities.

References