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DOI	https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-4507-5.ch006
Download date	2026-05-11 15:55:10
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14694/3257

Chapter 1

Microaggressions: An Introduction

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ABSTRACT

Microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults toward people who are not classified within the “normative” standard. Perpetrators of microaggressions are often unaware that they engage in such communications when they interact with people who differ from themselves. This review of microaggressions in its numerous forms seeks to address the current literature regarding aversive behavior and its impacts; this includes investigating the manifestation and influence of everyday “isms,” on the quality of life of those on the receiving end of these acts. Ensuing suggestions regarding institutional-level education, training, and research—particularly in the higher educational realm—in the work towards reducing microaggression-inducing behaviors are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

‘You got beat by a girl!’ ...is a direct insult to the female professor, sending the message that women are inferior to men. Telling an African American professor: ‘You are a credit to your race,’ is insulting because the message is that African Americans

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-5942-9.ch001

are not as smart as Whites to be professors. 'Complimenting' an Asian American [by saying]: 'You speak excellent English,' is offensive because it communicates that he or she is not a real American. These insults are called 'microaggressions' (Berk, 2017, p. 64.)

Psychiatrist and Harvard University Emeritus Professor Chester M. Pierce is credited as the originator of the term 'microaggression'. In 1969, he created the word to describe the insults and dismissals he regularly witnessed non-black Americans inflict upon those of African American descent (Delpit, 2012; Lau & Williams, 2010; Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2015; Sue, 2010; Treadwell, 2013). Microaggressions, according to Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, and Willis (1978), refer to the "everyday subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are 'put downs' of blacks by offenders. The offensive mechanisms used against blacks often are innocuous" (p. 66). Peggy Davis (1989), Professor of Law at New York University School of Law, defined microaggressions as "stunning, automatic acts of disregard that stem from unconscious attitudes of white superiority and constitute a verification of black inferiority" (p. 1576). Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) refer to these as "subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously" (p. 60).

The meaning of this term has evolved since its inception. In 1973, MIT economist Dr. Mary Rowe extended the term to include similar backhanded remarks directed at women, referring to these acts as "apparently small events which are often ephemeral and hard-to-prove, events which are covert, often unintentional, frequently unrecognized by the perpetrator, which occur wherever people are perceived to be 'different'" (2008, p. 2). Since then, the use of the word microaggression has expanded further to describe the unintentional, unpremeditated degradation of members of any socially marginalized group (Paludi, Denmark, Denmark, & Paludi, 2010). This includes, but is not limited to, groups experiencing societal exclusion in any capacity due to race, gender, social economic status (SES), disability, and/or sexual orientation. Psychologist and diversity training specialist Derald Wing Sue (2010) defines microaggressions as "the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, and sexual orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group" (p. 229). In sum, although explicit racism is now widely frowned upon – and thus, deemed a non-issue for most people – implicit biases remain prevalent. For this reason, the term 'microaggression' has evolved from being mainly concerned with racism to a focus on the subtle indignities regularly suffered by marginalized groups.

Microaggressions

For clarity's sake, a microaggression is 'micro' in the size of the infraction – as compared to a 'macro' overt, illegal hate crime – and the perception by the aggressor that it is trivial, inoffensive, and even trite (Wells, 2013). It is in no way, however, 'micro' in that the potentially detrimental impact it bears on the victims can be lasting and downright hurtful. In fact, scholars such as Berk (2017) compare the 'aggression' component of this phenomenon to a misdemeanor-level assault (Garcia & Johnston-Guerrero, 2015; Paludi et al., 2010; Sue et al., 2007; Wells, 2013). Similar to an assault, microaggressions can produce fear, stress, and emotional harm, and may embarrass or intimidate the victim, undermine his or her credibility, and expose vulnerabilities. Unlike an assault in a traditional sense, they are often absent of the intent, threats, and/or the fear of physical harm (Berk, 2017; Garcia & Johnston-Guerrero, 2015; Paludi et al., 2010; Sue et al., 2007; Wells, 2013).

Across the board, contemporary scholars contend that microaggressions are now commonly understood as subtle affronts, directed towards a person or a group of people, as a way of putting them down – regardless of intent (or the lack thereof) (Sue et al., 2009; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). Though widely accepted as pejorative, microaggressions remain distinct in their relation to more overt, deliberate acts of bigotry, such as the use of racial epithets. That is, those who micro-aggress often lack ill-intent and, thusly, are unaware of the harm they are inflicting (Berk, 2017; Campbell & Manning, 2014; Dovidio, Gaetner, Kawkami, & Hodson, 2002; Flagg, 1993; Lau & Williams, 2010; Paludi et al., 2010; Rowe, 2008; Sue et al., 2009; Sue, 2010; Wells, 2013; Yosso et al., 2009). These acts, according to Sue and colleagues (2009), tend to affirm or reaffirm stereotypes about the marginalized group or demean them in an understated, subtle manner. In addition, they also reinforce the following notions:

- The position of the dominant culture as normal and all else as aberrant or pathological,
- The expression of disapproval of or discomfort with the marginalized group,
- The assumption that all marginalized group members are the same, curtailing the existence of discrimination against the minority group,
- The denial of the perpetrator's own bias, or the minimalizing of real conflict between the minority group and the dominant culture (Campbell & Manning, 2014; Paludi, 2012; Sue et al., 2010).

Though deprecating, these embedded assumptions are often not intentional. Due to collective socialization, most people believe that injurious intent is vital in the filing and handling of a grievance. In light of this, when faced with a microaggression, the motives of the aggressor may be unclear at best. Under such conditions of uncertainty, most victims find themselves in the following two positions: (1) attempting to

suppress one's anger – which perpetuates the injuries and may weaken the victim's self-image – or (2) openly protesting regardless of intent to injure. Rowe (1977; 1990; 2008) posits that the latter situation may be salutary for all concerned, especially if the aggressor admits an unconscious intent to injure. As is often the case, however, the aggressor is completely unaware of his or her assaultive conduct, and in turn, may react negatively to the victim's remonstrance. This can exacerbate a situation in which the grieved person, seeking reconciliation, is instead considered to be 'defensive' and/or 'overly sensitive'.

Racial/Ethnic Microaggressions

Unfortunately, 'post racism' is also a myth, like unicorns and black people who survive to the end of a horror movie. (Simien, 2014).

Across multiple disciplines, research has shown that the expression of racism has shifted from overt, blatant, and intentional – often referred to as “old-fashioned racism,” – to more subtle behaviors (Dovidio et al., 2002; Lau & Williams, 2010; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue et al., 2007). Describing microaggressions as ‘the new face of racism’, Sue and coauthors (2007) assert that there has been a gradual, albeit widespread societal shift from more pronounced racism towards more covert manifestations. Microaggressions, because they tend to be understated, ambiguous, and often unintentional, can be interpreted by the offended party as snide and aversive. Unfortunately, this gradualism – from conspicuous to inconspicuous race-laden relations, behaviors, and interactions – has led many Americans to wrongly believe that racism is no longer a problem for non-white Americans (Sue et al., 2008).

According to Pierce (1995),

Probably the most grievous of offensive mechanisms spewed at victims of racism and sexism are microaggressions. These are subtle, innocuous, preconscious, or unconscious degradations, and putdowns, often kinetic but capable of being verbal and/or kinetic. In and of itself a microaggression may seem harmless, but the cumulative burden of a lifetime of microaggressions can theoretically contribute to diminished mortality, augmented morbidity, and flattened confidence. (p. 281)

When asked to expound upon the cited statement, Pierce (1995) spoke directly to the negative impacts of microaggressions over time. He referenced these as incessant and cumulative assaults to one's dignity and hope. Moreover, “any single one may be gross...[yet], these mini disasters accumulate. It is the sum

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total of multiple microaggressions by [offenders] to [victims] that has pervasive effects to the stability and peace of this world” (Pierce, 1995, p. 290). Whether an “old-fashioned”, racialized incident, or a premeditated or unintentional act, the ramifications of these ordeals are deep-cutting and pervasive. Extant research has shown that microaggressions, although they are seemingly small and innocent offenses, can take a real psychological toll on the mental health of their recipients. This suffering can lead to anger and depression and even lower work productivity and problem-solving capabilities. As such, the many consequences resulting from these encounters cannot, should not, and must not be ignored.

Sue et al. (2007) identified three primary, recurring forms of racial microaggressions:

1. As a microassault: an explicit racial derogation; verbal/nonverbal; e.g. name-calling, avoidant behavior, purposeful discriminatory actions.
2. As a micro insult: communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person’s racial heritage or identity; subtle snubs; unknown to the perpetrator; hidden insulting message to the recipient of color.
3. As a microinvalidation: communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person belonging to a particular group. (p. 275)

As separate events, these and other microaggressions may seem harmless enough, but the harsh reality is that the cumulative burden of dealing with these microassaults and their tolls – over the course of a lifetime – can lead to an inferior quality of life for the victims (Garcia & Johnston-Guerrero, 2015). Reviews of extant scholarship suggest that members of minority groups who perceive that they are being discriminated against also tend to exhibit poorer health and mental health outcomes (Carter, 2007; Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Harrell, Hall, & Taliaferro, 2003; Mays, Cochran, & Barnes, 2007). Perceived stigmatization, even in the form of a microaggression, is associated with depression, anxiety, physical health issues (e.g., higher blood pressure), decreased psychological well-being, and lower self-regard (Wong, Derthick, David, Shaw, & Okazaki, 2014). The impact these aggressors have on the health outcomes of those on the receiving end is well documented in the psychological literature as well (Clark et al., 1999; Hatzenbuehler, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Dovidio, 2009; Mays et al., 2007). Although questions concerning the cumulative effect of microaggressions persist, scholars have begun advancing the research regarding the adverse health outcomes and psychological distress among assailed groups (Wong et al., 2014).

Gender Microaggressions

...women still have to work against the prevalent stereotypes of them as submissive and subservient, which can undermine their authority and prevent them from being considered for leadership positions...I am still taken aback by the level of incivility and disrespect female administrators experience, behavior that male colleagues would not direct at male administrators. (Võ, 2012, pp. 107–108).

Subtle sexism — often accepted as normal, customary, or ‘good natured’ — has replaced much of the blatant gender discrimination of the past. Historically disguised as ‘tradition’, many women regularly face a wide range of ‘just below the surface’ discriminatory acts. Unfortunately, there remains a considerable knowledge gap on this topic (Benokraitis, 1997). Just as acts of racism and ethnic discrimination have become more covert and subtle, the nature of sexism has also changed (Benokraitis, 1997; Capodilupo et al., 2010; Nadal, 2010; Nielsen, 2002; Owen, Tao, & Rodolfa, 2010; Rowe, 1990; Sue, 2010a; Sue, 2010b; Swim & Cohen, 1997; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). While open sexism refers to the intentional, highly visible inequities directed toward women (Swim & Cohen, 1997), covert or subtle sexism tends to be concealed, unnoticed, downplayed, or even disregarded because it is engrained in reigning cultural and societal norms (Swim & Cohen, 1997). Significant progress has indeed been made in women’s rights since the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act of 1964; yet, both overt sexism and subtle gender discrimination remain widespread (Swim & Cohen, 1997; Swim et al., 2001).

The dynamics of subtle sexism are undoubtedly intricate and complex; however, few studies have investigated the full extent of this social problem (Benokraitis, 1997; Nadal, 2008; Nielsen, 2002). Extant literature indicates that subtle sexism invalidates women, dismisses their contributions and accomplishments, and limits their effectiveness in social and professional settings (Benokraitis, 1997; Nielsen, 2002; Watkins et al., 2006). Moreover, a recent line of research has identified that the microgressions phenomenon is directly related to subtle sexism. As with previous studies on sexism, microaggressions have been found to contribute to an array of emotional problems. Consequently, these feelings can bring about negative mental health ramifications for victims of such discrimination (Sue et al., 2007; Sue et al., 2008). Overwhelmingly, research conducted in this sphere tend to focus primarily on racial interactions. Only recently have researchers started closely looking at the various ways in which subtle forms of discrimination impact other oppressed groups, including women (Nadal, 2008).

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Instances of overt sexism are still commonplace in our society; however, it is the less obvious forms of sex-based bias and discrimination that are even more apparent (Owen et al., 2010). Especially within the context of psychotherapy, the more nuanced forms of discrimination must be considered. To date, most of the empirical and theoretical literature on microaggressions in psychotherapy has examined the effect that it has on racial/ethnic minorities (Constantine, 2007; Owen et al., 2010; Sue et al., 2007). Yet, the “insidious nature of microaggressions against women” (Owen et al., 2010, p. 941) raises numerous concerns for researchers and practitioners alike. More gender-focused research is necessary to increase awareness and understanding regarding the effects of microaggressions on women. Accordingly, modern-day scholars are currently adding to the growing body of scholarship on this subject. In fact, researchers have expanded the materialization of this term to describe the lived experiences of women as victims of microaggressions in a myriad of capacities (Benokraitis, 1997; Capodilupo et al., 2010; McCabe, 2009; Nadal, 2010; Nielsen, 2002; Owen et al., 2010; Swim et al., 2001; Vö, 2012; Watkins et al., 2006). This includes investigating whether female perceptions of microaggressions activate negative self-schemas or maladaptive internalizations, which in turn influence the subsequent processes and outcomes (Owen et al., 2010). Furthermore, women’s perceptions of microaggressions may lead to other unfavorable results, such as a poor self-image, shame about one’s body, or incongruity regarding one’s own gender role beliefs. According to Owen and collaborators (2010), “the use of longitudinal, prospective studies will be an asset to better disentangle the directionality of microaggression–alliance correlations” (p. 941). This begins with a willingness on the part of all connected stakeholders to identify and address socially constructed sexist attitudes, such as misogyny, Androcentrism, patriarchy, and male privilege (McCabe, 2009; Nadal, 2010; Owen et al., 2010; Sue & Capodilupo, 2007; Swim et al., 2001; Vö, 2012).

Microaggressions in Higher Education

No matter how hard they work, how many degrees they possess, what titles they earn, or what levels and/or positions they acquire, they are still vulnerable to malevolent experiences as faculty members (Niemann, 2012, p. 448).

We have witnessed a recent uptrend in scholarly interest in microaggressive behaviors on college campuses (Garcia, 2015; Harper, 2013; McCabe, 2009; Minikel-Lacocque, 2013; Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Davidoff, & Sriken, 2014; Solórzano et al., 2000). As a central theme of critical theories, scholars continue to analyze the microaggressive impacts of campus culture and climate on the experiences of both students and faculty of color (Garcia & Johnston-Guerrero, 2015). Along this vein, scholars are increasingly

referencing microaggressions in the ongoing pursuit to develop theoretical insights for higher education and student affairs research. There has been a proliferation of literature specifically pertaining to the microaggressions that take place in a wide range of educational contexts. Aguirre and Messineo (1997), for example, contend that the organizational culture within institutions of higher education “is rooted in a belief system that protects White interests and facilitates the expression of racial bigotry” (p. 29). Simply put, colleges and universities are not fully equipped to justly serve an increasingly diverse population (Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Garcia & Johnston-Guerrero, 2015). Universities must move beyond these prevailing Caucasian-centered values to better serve these traditionally marginalized groups and establish a safe environment for all constituents (Nadal et al., 2014).

The higher education realm, just as with any other academic or professional environment, has long been a place in which the culture is dictated by those in positions of leadership and/or power. Whether intentional or not, microaggressions in this domain tend to foster a climate wherein, over time, the veritable maelstrom of personal insults is bound to generate new aggressors and produce new victims. In increasing fashion, these occurrences have been directed at the historically marginalized, underrepresented, and usually, most vulnerable persons in our society. More specifically, those within historically ostracized racial/ethnic, gender, religious, and sexual-orientation groups often bear the brunt of these microaggressions. Persons of African, Asian, Native American, and Latino descent, women, Jews and Muslims, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ individuals are the most frequent victims of such attacks (Berk, 2017; Nadal et al., 2014). At minimum, the strain stemming from these ongoing, assaultive interactions is bound to result in negative repercussions.

In recent years, the backdrop for these attacks changed dramatically in the wake of the following events:

- The tragic mass murders committed in the U.S. and abroad,
- The questionable killings of African-American citizens at the hands of White male police officers,
- The mean-spirited, toxic and incendiary racist and sexist discourse of the 2016 presidential campaign,
- The post-election protests in cities and on school campuses nationwide,
- The post-election spike in the harassment and intimidation of African Americans, Muslims, girls and women, immigrants, and LGBTQ people, and
- The post-election spike in hate crimes occurring in public schools, universities, and businesses (Berk, 2017; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016).

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Incidences such as these greatly alter both the context as well as the level of urgency in the effort to build understanding and respond justly to attacks of this nature. As these tragic events continue to unfold, we have witnessed (1) a resurgence of the old, more blatant standard – including the ensuing repercussions – for ‘other’, and (2) an unveiling of the pervasively covert standard for what it means to be ‘truly American’. Perhaps even more disturbing is the regularity in which these attitudes are reflected in mainstream political rhetoric.

Freund and colleagues (2016) recently conducted a study - *Inequities in academic compensation by gender: A follow-up to the National Faculty Survey Cohort Study* - specifically examining the link between gender and academic compensation in medical schools. They reported that women professors earn an average of nearly \$21,000 less than their male counterparts. To provide context, female faculty members were only paid roughly 90% of the male professors’ average salaries. Based on these findings, these researchers concluded that the present – and continued – gender gap in compensation cannot be accounted for solely by utilizing a metric scale to calculate salary. Rather, “institutional actions to address these disparities include both initial appointment and annual salary equity reviews, training of senior faculty and administrators to understand implicit bias, and training of women faculty in negotiating skills” (p. 1068).

In addition to the existent gender gaps in academic compensation, faculty of color and women often (Sue, 2014):

- Find that the campus climate is isolating, alienating, extremely stressful, risky and invalidating (Harlow, 2003; Turner, Gonzalez & Wood, 2008);
- More frequently experience being ‘the only one’ or token which leads to feelings of isolation and loneliness (Alexander & Moore, 2008);
- Lack mentors who possess knowledge of the ‘minority experience’ (Stanley, 2006);
- Have their research and scholarship devalued and considered illegitimate (Guzman, Trevino, Lubuguin, & Aryan, 2010);
- Have their racial or gender identities assailed (Harlow, 2003);
- Experience elevated levels of stress and distress (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2008);
- Are subjected to biased promotion and tenure decisions (Fenelon, 2003); and
- Have many more students and colleagues who question their qualifications or credentials to hold the status of ‘Professor’ (Harlow, 2003).

The direct and indirect targets of these assaults receive a message that they are unwanted and unwelcomed in postsecondary institutions, which can ultimately affect their sense of belonging and success in higher education (Grillo, 1996; Hurtado &

Carter, 1997; Niemann, 2012; Paludi, 2012; Rowe, 1990; Strayhorn, 2012; Turner, González, & Wood, 2008; Wells, 2013). Despite the perpetrators' intent, the message of 'you have not historically belonged here, nor do you currently belong here' is loud and clear to those targeted individuals (Garcia & Johnston-Guerrero, 2015, p. 61).

Law as Microaggression

Whether she is a judge, a litigant, a court officer, or a vagrant, it is likely that her view of the legal system is affected by her status as a regular target of microaggression. If she has a role in the system, she will be concerned about the ways in which she is heard and regarded. When a court decides matters of fact, she will wonder whether the judgment has been particularized or based upon generalizations from immutable irrelevancies. When a court decides matters of law, she will wonder whether it considers and speaks to a community in which she is included. She will know that not every legal outcome is the product of bias (Davis, 1989, p. 1568).

Because college and university employees must carry out jobs that are codified in law and policy, we cannot overlook the important role of law as microaggression. For this reason, we extend the discussion regarding how new laws might be implemented and utilized to provide adequate checks and balances against discrimination of all forms in this section. Discrimination reflects the wider problem of prejudice in the society at-large. Addressing these ills must be done in conjunction with those targeted at and within criminal justice system. These larger harms include a broad range of 'invisible' and visible harms, including microaggressions and macroaggressions. Macroaggressions, like microaggressions, describe the non-verbal, subtle, oftentimes automatic put downs of members of minority groups by those in the dominant majority. The difference between 'macro' and 'micro' in this respect is that a macroaggression is simply a microaggression writ large – that is, a slight of a public nature (Russell, 1998). The authors deem it relevant to consider the many harms resulting from the law's failure to actively address the ails directly flowing from micro and macroaggressions.

Microaggressive confrontations are carried out in "automatic, preconscious, or unconscious fashion" and "stem from the mental attitude of presumed superiority" (Pierce, 1974). This is further exacerbated in the legal sphere wherein implicit biases, perceptions, and prejudices play themselves out in the form of life-altering judgments and deliberations. Without hard, scientific evidence – outside of one's own sense or perception of bias within the court system – the person on the receiving end is left to solitarily deal with the manifestations of both the real and perceived biases (Pierce 1974; Pierce et al., 1978). For the microaggressed, the message delivered is often one of inferiority and subordination which arouses an increased hypervigilance

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against acts of arbitrary prejudice (Davis, 1989). These evoked feelings and the corresponding actions contribute to the ongoing, cumulative stress, anger, energy depletion, and uneasiness that result from the time spent coping with such affronts (Delgado & Stefancic, 1991; Flagg, 1993; Grillo, 1996; Harris, 1994; Pierce, 1995). The adverse impacts, particularly as they relate to and within the legal sphere, can ultimately mean the difference between life and death (Davis, 1989; Russell, 1998).

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I have come to use the term ‘macroaggression’ differently, to help me understand my own mindless participation in or compliance with big, systemic forms of oppression rather than interpersonal forms of bias or discrimination. It shares with ‘microaggression’ the quality of not necessarily being purposeful (Gorski, 2014, p. 6).

Studies reveal, that microaggressions, while seemingly trivial in nature have major consequences for marginalized groups in our society because they:

1. Assail the mental health of recipients (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008),
2. Create a hostile and invalidating campus climate (Solórzano et al., 2000),
3. Perpetuate stereotype threat (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002),
4. Create physical health problems (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999),
5. Saturate the broader society with cues that signal devaluation of social group identities (Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, & Dittmann, 2008),
6. Lower work productivity and problem-solving abilities (Dovidio et al., 2002; Salvatore & Shelton, 2007), and
7. Are responsible for creating inequities in education, employment and health care (Purdie-Vaughns, et al, 2008; Sue, 2010).

Far from simple benign slights, microaggressions can and do have major detrimental consequences for members of any marginalized group.

The work involved in addressing microaggressions is momentous, to say the least. There remains a scarcity of literature, controlled studies, and qualitative research specifically regarding this issue. It involves identifying – and acknowledging – its root causes, materialization, and the direct connection between the two. Equally rare are the tangible, necessary interventions intended to teach people how to respond to microaggressions and to cope with their adverse effects (Bartlett, 2017; Kalinoski et al., 2013; Lilienfeld, 2017). However, the potential negative consequences and risks of inaction justify pursuing specific actions at both the institutional and individual

levels (Paluck, & Green, 2009). These actions include conversation-building around the following themes:

1. The significance of explicit vs. implicit bias,
2. Action steps to increase diversity and decrease microaggressions,
3. Guidelines for professional development and training workshops,
4. How, as a victim, to respond to microaggressions,
5. How, as an aggressor, to respond to the victim who responded, and

Continued research concentrating on the immediate psychological, physiological, and behavioral reactions to experiences of microaggressions may improve our collective understanding of the true and lasting impact of microaggressions. An examination into the mechanisms through which microaggressions influence one's mental, physical, and psychological health will help shed light on how subtle forms of discrimination affect the daily well-being of members of marginalized groups (Caldwell, 1991; Campbell & Manning, 2014; Delpit, 2012; Lau & Williams, 2010; Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2015). This is a right step towards a greater communal consideration of the impacts, great and small, long and short term, of microaggressions on a person's overall quality of life.

CONCLUSION

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent. (Eleanor Roosevelt).

To better understand the effects of microaggressions on women, more gender-focused microaggression research is required. One promising area of inquiry includes whether female perceptions of microaggressions activate negative self-schemas or maladaptive internalized representations, which in turn influence the process and outcome. Furthermore, women's perceptions of microaggressions may relate to different outcomes, such as shame about one's body or gender role beliefs. Also, longitudinal, prospective studies will aid in disentangling the directionality of microaggression–alliance correlations.

In the continued effort to actively address both the impact and repercussions of microaggressions, Guzman (2008), Niemann (2012), Sue (2010), and Sue et al. (2009) present institutional leaders and administrators with 10 suggestions to consider (adapted from the Workplace Microaggressions Inventory (WMI)):

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1. Plan regular meetings of underrepresented groups with deans and department chairs to maintain an open dialogue on the topics of equal access, opportunities, and microaggressions;
2. Organize regular networking meetings of underrepresented employees across faculty, administrators, and staff;
3. Manage teaching loads, faculty evaluation, and performance appraisal procedures to ensure fairness to eliminate discrimination, microinequities, and “glass ceilings”;
4. Outline the expectations and explicit requirements for promotion and tenure to provide transparency in the review process of all faculty;
5. Educate underrepresented faculty about the challenges of teaching at a White-majority institution, including adverse risks of teaching in the areas of diversity, multicultural issues, LGBTQ issues, and social justice on promotion and tenure;
6. Appoint diverse faculty members to all critical committees, including promotion, search, diversity, oversight, and curriculum;
7. Create a work environment that is positive, supportive, welcoming, and cooperative and facilitates productivity and advancement for all employees;
8. Provide resources to support the professional development of all underrepresented employees to attend conferences, institutes, grant writing workshops, and other activities to promote their success;
9. Extend mentoring programs with qualified mentors to include all underrepresented employees; and
10. Infuse accountability monitoring and oversight into all programs and initiatives to evaluate attainment of outcomes on the established timelines.

Further, the following guidelines (Guzman, 2008; Niemann, 2012; Sue, 2010; Sue et al., 2009) include 10 action steps, offering administrators the opportunity to implement and foster robust professional development programs – this begins with an initial assessment, measuring all constituents’ exposure to microaggressions and their implicit biases. Zamudio-Suaréz (2016) asserts that the institution’s offices of diversity, professional and faculty development, and training should coordinate these workshops, with an emphasis on the following outcomes:

1. Increase stakeholders’ knowledge and awareness of microaggressions;
2. Enhance all members’ knowledge and appreciation of people’s differences and their importance to an individual’s identity;
3. Understand the serious psychological and physical consequences of microaggressions to the victims;
4. Identify their implicit biases and prejudices to take immediate action to improve;

5. Appreciate the value and status of all employees at all levels of the academic hierarchy;
6. Raise their sensitivity levels to recognize microaggressions when they occur;
7. Serve as an effective ally and advocate for colleagues and students who are the targets of microaggressions;
8. Select the appropriate strategies for the aggressor and victim to respond to microaggressions;
9. Formally document all incidents as the aggressor or victim for accountability; and
10. Take on the role of change agent to eliminate microaggressions on their campus. (Berk, 2017b, pp. 72-73)

Educational institutions, particularly post-secondary arenas, are microcosms of the American society in that many of the nation's issues are reflected in the academy (Bridgeforth, 2017). It is important to note that one of the best opportunities for advancing multicultural equality, increasing diversity, and developing societal equity is found within the higher educational sphere (Berk, 2017; Bridgeforth, 2017; Delpit, 2012). Higher education administrators must exercise leadership that prioritizes proportional representation of faculty (e.g., race, gender, and sexual orientation). In this way, we take the necessary steps toward establishing an academic environment that is advantageous to and for faculty and students of all backgrounds (Campbell & Manning, 2014; Lau & Williams, 2010; Nordmarken, 2014; Sommers-Flanagan, & Sommers-Flanagan, 2015). The authors assert that this must begin with the active and overt work involved in addressing, on a palpable level, the microaggression-inducing behaviors that are currently pervasive both systemically and systematically.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Critical Theory: A philosophical approach to culture, and especially to literature, that seeks to confront the social, historical, and ideological forces and structures that produce and constrain it. While traditional theory seeks to understand or explain society as a whole, critical theory is oriented toward critiquing and changing it. Critical theories aim to uncover the assumptions that keep people from developing a full understanding of how the world works.

Implicit Bias: Also known as *implicit social cognition*, implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness. Rather, implicit biases are not accessible through introspection.

Macroaggressions: Are microaggressions (see definition below) "writ large" – more specifically, this term references the clear, obvious, stark and overwhelmingly, public displays of verbally aggressive slights. Perpetrators are usually unaware that they have engaged in an exchange that demeans the recipient of the communication.

Microaffirmations: Apparently small acts, which are often ephemeral and hard-to-see, events that are public and private, often unconscious but very effective, which occur wherever people wish to help others to succeed. These include the tiny acts of opening doors to opportunity, gestures of inclusion and caring, graceful acts of listening, practicing generosity, consistently giving credit to others, and providing comfort and support when others are in distress.

Microaggressions: The brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group. Perpetrators are usually unaware that they have engaged in an exchange that demeans the recipient of the communication.

Microassaults: Explicit denigrations, primarily characterized by verbal and/or nonverbal attacks. These attacks are meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, and other purposeful, discriminatory behavior.

Microinequities: Describe the pattern of being overlooked, under respected, and devalued because of one's race or gender. Microinequities are often unconsciously delivered as subtle snubs or dismissive looks, gestures, and tones. These exchanges are so pervasive and automatic in daily conversations and interactions that they are often dismissed and glossed over as being innocent and innocuous.

Microaggressions

Microinsults: Characterized by communications, conveying rudeness and insensitivity, that demean a person's heritage or identity. These are often represented by subtle snubs, frequently unknown to the perpetrator, yet they clearly convey a hidden insulting message to the recipient.

Microinvalidations: Classified as a form of microaggressions that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person or particular group of people.