Racial Microinsults in St. Olaf Classrooms
Emma Beahler, Kellis Brandt, Michelle Olson, and Anna Perkins
SOAN 371B, Fall 2017, St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN

Research Questions
- **How often** do racial microinsults occur?
- **What types** of racial microinsults occur?
- **Who** are the targets of racial microinsults?

Literature Review
- **Microinsult (MI)** = often unconscious, rude verbal or nonverbal acts that belittle someone’s racial identity (Sue et al. 2007)
- **Student-to-Student MIs include:** racial/ethnic stereotypes, white students staring at students of color, white students avoiding sitting next to a student of color (Harwood et al. 2015, Minikel-Lacocque 2013, Museus and Park 2015, Parker et al. 2016)
- **Professor-to-Student MIs include:** ascription of intelligence based on race/ethnicity, race/ethnicity stereotypes, minimization of oppression (Harwood et al. 2015, Suárez-Orozco et al. 2015)

Methods
- **Focus group** use to construct survey questions
- **Sample:** Survey sent to 2,844 St. Olaf students (all students on campus and not enrolled in SOAN 371); 25.2% response rate (718/2844)
- **Independent Variables:** Race/Ethnicity; Gender; Major; International Student (yes/no)
- **Dependent Variables:**
  - Frequency of microinsults (Index of Student-to-Student Microinsults and Index of Professor-to-Student Microinsult)
  - Type of microinsults (Student-to-Student Mls Matrix and Professor-to-Student Mls Matrix)
  - Target/Observer vs. Not (Indexes and additional survey question)

Results: Part 1
- **People who scored high on one MA index (microinsults, microinvalidations, microassaults) were more likely to score high on the other two MA indices** (p=0.000).
- **Students of color are more likely to report observing or experiencing microinsults than white students.** On our student-to-student microinsult matrix, students of color reported almost twice as many microinsults as white students (p=0.003).

Results: Part 2
- **59.9% of respondents** have observed or experienced a student stating or implying a racial, ethnic, or national stereotype about a group of people at least once in the first 11 weeks of this semester.
- **35.5% of respondents** reported observing a professor focusing unwarranted attention on a student of color or international student at least once in the first 11 weeks of this semester.
- **Female-identifying students** were more likely than male-identifying students to report observing or experiencing microinsults perpetrated by both professors (p=0.000 for both indices).

Conclusion
- **Recommendation:** Mandatory anti-racist training for students and professors on racialized microinsults and other microaggressions (environmental, microinvalidations, microassaults)
- **Strengths:** Fills a gap in literature (microinsults, MAs at liberal arts colleges, St. Olaf-specific)
- **Limitations:** Self-report, data limited to this semester in classrooms only, positionality of research team (white, female)
- **Future research:** Investigate microinsults outside the classroom

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**References**
More recent studies have found that racism - long considered overt, explicit and intentional - has become more covert, implicit and unconscious (Minikel-Lacocque 2013). Students of color often feel their mere presence in the classroom is invalidated (Harwood 2015)

Microinvalidations describe often-unconscious microaggressions that ignore, neutralize or negate the lived experiences and emotional realities of racially, ethnically and nationally underrepresented students, such as denying white privilege (Sue et al. 2007).

**Results and Discussion**

- 72% of students reported having observed at least one student-to-student microinvalidation.
- **White students were more likely to report never seeing** any of the student-to-student microinvalidation indicators, compared to students of color.
- Students reported observing more student-to-student than professor-to-student microinvalidations. However 35% of respondents reported seeing at least one professor-to-student microinvalidation in an academic space in the first 11 weeks of the semester.
- Students of color had a higher mean (Mean=4.92) on our student-to-student microinvalidation index than white students (Mean=3.02). Students of color are more likely to observe (notice) or be the target of microinvalidations.
- Female students tended to score higher than male students on our microinvalidations index. This was reflected in our target/observer survey question where females were more likely to be targets and/or observers.

**Research Questions**

1. What type of “racialized microinvalidations” occur most often in St. Olaf academic spaces?
2. Do “racialized microinvalidations” occur in some academic spaces more than others?
3. What are the demographics of students who: a. are targeted by microinvalidations? b. observe microinvalidations? c. are neither targets nor observers?

**Research Methods**

- **Focus group** used to inform our survey questions in the context of St. Olaf College
- **Anonymous survey** sent to 2,844 students at St. Olaf College. 718 responded (25.2% response rate)
- **Survey questions** on microinvalidations in academic spaces. Example indicators:
  - Stated or implied “racism doesn’t exist anymore”
  - Stated or implied “I don’t see color”

**Recommendations**

- **Training for professors**: We recommend that the college provide education and training on how professors can:
  - Recognize their personal biases
  - Facilitate productive class discussions on microaggressions, including working through tensions involved with (racially) difficult discussions and challenging stereotyping as it occurs
- **Training for students**: We also recommend that the college provide more in-depth, interactive training that:
  - Explicitly addresses racism
  - Teaches them to recognize power dynamics and personal biases
  - Provides them with specific language for discussing racism

**References**

Harwood, Stacy A., et al. 2015. “Racial microaggressions at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: Voices of students of color in the classroom.”


Not So Micro: Microassaults in St. Olaf Classrooms

Pearl McAndrews, Meghan Todd, and Arleigh Truesdale

Literature Review
- Microassaults are often conscious, small-scale verbal or behavior attacks meant to harm the target with demeaning and degrading actions or words.

Examples:
- Mocking language styles or imitating accents
- Telling jokes that mock or degrade a racial/ethnic (R/E) or nationality group(s)
- Using a racial slur to address or refer to person of color
- Displaying racist symbols, such as a confederate flag, swastika, or racist t-shirt

Sue et al. 2007: 274, Minikel-Lacocque 2013: 454

Research Methods
We conducted a focus group to develop our survey questions. We administered an online anonymous survey to students at St. Olaf that yielded a 25.2% response rate (718/2844).

Main variables:
- Self-identified Race/Ethnicity of the respondent (Nominal)
- Experience or observation of microassaults in St. Olaf classrooms (Student and Professor Microassault Index)

Results and Discussion (cont.)
- Professor mocking language styles or imitating accents: 10.3% of respondents indicated experiencing or observing this at least once this semester
- Professor telling a joke that mocked or degraded a R/E or nationality group(s): 8.7% experienced or observed this.
- These results are surprising, as the literature notes that overt forms of racism have become less common. Also note the difference in reported frequencies of student-perpetrated and professor-perpetrated microassaults.
- Students of color were more likely to report experiencing or observing these microassaults:
  - Student(s) mocking language styles or imitating accents: 42.8% of respondents indicated they experienced or observed this in class at least once this semester in class (first 11 weeks)
  - Student(s) telling a joke that mocked or degraded a R/E group(s) or a nationality group(s): 39.7% experienced/observed this.
  - These results are surprising: the literature indicates that overt forms of racism have become less common.
  - Students of color were twice as likely as white students to report experiencing or observing a student using a racial slur to address or refer to a person of color (21.9% vs. 10.0%). This was statistically significant (Cramer’s V=0.091, p=0.026).
  - Professor using a racial slur to address/refer to a person of color (5.4% vs. 1.7%). This was statistically significant (Cramer’s V=0.098, p=0.017).

Conclusion
- Recommendations: Provide training for students and professors that focuses on racism and microaggressions
- Campus policy: Create and promote an explicit policy regarding acts of racism

Strengths: High response rate; generalizability
Limitations: All white, female research team; limited time

Future Research: Examine all forms of microaggressions both inside and outside the classroom

References
In which types of classes are microaggressions most likely to occur at St. Olaf (e.g. lecture-based vs. discussion-based, STEM vs. Humanities, etc.)?

Research Methods

We conducted a focus group to develop our survey questions. We administered the online anonymous survey to students at St. Olaf and yielded a 25.2% response rate (718/2844). Our main variables were:
- Self-identified Race/Ethnicity of the respondent (Nominal)
- Setting of experienced or observed MAs (Setting Index)
- Frequency of students reporting departments with most and least MAs

Results and Discussion

- 37.3% of respondents reported having experienced or observed a MA during a class discussion; 29.7% during group work with other students; 25.4% during a lecture; and 17.7% during a music ensemble led by faculty during the first 11 weeks of fall semester.
- 19.2% of respondents reported having experienced or observed a professor including course material that depicted racism but did not discuss the material as racist in a class during fall semester.
- Students of color were more likely to report a discussion of racism focusing on the experiences or perspectives of white students rather than of students of color in classes than white students; this was found a significant interaction (Cramer’s $V=0.128$, $p=0.018$ $p<.05$). Figures 1 and 2
- Students identified the departments in which they believe the most/least MAs occur (not limited to this semester Fall 2017). Note that some departments are listed in both tables. Figures 3 and 4

Conclusion

Recommendations:
- Increase funding and specific resources to support students and faculty of color
- Provide training for all professors to discuss MAs and mitigate effects and prevalence

Strengths: High response rate; statistical generalizability

Limitations: All white, female research team; limited time

Future Research: Examination of forms of institutional racism
Immediate and Short-term Reactions to Racialized Microaggressions in the College Classroom

Frank Delaney, Grace Jackson, and Claire Mumford

Literature Review

- Microaggressions (MAs) are "characterized by ambiguity" and therefore often go unaddressed on college campuses (Ford 2011, Boysen 2012).
- Microaggressions warrant a response, and professors and students respond to microaggressions in a myriad of ways (Harper 2013, Salazar 2009, Solorzano 2000).
- Students cope with MAs by turning to academic student organizations to find solidarity with other students of color (Boysen 2012, Solaranzo 2000).
- In the classroom, the most important variable is who is targeted—a student or a faculty member (Boysen 2012, Ford 2011, Harper 2013, Salazar 2009, Solorzano 2000).

Research Questions

- How do students respond to microaggressions?
- Do responses differ based on positionality?
- How do professors respond to microaggressions?
- Which responses do students view as most and least effective? How do these views compare with how students and professors actually respond?

Results/Discussion Part 1

- **MA Targets:** Of the students of color respondents, 38 (29.9%) report they were the target of a racial/ethnic microaggression in the classroom during the first 11 weeks of this semester.
- **MA Targets and Observers:** Of all respondents answering this question, 227 (38.4%) said they observed and/or were targeted by a racial MA in the classroom this semester.
- **Most common student response to racial MAs:** Nonverbal (64.7%)
- **Least common student responses to racial MAs:** Reporting to faculty/staff/administration (2.9%) and using the Community Bias Incident form (0.7%)

Results/Discussion Part 2

- **Most common professor responses to MAs:** ignoring, staying silent, or changing the subject when a MA occurred (36.1%).
- **Most effective way to respond to MAs:** (student view): Confront the enactor gently/asking questions (62.3%)
- **Least effective ways to respond to MAs:** Confront the enactor forcefully/yelling (49.6%) and to stay silent/ignore the MA (48.5%)

Conclusion

- **Conclusion:** Students of color are disproportionately targeted by racial microaggressions
- Student reports of their responses to MAs do differ from what they view as most effective
- **Strengths:** Appropriate sample size
- Direct response to relevant campus climate

Limitations:

- Positionality of white researchers
- Limited time frame to conduct research

Recommendations:

- Provide in-depth training for faculty, staff and students to recognize and respond to MAs in the classroom
- Provide clear/effective forms of official reporting, as the Community Incident Bias form is not utilized fully nor seen as very effective
“He didn’t really say that, right?”: The Impacts of Racial Microaggressions in Learning Environments

Manuel Cardoza, Isabel Galic and Rita Thorsen

Literature Review

- Racialized microaggressions can cause physical avoidance and emotional withdrawal, inflicting “racial battle fatigue” on students of color (Smith et al. 2007)
- Students may disengage from or drop a class which perpetuates MAs (Harwood 2015)
- Students of color in predominantly white classrooms often feel scrutinized and stereotyped (Harwood 2015, Harper 2013)
- Assumptions of racialized intelligence raise additional barriers to academic success for students of color (Minikel-Lacocque 2013)

Questions

- How do MAs impact students’ psycho-emotional well-being?
- How do MAs impact classroom social dynamics?
- How do MAs impact student learning outcomes?

Methods

- Focus group informed survey items
- Of 2,844 invited, 718 responded for a 25.25% response rate
- Sample is roughly representative of school
- 65.6% respondents identified as White

Recommendations

- Validate that MAs are real and harmful
- Establish guidelines and strategies for classrooms to commit addressing MAs
- Educate professors to reduce MAs they commit and address curricular and student to student MAs
- Address harms to psycho-emotional and academic well-being by expanding relevant services and lowering barriers to access

Results

- Psycho-emotional Impacts:
  - 73.2% of students report MAs causing negative psycho-emotional impacts
  - Mean score students of color: 6.63
  - Mean score white students: 7.81
  - Score indicating no change: 9 (p<.05)

- Social Impacts:
  - 64.2% of all respondents reported negative social impacts

- Academic Impacts:
  - 65.4% of targets and observers report negative academic impacts
  - White students and students of color did not show a significant difference in impacts

86.5% students reported being negatively impacted in some way

References

Reduction in Racial Microaggressions

Maddy Chiu, Olive Dwan, Khadijah Gowdy, and Ann Jensen

Literature Review

- Race-related materials in the classroom: Students should be exposed to and engage with these to make them conscious of issues surrounding racism and process their own experiences and biases (Dhillon et al. 2015)
- Discussions of racism reduce its presence and impacts on college campuses (Minikel-Lacocque 2013)
- Educating professors: They need education about microaggressions (MAs) and racism (Patterson-Rivera 2014) and help developing tools to engage with and prevent MAs in the classroom (Harwood 2015)
- Being proactive: There is a gap in the existing literature regarding how professors and institutions can proactively prevent MAs in classrooms and limit their impacts

Research Methods

- Focus groups: We conducted focus groups to inform the development of an anonymous online survey sent to all St. Olaf students on campus (excluding us) during fall semester
- Sample: We received a 25.2% response rate (718/2844), with sample representation generally consistent with that of the invited student sample, with the exception of a five percent higher response rate of students of color (21.5%, 129/718)
- Main Variables:
  - Individual and indexed frequency of professors’ actions to proactively address racial MAs in the classroom
  - Students’ perceived effectiveness of the same professorial actions
  - Effectiveness of institutional or organizational measures outside of the classroom

Research Questions

1. What proactive actions do professors take in classrooms to limit or prevent racial MAs, how frequently do they occur, and how do students perceive their effectiveness?
2. How effective have initiatives outside of the classroom, such as Sustained Dialogue and DiversityEdu, been in limiting or preventing racial MAs inside the classroom?

Results and Discussion

1. Effectiveness: Overall, students view actions taken by professors inside the classroom as more effective in limiting and preventing MAs in the classroom than actions taken outside the classroom. The majority also perceives outside-the-classroom proactive responses to be at least somewhat effective, except for DiversityEdu Training and its Follow-Up Dialogues, which the majority find “not at all effective”
2. Professor (in)actions: A majority of respondents report not experiencing a professor using the term MA (53.4%) and not experiencing a professor initiating a discussion on how to respond to MAs (66.7%) in their courses this semester, at least not by week 12
3. Infrequency of discussing/using the term MA: While there departments vary, it appears that no department does these things frequently
4. Discussions of racism: Of the professor-initiated proactive actions, students view these as “highly effective,” but the discussions more often focus on class materials and less often connect to campus or societal events

Professor Actions to Proactively Address Racial MAs in the Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Description</th>
<th>Not at all effective</th>
<th>Moderately Effective</th>
<th>Highly Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussing guidelines for how to address racism in class, such as expectations for</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classroom conduct regarding racism, how to respond to racist questions and comments,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>etc. (644 respondents)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiating discussion of racism regarding class materials, such as in readings,</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>film, plays, or music (657 respondents)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the term microaggression, as related to the course and its material</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(641 respondents)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating discussion of microaggressions in the classroom, such as what they are</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and how to respond to them (641 respondents)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating discussion of racism in response to campus events and/or societal events</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>such as elections and public protests (650 respondents)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References

Harwood, Stacy A., et al. 2015. “Racial microaggressions at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: Voices of students of color in the classroom.”
Patterson-Rivera, Manpreet. 2014. “Student perceptions of multicultural competence in the graduate programs in the school of education at a small private college in the Midwest.” Edgewood College Doctor of Education Degree Program 1-160.

Conclusion

Recommendations:

- Increase professor-initiated proactive responses, particularly discussions of racism
- Create an in-person course that addresses racism and MAs, and better integrate this information into curriculum across campus

Limitations: Small sample size, our positionality as students who experience and enact racial MAs

Strengths: Informs gap in existing literature, relevant to campus current issues and STOGoals

Future research: Focus on student-initiated proactive actions, improving the effectiveness and frequency of proactive measures, and the implications of racial MAs on “safe classrooms”
The Role of Curricula in Challenging Racism at St. Olaf

Tim Bergeland, Katie Opperman, Sarah Zhang

Literature Review

- Ladson-Billings (1995) defines transformative pedagogy as “culturally relevant pedagogy” (CRP), and describes it as education that promotes collective empowerment and critical understanding of social inequalities and oppressions. CRP promotes direct action and advocacy as an extension of learning.
- The implementation of CRP in schools demands structural, institutional changes to prepare teachers to use it (Young 2015).
- Scholars also conceptualize transformative pedagogy as social-psychological, through students’ tendencies to make structural vs. individualistic attributions when interpreting social phenomena (Lopez 1998).

Research Questions

1. To what extent do students report that racially/ethnically marginalized voices are included within material in their majors, concentrations, and conversation programs?
2. Based on their experiences, which academic departments, concentrations, & conversation programs do students view as most effective in including voices and perspectives from racially/ethnically marginalized groups?
3. To what extent do students report their major as supporting them in starting or continuing to fulfill STOGoals?

Results and Discussion Pt. 1

- 33% of students reported that “None or Almost None” of course content in their majors, concentrations, and conversation programs included voices from racially/ethnically marginalized groups.
- Compared to standards of transformative pedagogy that emphasize the importance of including voices and perspectives from racially/ethnically marginalized groups (Nagda et al. 2003), this is concerning and hinders students’ ability to fulfill the “Responsible Engagement” STOGoal.
- For each indicator measuring STOGoal outcomes, approximately 20% of students reported that their major provided no support for them in achieving these goals.
- Literature views transformative pedagogy as key for developing cognitive-interpretive recognition of racial social structures and to action-based will to challenge such structures through direct action. These standards are mirrored by the Responsible Engagement STOGoal, which calls students to “Recognize and confront injustice and oppression.”

Results and Discussion Pt. 2

- Students with NSM majors tend to report lower “Responsible Engagement” STOGoal fulfillment than those without NSM majors, while those with SS, HUM, and FA majors tend to report a higher fulfillment. The data show a link between the academic division of a student’s major and student tendencies to report STOGoal fulfillment via their major. Certain divisions may benefit from critical conversations regarding how to better link course content to the STOGoal of “Responsible Engagement.”

Conclusions

Recommendations:
1. Evaluate GEs to ensure that all students experience curricula which teaches an understanding of racism systematically.
2. Modify departmental review processes to ensure that each major discusses its relation to racial injustice, fulfilling the “Responsible Engagement” STOGoal.
3. Increase awareness of STOGoals so students understand intended outcomes and measure themselves to these standards.

Limitations: representation of departments, concentrations. conversation programs varies

References

Racism in the Classroom and its Effects on Student Academic Choices
Jenna Castillo, Chase Koob, Abby Olson, Maria Jacquelyn Quispe

LITERATURE
Prior scholarship emphasizes these concepts:
• Eurocentric Curricula: A Western-focused education, giving preference to white scholars and their writings, and omitting or ignoring diverse socio-historical perspectives.
• Racist Pedagogy: Examples of racist pedagogy are excluding scholars of color from syllabi (Delpit 1988), including scholars of color in tokenizing ways (Fishman and McCarthy 2006), affirming color blind rhetoric in the classroom (Harper 2012).
• Positionality in the Classroom: Failure to address one’s positionality can lead to the perpetuation of institutional racism and negative pedagogical practices.
• Searching for Similar Faces: A sense of belonging is the state in which one feels “valued, needed, and considered important by other people or groups,” playing into students’ academic success (Costen 2012).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. In students’ views, to what extent and in what ways does the curriculum include and/or exclude racially diverse voices and perspectives?
2. To what extent and in what ways does the presence or absence of racially diverse voices and perspectives affect students’ academic choices?
3. Which students participate in discussions of racially diverse works or issues of racism within the classroom?
4. To what extent are racially diverse perspectives integrated in the curriculum versus tokenized?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
• 9.6% (53) of respondents “never” actively participate in discussions of race and racism.
• 26.2% (28) of students of color feel expected to participate in “all or almost all” discussions of race/racism. Nearly 20% of respondents report feeling shut down from participating in at least “some” of these discussions.
• 10% of students “didn’t or didn’t want to register for a class” 5 times or more because the professor was not equipped to address issues of race and racism.
• Our data reveal that St. Olaf College is not currently fulfilling its mission to be an “inclusive community.” To do so, the college needs to create a learning environment in which all students feel respected and engaged in discussions of race and racism.
• A large portion of respondents reported that racism in the classroom did not affect their academic choices or their learning, but students of color disproportionately reported that classroom racism did affect their choices and learning.

METHODS
• Main variables: the inclusion or exclusion of scholars of color in syllabi, participation in discussions of race, and the ways in which race and racism influence students’ academic choices
• Anonymous online survey sent to 2,844 St. Olaf students with 718 respondents, yielding a 25.25% response rate
• Of the 718 total respondents, 600 fit into the student of color/white student binary, with 78.5% (471) identifying as white and 21.5% (129) identifying as students of color

WORKS CITED

TABLE
Decision to not register or not want to register for a class because you believe the professor is not adequately equipped to address microaggressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students of Color</th>
<th>White Students</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 times or more</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We calculated a chi-square test of independence comparing the frequency of the decision to not register or not want to register for a class because the professor was not equipped to address microaggressions for students of color and white students, and found a significant interaction (X^2 (3)=22.30, p>.05).

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Hire more faculty of color to match the growing number of students of color.
2. Ask professors to use anonymous feedback forms to address issues in class during the semester.
3. Establish a required first-year seminar course for students to engage with issues of identity, specifically race/ethnicity.
4. The institution as a whole should redefine what diversity means to the college and how it is used in the college’s policies, programs, and promotional materials.