

## **Immediate and Short-Term Reactions and Interventions in Response to Racialized Microaggressions in the Classroom**

Frank Delaney, Grace Jackson, and Claire Mumford

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### **Executive Summary**

In the fall of 2017, the Sociology/Anthropology 371 students conducted research on racialized microaggressions in college classrooms. We sent an anonymous online survey to 2,844 students at St. Olaf College. We received 718 responses, a 25.2% response rate. Our sample reflects many demographics of the student body, and it matches the general rule of thumb of 20-25% for a sample size of a population of approximately 3,000 (Neumann 2012).

Prior studies have found that microaggressions are “characterized by ambiguity” and therefore often go unaddressed on college campuses (Ford 2011, Boysen 2012). Moreover, scholars have found professors and students respond to microaggressions in myriad ways (Harper 2013, Salazar 2009, Solorzano 2000). We focused our research on responses to microaggressions in the classroom. Our research questions are as follows:

- How do students respond to racial/ethnic microaggressions in the classroom?
- Do they respond differently based on their position as a target or as an observer? Do they respond differently as a student of color or a white student?
- How do professors respond to racial/ethnic microaggressions in the classroom?
- Which responses to microaggressions do students view as most effective and which do they view as least effective? How does this compare to how students and professors actually respond?

The most important results of our research are:

- Of the students of color, 29.9% (38) report they were the target of a racial/ethnic microaggression in the classroom during the first 11 weeks of the semester.
- The most common student response to microaggressions was nonverbal (64.7%).
- The least common student responses to microaggressions were reporting to faculty/staff/administration (2.9%), and using the Community Bias Incident form (0.7%).
- The most common responses of professors were ignoring, staying silent, or changing the subject when a microaggression occurred (36.1%).
- Students report that the most effective way to respond to microaggressions is to confront the enactor gently/asking questions (62.3%), and the least effective ways are to confront the enactor forcefully/yelling (49.6%) and to stay silent/ignore the microaggression (48.5%).

Based on our research, we offer three recommendations:

1. Training for faculty, staff, and students in recognizing microaggressions in the classroom
2. Further research to determine the best practices for responding to microaggressions, and implementing them in faculty, staff, and student training
3. A way to report microaggressions that 1) is anonymous for reporters, 2) discloses who is able to read the report, 3) alerts the reporter when their report is read, and 4) informs reporter how the microaggression will be addressed

## Literature Review

### *Taxonomy of Racism and Microaggressions (MAs)*

Across the United States, colleges and universities struggle to adequately support diverse student bodies. Numerous studies oriented towards social justice have focused on a variety of disparities on campuses such as those between students, those between students and faculty, and those between faculty. Topic areas include racist communications on campus such as microaggressions, and under-representation in student enrollment and faculty personnel. Our topic focuses on the reactive responses and interventions to racial microaggressions in the college classroom.

To begin our research we conceptualized racism using Harper's definition: "individual actions (both intentional and unconscious) that engender marginalization and inflict varying degrees of harm on minoritized persons; structures that determine and cyclically remanufacture racial inequality; and institutional norms that sustain White privilege and permit the ongoing subordination of minoritized persons" (Harper 2012:10). At higher-education institutions such as St. Olaf College, racism unfolds in varying settings and degrees, from individual actions and interactions to curricula and administrative discourse. Our research focuses on responses to racial microaggressions in the classroom, and studies both student and faculty actions and reactions.

Sue and his co-authors (2007) defined racial microaggressions as "commonplace verbal or behavioral indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults" (Sue et al. 2007:278). Sue and his team define three subcategories of microaggression: microinsults, microinvalidations, and microassaults. According to Sue et al. these subtypes constitute the most commonly used taxonomy in research on microaggressions.

Microinsults are "behaviors/verbal remarks or comments that convey rudeness, insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity" (Sue et. al 2007:278). For example, this can include a person's presumption that an African American attends a college or university only to increase the institution's diversity ratio. Next, microinvalidations are "verbal comments or behaviors that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color" (Sue et al. 2007:278). Examples of microinvalidations include telling a person of color, "I don't see color," or denying that White privilege exists. The most overt and least common type of microaggression to occur in the classroom is a microassault. Sue and his co-authors define microassaults as "explicit racial derogations characterized primarily by a violent verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior or purposeful discriminatory actions" (Sue et al. 2007:278). Examples of microassaults include using the N-word or openly laughing at a person's accent.

### *Critical Race Theory*

In our study, we use Critical Race Theory to contextualize the ideas of race and racism by challenging traditional discourses and ideologies on race (Solorzano 2000:63). We used Critical Race Theory when forming our research and survey questions, as our project centers around race, and we highlight the intersectionality of race in a critical study of racialized aggressions in college classrooms. In Solorzano's study, five principle aspects of the Critical Race Theory model emerge: "(a) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms

of subordination, (b) the challenge to dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the transdisciplinary perspective” (Solorzano 2000:63).

### *Themes of Racism*

In their research, “Racial Microaggressions against Black Americans: Implications for Counseling,” Sue and his co-authors identify six main themes of racism: “(1) assumption of intellectual inferiority, (2) second-class citizenship, (3) assumption of criminality, (4) assumption of inferior status, (5) assumed universality of the [person of color’s] experience, and (6) assumed superiority of white cultural values/communication styles” (Sue et al. 2008:333-334). The assumption of intellectual inferiority arises when people assume that Black Americans are less articulate, solely due to their race (Sue et al. 2008:333). Second-class citizenship means that people in the study recounted that they were treated as lesser, even invisible at times, whereas the assumption of inferior status is the assumption that Black Americans were unlikely to hold higher-paying jobs, and thus were poorer and uncultured (Sue et al. 2008:333). The assumption of criminality addresses people that presume that members of certain groups are more likely to be criminals, due to their race. The assumed universality of the Black American experience occurs when people are asked to speak on behalf of the entire Black community as the “Black representative” (Sue et al. 2008:334). The final theme from Sue’s study, the assumed superiority of White cultural values and communication styles, occurs when the majority of participants articulated how Black cultural values were seen as inferior to White ways of communication (Sue et al. 2008: 334).

### *Witnessing and Recognizing MAs*

Unintentional microaggressions are often misrecognized by the enactor because they may not realize when their actions offend others (Salazar 2009). In other words, racist communications often occur when either one or multiple parties do not recognize the incident as racist. This is not surprising, as microaggressions are “characterized by ambiguity” due to varying perspectives, subjectivities and interpretations (Boysen 2012:123). However, recognition of a microaggression is extremely important, because without it (and awareness of personal cultural values, and personal bias), there cannot be a proper response (Sue 2007).

Individual perceptions of microaggressions shape and are shaped by collective experiences, which are interpretations of events that are shaped by socio-historical contexts, such as race relations (Ford 2011). Therefore, it is possible for events to be viewed similarly, but in dominant American culture which privileges whiteness and maleness, microaggressions are often understated (Ford 2011). To investigate this problem of perception, Boysen’s study provided participants with short descriptions of microaggressions, and asked participants to evaluate them (2012).

One form of misrecognition is when individuals claim to notice microaggressions, yet do not act to alleviate or prevent the situation from occurring again. Salazar describes this situation as “discrepancies between espoused philosophy regarding openness to diversity, and actual practice” (2009: 186). For example, a professor might claim to be socially aware and anti-racist, yet continue to enact or tolerate microaggressions in the classroom. Boysen refers to this as “aversive racism,” or the belief in equality paired with the hypocritical capacity to act with intentional bias (Boysen 2012). Recognition of microaggressions therefore often feels fruitless and even demeaning when it is not coupled with active solutions for change.

### *Reactions to MAs*

A dominant theme in research is the idea that microaggressive behavior warrants a response, and that it is not effective to ignore subtle forms of racism in academic settings. There are variables which can affect such reaction to a microaggression, and in the classroom one of the most important of these is who is targeted — a student or a faculty member (Boysen 2012, Ford 2011, Harper 2013, Salazar 2009, Solaranzo 2000).

Students most often respond to a microaggression after it occurs. A common method of coping is turning to student organizations on campus to find solidarity with other students of color. Data suggest the NAACP and Black Student Alliance as prominent examples of student organizations that African American students at predominantly white institutions might turn to (Boysen 2012, Solaranzo 2000). Also, often heeding the advice of elders, a student of color may try to seek out a relationship with a professor of color before problems arise (Harper 2013). Personal relationships with other people of color are inherently important for student efforts to cope with microaggressions because they provide sources of understanding and validation (Solaranzo 2000). If students choose to outwardly react directly after a microaggression is perpetrated, they prefer to acknowledge it and stimulate a discussion (Boysen 2012). Professors also prefer this method when they choose to act in the moment, but their options for reacting later are different than those of students (Salazar 2009).

As authority figures, professors have more options at their disposal than students for addressing microaggressive behavior directed at them. Whether a professor takes direct action often depends on tenure or job security (Ford 2011, Salazar 2009). According to Ford, non-tenured professors tend to react to microaggressions directed at them through “assimilative practice.” This term describes when a faculty member chooses to standardize their behavior in accordance with expectations within the academy in an effort to avoid microinvalidations (Ford 2011; Sue et al. 2007). It can involve downplaying everyday racism in academic writing as well (Harper 2012). Other professor strategies for responding to microaggressions enacted against them include methods of self-affirmation focused on inner virtues, pride, and work-life balance (Salazar 2009). Using these strategies, faculty members are able to put things in perspective and maintain a positive self image amidst a microaggressive environment. Beyond retroactive coping methods, some professors decide to act more directly to subtle racism they experience in the workplace. These reactions include “pluralistic” and “transformative” strategies which stress challenging dominant narratives through deliberate manipulation of stereotypes is stressed (Ford 2011). The end goal of these strategies is not to conform to peer perception, but rather change it. For this reason, these strategies are more laborious to manifest successfully, but they can have some of the most fruitful outcomes.

### *Conclusion*

Past research set a solid foundation for scholarly inquiry into microaggressions, but our study aims to transcend this precedent in several key ways. In order to discuss responses to microaggressions, our research first addresses what we mean by microaggressions and establishes what participants recognize as microaggressions, and then studies where these two views intersect and diverge. Most published research focuses on after-the-fact reactions to microaggressions, but lacks information on immediate responses. Our research places a stronger focus on in-the-moment reactions that take place in the college classroom setting. This includes reactions of both students and professors to microaggressions in the classroom.

The research questions guiding our study are as follows:

1. How do students respond to racial/ethnic microaggressions in the classroom?
2. Do they respond differently based on their position as a target or observer? Do they respond differently as a student of color or a white student?
3. How do professors respond to racial/ethnic microaggressions in the classroom?
4. Which responses to microaggressions do students view as most effective and which ones do they view as least effective? How does this compare to how students and professors actually respond?

## **Methods**

Our study was part of a larger study on racial and ethnic microaggressions in the classroom which used an online survey to gather data. The survey was sent to most of the enrolled students of St. Olaf College, a small liberal arts college in southern Minnesota. The survey was made using St. Olaf Form Creator, and was sent via email on Tuesday, November 7, 2017. Our methodology incorporated a survey in order to gather a large amount of information quickly. The survey methods was also useful because our research questions included self-reported beliefs and behaviors (Neuman 2012:172).

### *Variables*

In crafting our first research question, we wanted to know how students respond to racial and ethnic microaggressions in the classroom and how these responses changed according to the subjectivity of the student, for example, whether they were the target of the microaggression, an observer, a white student or a student of color. To measure this, we used a filter question that asked students if they had been the target or had observed a racial and ethnic microaggression in the classroom this semester. Those who had been targets and/or observers were then asked how they responded to those microaggressions. The independent variables included the respondent's subjectivities such as target or observer, race, gender, and class year. The dependent variable was their response to the microaggression(s). Students could read a list of fifteen ways of responding to microaggressions, including calling out the enactor of the microaggression forcefully and reporting the microaggression using the Community Bias Incident Form, and check all that applied to their experiences. Additionally, there was an open-ended option where respondents could write about any additional reactions or responses that were not included in the fifteen options.

Another research question aimed to determine how professors respond to racial and ethnic microaggressions when they occur in the classroom. The independent variables were the respondent's (student's) subjectivity as a target and/or observer of the microaggression. The dependent variable was the respondent's (student's) perception of how the professor responded to the racial and ethnic microaggression. This question was asked in an open-ended fashion, and respondents were free to use the fifteen response options from the previous question, and/or use their own words regarding how the professor responded.

Our last research question sought to determine which responses students think are the most effective and the least effective for responding to a racial or ethnic microaggressions in the classroom. We used an open-ended question so as to avoid forcing respondents to fit their beliefs into a few fixed-answer categories (Neuman 2012:184). The independent variables were the respondent's subjectivities, and the dependent variable was the reactions or responses that the respondent thought were best or worst in addressing microaggressions in the classroom.

### *Validity*

Neuman (2012:121) defines validity as an accurate match between how a construct is measured and what actually occurs in the social world. Thus, in our study of reactions to racial and ethnic microaggressions in the classroom, we decided to ask respondents about the different ways in which they and their professors have reacted when witnessing or being targeted by a microaggression or shortly thereafter by creating a list of fifteen response options. To add a deeper level of meaning to this variable, we additionally asked respondents to think about which of the possible reactions work best in practice. Through these two inquiries, we conceptualized reactions to microaggressions occurring in the college classroom.

Face validity ensures that the scientific community agrees that an indicator really measures its construct (Neuman 2012:123). This can include indicators used in previous studies. As described in our review of past research, Boysen measures responses by presenting five options to participants: confront, discuss, private, counter, ignore (Boysen 2012:126). We adopted a similar method of giving participants response options and allowing them to choose which ones they use in practice. However, Boysen's survey asks about the perception of effectiveness for each option, and because of the length and complexity of some of our options, we decided to ask this as an open-ended question on our survey. An additional source of face validity for our survey is Harwood's research conducted at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She similarly provides a list of coping strategies used by students when they experience a microaggression (Harwood 2015:14). In drawing upon the strategies of previous studies, we strove to bring face validity to our methodology, also consulting with our professor about the best strategies for doing so.

Content validity represents a type of validity that asks if the full content of a definition is measured (Neuman 2012:123). Therefore, in our conceptualization of response categories, we ensured that the full dimensions of our concept were covered with our measure. With this definition and the examples in our literature research in mind, we created what we believe is a strong, comprehensive list of possible ways that students could react while witnessing, or being the target of a racial or ethnic microaggression. This list includes in-the-moment reactions which are direct, such as forceful or gentle callouts, and indirect reactions such as nonverbal cues. Moreover, it incorporated after the fact reactions which are direct, such as confronting the enactor after class, or indirect, such as consulting a trusted professor. We left all of these questions open-ended so that respondents could add any of their own responses which were not covered in our list.

### *Reliability*

According to Neuman, reliability refers to dependability, or measures yielding consistent results. It can be improved by clearly conceptualizing constructs, using precise levels of measurement, using multiple indicators, and conducting pilots tests (Neuman 2012:121). In our study we clearly conceptualized our constructs by creating an exhaustive list of reactions keeping in mind both content and face validity. Furthermore, by continually scrutinizing our drafted survey questions we insured that our final survey was clear and concise. We also conducted a pilot test with all students in Sociology/Anthropology 371 to make sure that the survey made sense from the participants perspective.

## *Sampling*

Our target population was the current student body of St. Olaf College, a small, private, and predominantly white liberal arts college located in Northfield, Minnesota. In the fall of 2017, there were 3035 enrolled students. According to the St. Olaf College Race/Ethnicity Profile<sup>1</sup> the subtotal of “domestic multicultural students” total 565, the highest it has been in the last five years, while there are 2149 white students at St. Olaf. St. Olaf defines “domestic multicultural” students as American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, African American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Hispanic/Latino. Domestic multicultural students make up 18.6% of the 2017 student body.

To conduct our survey, we sent an email to the student body inviting them to complete an online survey on St. Olaf Form Creator. We decided to survey the entire student body to gather a comprehensive body of data that encompasses the student experience at St. Olaf College. We sent our survey invitation to 2844 students, as we did not include the students in our SO/AN 371 course nor students who were studying off-campus at the time.

We received responses from 718 students, a response rate of 25.2%, which is considered sufficient for a population of about 3,000 (Newman 2012). Our sample was 59.5% female, 29.0% male, and 11.5% identified as non-binary, transgender, or unknown (1.9% nonbinary, 0.4% transgender, 9.2% unknown). Of the students that responded, 65.6% were white, 17.9% were “domestic multicultural,” 5.0% were international students, and 11.4% preferred not to specify their race/ethnicity. These numbers differ slightly from our target population, as students self-identified their race/ethnicity.

## *Ethics*

Our research group consisted of three white students, two female and one male. We recognize our positionality as white students conducting a survey about racialized aggressions and racism in the classroom, so we sought to decrease as much bias as we could by conducting a thorough review of similar studies and by conducting a focus group of St. Olaf students from multiple backgrounds. We also tested our survey questions with a section of students in the Sociology/Anthropology course, Foundations in Quantitative Research Methods (SOAN 371 A), and we consulted our professor throughout the process, hoping to ensure that our positionality as white students did not affect our survey questions.

Additionally, we recognized that we asked sensitive questions on our survey that could remind students of uncomfortable or traumatic experiences of racism in the classroom. We organized the survey so that the questions at the beginning served as a way for the respondent to “warm up” to the topic, remember their experiences, and familiarize themselves with the terminology before delving into more difficult questions. With this approach, respondents were more likely to respond thoughtfully and honestly to our survey questions. We provided an informed consent statement to participants indicating the specific actions and expectations of the survey, a guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality, the assurance that the survey is voluntary, and an offer to provide a summary of findings (Neuman 2012).

## *Strengths and Limitations*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://wp.stolaf.edu/ir-e/st-olaf-students-raceethnicity-profile/>

One strength of our research is its relevance to the current St. Olaf College community and the country as a whole. Racism has always been present in our society and in our institutions, but in recent years, racism on college campuses has become the focus of a national conversation. After the events surrounding racism enacted against students at St. Olaf during spring semester 2017, students were likely more willing to share their experiences concerning racism than in the past.

The limitations of our research include our limited number of responses, mixed qualitative and quantitative responses, and our subjectivity as white student researchers. First, even though 718 people took our survey, only 601 students answered our filter question about being a target, observer, both or neither. Of those, only 235 said that they had been a target or had observed a microaggression in the classroom, and therefore were qualified to answer questions about their responses. Similarly, of the 718 respondents, only around 250 answered about what they thought were the most and least effective responses to microaggressions. Therefore, despite the high response rate, the particular questions concerning responses to microaggressions did not have a lot of respondents and therefore is not a large sample size from which to make conclusions about St. Olaf students.

Next, although all of the survey questions had an open-ended portion, some questions were check all that apply (yes/no), while others were completely open-ended. The mix of quantitative and qualitative data is both a strength and a weakness. On the one hand, qualitative responses allowed for respondents to share their experiences with researchers in their own words, and without the constraints of preset response categories. On the other hand, the mix made it difficult to code and compare responses to each other. Consequently, researchers were left to subjectively categorize qualitative responses so that they could be presented.

Finally, this particular subtopic of research was conducted by an all-white student group. We as white researchers recognize that we have never been the target of a racial microaggression, and therefore do not always recognize microaggressions when they occur around us. Additionally, when conceptualizing our survey questions and response categories, we may have left out items as being the target of a microaggression is not a part of our lived experiences.

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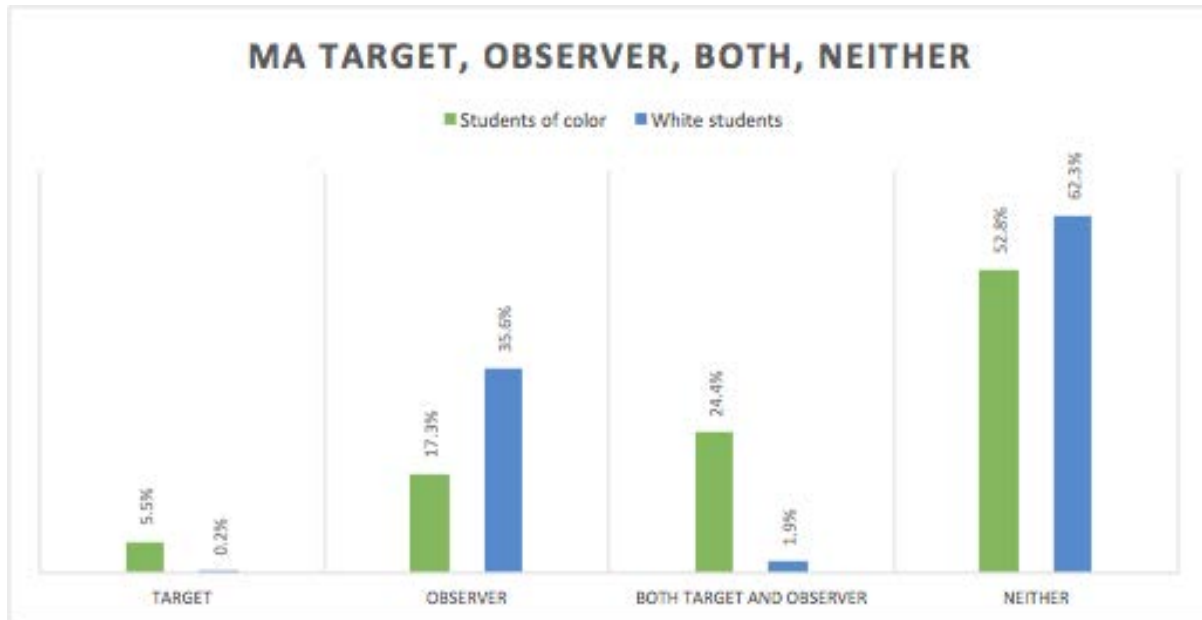
## Results and Discussion

### UNIVARIATE DATA ANALYSIS

**Research question 1:** *How do students respond to racial/ethnic microaggressions that occur in the classroom? Do they respond differently based on their subject position as a target or as an observer? Do they respond differently based on their subject position as a student of color or as a white student?*

We began our survey questions asking if students have been a target of a microaggression, an observer, both, or neither in their classes by the 11<sup>th</sup> week of the semester, when we launched our survey. Graph 1 represents a breakdown of our respondents, according to their race and their experiences with microaggressions. Our race categories are condensed into “students of color” and “white students.”

**Graph 1: Most Common Positionality (Target, Observer, Both Target and Observer, or Neither) of SOC and White Students Regarding Racial Microaggressions in the Classroom. See Table 1 in Appendix A for full list of response categories.**



From the 781 students who took the survey, 591 answered the question, “Have you been a target or observer of any racial microaggressions in your classes this semester?” The response categories included target only, target and observer, observer only, and neither. In the results, we often combined those who answered “target only” with those who answered “target and observer,” into a group called “target combined,” since both of these groups were targets of microaggressions. In this graph, however, we represent each response category individually. Of the 127 students of color who responded to this question, 38 (29.9%) reported having been targets of racial microaggressions in the classroom during the semester of the study. Of the 464 white students who responded to the question, 35.6% reported observing microaggressions while 62.3% reported that they did not witness (or recognize) a microaggression in the classroom this semester.

From this graph, we see that students of color are often targeted by microaggressions, as our survey only asked for experiences from the first eleven weeks of one semester. The semester included mandatory student diversity training, in which microaggressions were defined and explained. Since microaggressions are still occurring, and many students are not witnessing and recognizing them when they occur, we can assume that the student training provided has not been effective.

The data suggest that white students often fail to recognize microaggressions, which supports previous research on this topic (Salazar 2009). While for some white students, it may be true that they had not witnessed a microaggression in the classroom, it is hard to believe that 62.3% hadn't see one while almost half of the respondents who were student of color had. As one student said,

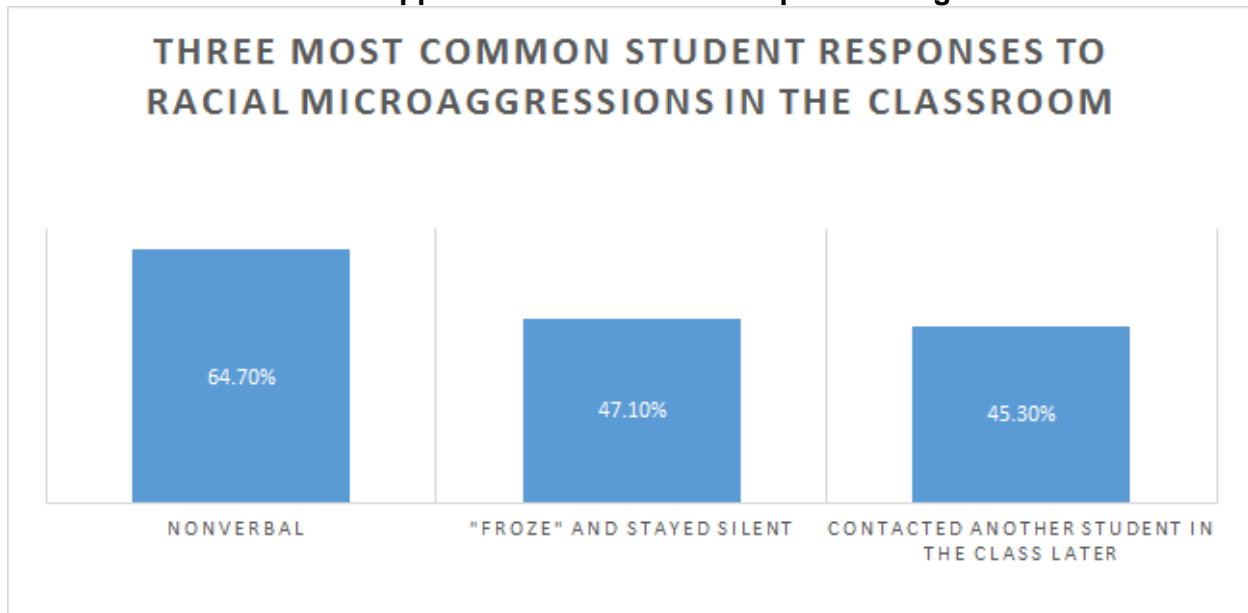
“my responses on this form are really revealing of my privilege as a white person. I realized that I haven't noticed many microaggressions in my classes, though I know they happen, and happen often. This is because I haven't had to notice them, and so I think one thing that needs to happen is for white students and teachers to become more aware of microaggressions and what we can do when one has happened, or may be about to happen.”

High numbers of individuals reporting that they had neither witnessed nor been targeted by a microaggression in a classroom during the semester of our study is also frustrating. As Sue et al. (2007) note, without an awareness of microaggressions, there cannot be a proper response.

Next, we asked students how they respond to MAs when they occur in the classroom. We provided a close-ended question with 15 response categories, and students could check all that applied. Response categories included options such as, “responded nonverbally (rolled eyes, shook head, sighed, gasped, etc.),” “Confronted or called out the enactor gently (such as by asking questions or explaining that the statement or behavior is a microaggression),” “Sought support for mental health (Boe House, Campus Ministry, etc.),” and “Reported the microaggression to another professor, Resident Life, the chair of the department, another staff member or administrator, etc. (other than filing an official Community Bias Incident Report form).” There was also an open-ended question for students to answer if they had differing experiences. The following graph represents the three most common student responses to MAs in the classroom.

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**Graph 2: Most Common Student Responses to Racial Microaggressions in the Classroom. See Table 2 in Appendix A for full list of response categories.**



In all, 235 students answered this question, and this included those who had been an observer and a target of microaggression(s) during the semester of the study. If students indicated they had not been a target or observer, they were directed to skip this question. (However, 43 people responded who shouldn't have.) The most frequent reaction to microaggressions was "Reacted nonverbally" (64.7%) for those who had been targets, targets and observers, and observers only. Additionally, almost half of the 278 students (47.1%) reacted by staying silent because they froze or didn't know what to say, 126 students contacted another student (45.3%), and 115 stayed silent deliberately (41.4%).

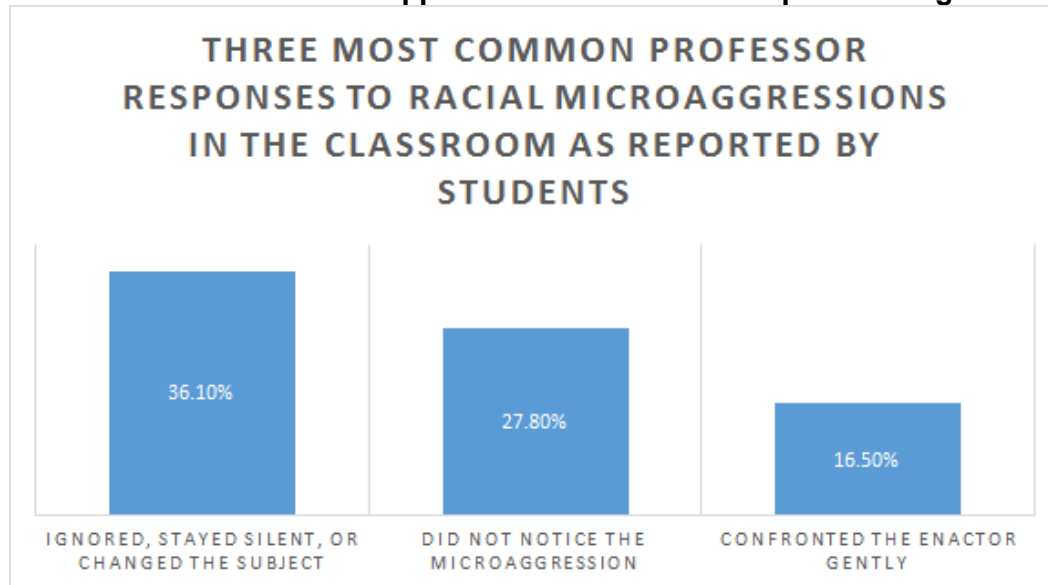
The four most frequent reactions to microaggressions are non-direct and passive. One student illustrated what it means to freeze and stay silent, "I froze and looked around to see if other people were reacting the same way I was (i.e. shocked, concerned, disbelieving)." The least common responses to microaggressions in the classroom are "Reported the microaggression to another professor, Resident Life, the chair of the department, another staff member or administrator, etc. (other than filing an official Community Bias Incident Report form)" at 2.9%, and only 0.7% of students report using the Community Bias Incident Report form when a MA occurs. The Community Bias Incident Report form is an online form on the St. Olaf College website that anyone at the College can fill out when a bias incident occurs, and it asks for a full name, email address, title, in addition to the reporting of the incident. Many students do not use this form of reporting, as the form does not protect student confidentiality. These two forms of reporting MAs to the school are not utilized, so many of the incidents are unknown to the school.

It is not surprising that students' most common responses to microaggressions include staying silent and reacting nonverbally. This agrees with Salazar's study in which most people claimed to notice microaggressions, yet did not act to alleviate or prevent the situation from occurring again (2009). Furthermore, Boysen (2012) states that people commonly claim to be anti-racist, yet they act hypocritically with intentional bias. This bias action could include not standing up for people of color when microaggressions occur, and it explains why, even though many students have witnessed or have been targeted by microaggressions, most do not act to alleviate the situation in any way, and instead just "froze and looked around."

**Research Question 2:** *How do professors respond to racial/ethnic microaggressions in the classroom?*

The next section of our research asks students how professors respond to microaggressions in the classroom, specifically referring to the semester of our study. We used an open-ended survey question that encouraged students to refer to the response categories from the previous question and to add their own observations. The following graph shows the most common professor responses, as reported by students.

**Graph 3: Most Common Professor Responses to Racial Microaggressions in the Classroom. See Table 3 in Appendix A for full list of response categories.**



According to 133 student responses, professors respond to racial microaggressions enacted in the classroom in 14 ways, the most common of which are ignoring the microaggression, staying silent, or changing the subject (36.1% with 48 respondents). Following the most common responses is “the professor didn’t notice the microaggression or wasn’t nearby or in the room” with 37 responses (27.8%). Students also recognized incidents when the professor enacted the microaggression in the classroom. Thirteen students reported that the professor enacting a microaggression, but with no information about how they responded (9.8%), seven stated that the professor was the enactor and responded in a positive way (5.3%), three reported that the professor was the enactor and was defensive (2.3%), two reported that the professor was the enactor and apologized (1.5%), and one student reported that the professor was the enactor and responded in a negative way (0.8%).

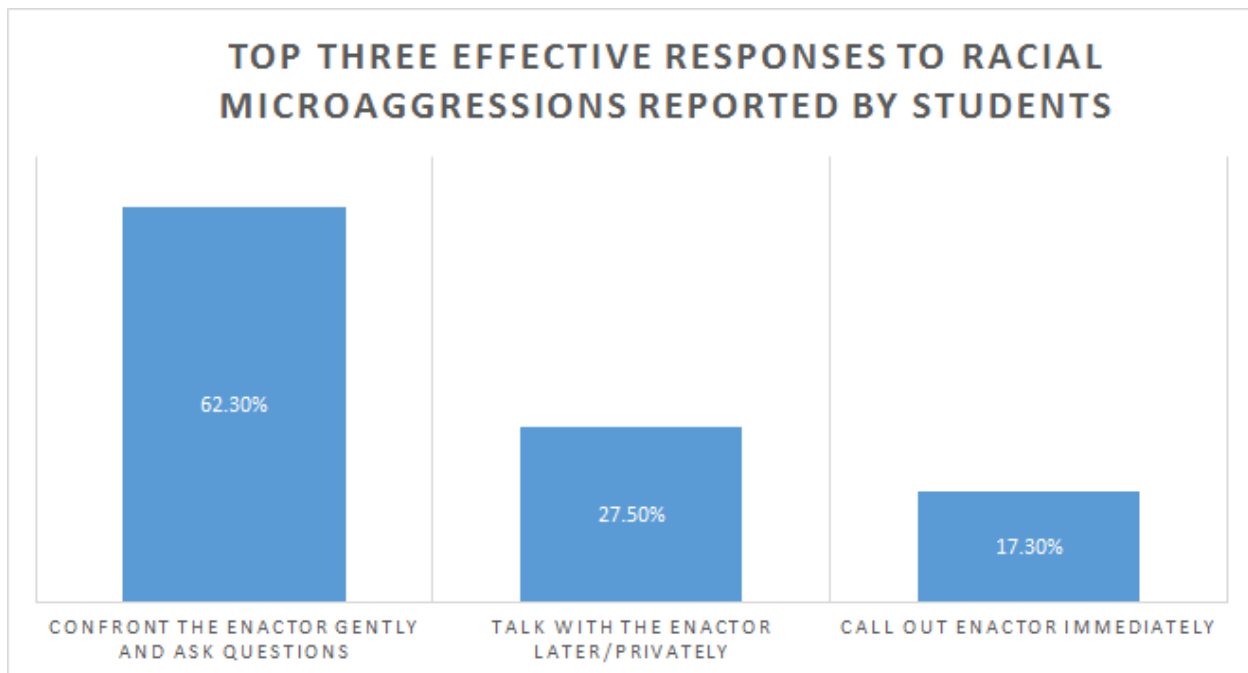
Our survey only addresses student perceptions of how professors respond to MAs, not how professors report responding to MAs themselves. Some individual responses, such as contacting students outside of class privately will remain unknown to most people, so these responses were considerably lower in our survey. We hope that future research will ask professors how they respond to microaggressions to better understand their reactions. Keeping in mind the results from previous research, it would also be interesting to determine whether professors react differently according to their tenure status (Ford 2011; Salazar 2009).

Another reason that students perceive professors ignoring microaggressions could be that the professor is a professor of color and has adopted assimilative practices in order to avoid microinvalidations (Ford 2011; Sue et. al 2007).

**Research Question 3:** *Which responses to microaggressions do students view as most effective and which do they view as least effective? How does this compare to how professors and students actually respond?*

Next, we asked students to report what they view as the most effective way to respond to a microaggression when it occurs in a classroom. This was asked in an open-ended question, and students could refer to the 15 response categories from a question earlier in that survey section. Graph 4 shows students' views of the most effective ways to respond to microaggressions in the classroom. These represent the three most common answers to an open-ended question to which 244 students responded.

**Graph 4: Student Views of the Most Effective Ways to Respond to a Microaggression in the Classroom. See Table 4 in Appendix A for full list of response categories.**



Respondents often qualified their answers, stating that the most effective response to a microaggression depends on the situation, the enactor, the target, and the nature of the microaggression. Students reported that the most effective forms of responding to a microaggression are to confront the enactor gently in a respectful manner (62.3%; 152 students), to confront the enactor later in a private setting (27.5%; 67 or to report it, using either the Community Incident Bias Form or to a faculty/staff member of the college (17%; 44). Only 13 students (5.3%) said that confronting the enactor forcefully is the most effective way to respond to a microaggression.

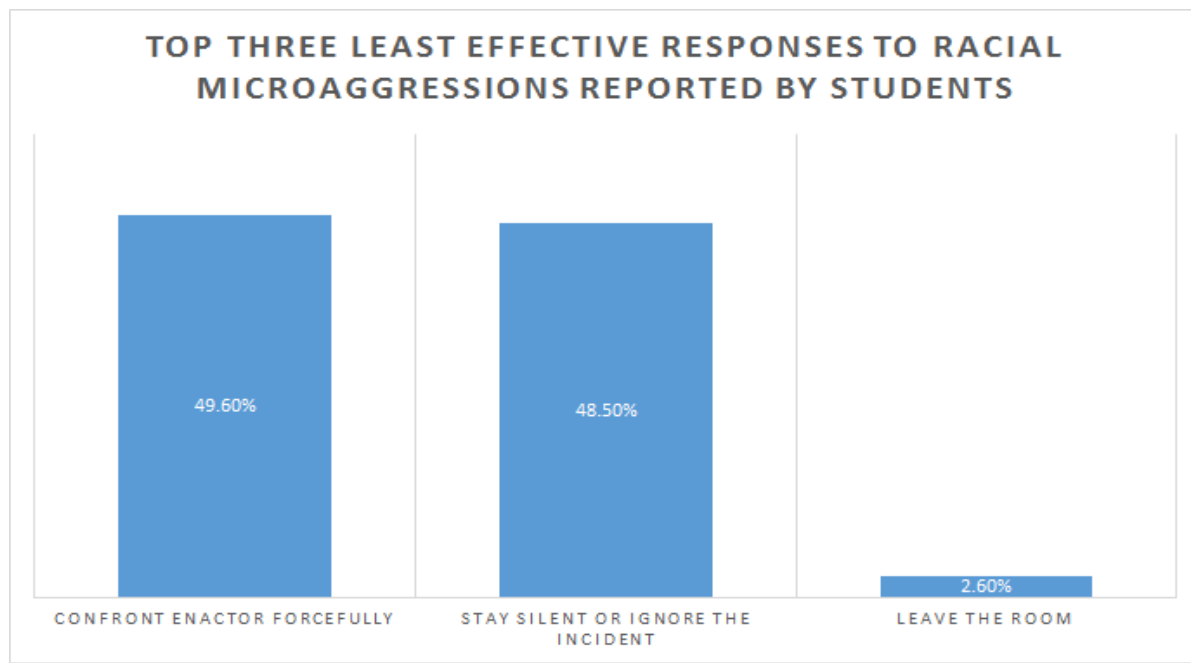
Since the question was asked in an open-ended form, some individuals made suggestions that were not in the top ten effective responses but may still be effective. One student said,

“I think it would be very beneficial to have professors trained in on how to de-escalate these situations (particularly for discussion heavy classes). I had a professor in the past who didn't address a microaggression that happened in the classroom, so instead a student stepped in. I think it might have been more productive if the professor had addressed the problem.”

It is not surprising that the most frequent response from students is confronting the enactor gently (62.3%), as previous literature suggests students typically prefer to respond to microaggressions through discussion (Boysen 2012). However, students' preference for this response does not mean that when a microaggression occurs they are willing to start a discussion, as ideology and action do not always correaltate (Boysen 2012; Salazar 2009).

We then asked what students view as the least effective ways to respond to microaggressions in the classroom. The following graph shows the three least effective ways, as perceived by students.

**Graph 5: Student Views of the Least Effective Ways to Respond to a Microaggression in the Classroom. See Table 5 in Appendix A for full list of response categories.**



As Graph 5 shows, students who answered the question about the least effective ways to respond to microaggressions in the classroom were most likely to cite confronting the enactor forcefully (49.6%) or staying silent and ignoring the incident (48.5%). It is important to note that some of the students in the category of “Other” emphasized the importance of the targeted students, for example, stating that one of the worst responses is “asking targeted students to respond/speak from their experiences.”

It is also important to note that while 48.5% of respondents said that staying silent or ignoring the incident was the least effective way to respond, an overwhelming amount (47.1%) said that this was in fact how they had responded in their experiences (see Graph 2). Students' self-reported actual responses versus students' perceptions of the most effective responses will be discussed later (see Graph 6).

## BIVARIATE DATA ANALYSIS

**Research question 1:** *How do students respond to racial/ethnic microaggressions that occur in the classroom? Do they respond differently based on their subject position as a target or as an observer? Do they respond differently based on their subject position as a student of color or as a white student?*

Table 6 shows how people responded to microaggressions, according to whether they were targets or observers. Respondents who had been neither a target nor an observer of a microaggression were directed to skip this question, leaving only 235 respondents qualified to report their experiences with microaggressions. Respondents who reported being both targets *and* observers have been added to the “Targets (grouped)” category in order to determine if there is any significant difference in the way targets and observers react.

**Table 6: Most Common Responses to Racial Microaggressions in the Classroom, According to Target Grouped and Observer Only Categories (In Descending Order Based on Target Grouped). See Table 6 in Appendix A for full list of response categories.**

Responses to a microaggression in the classroom	Targets (grouped)	Observers Only	Phi Value
Reacted nonverbally	63.6%	66.3%	.024
Stayed silent deliberately	54.5%	38.0%	-.144*
Confronted gently	51.5%	38.0%	-.118
Reached out to family	51.5%	18.3%	-.323*
Contacted another student	47.0%	45.7%	-.011
Stayed silent “froze” in moment	39.4%	50.5%	.095
Sought support from student group or org	22.7%	6.3%	-.233*
Confronted enactor later	12.1%	10.6%	-.021
Confronted forcefully	12.1%	6.3%	-.094

\*Indicates Statistical Significance

The most common response for both those who were targets (63.6%), and those who were observers only (66.3%) was a nonverbal reaction. These data confirm our previous finding that nonverbal reactions are most common for students, both target and observer (see Graph 2). This suggests that, across the spectrum of positionality, people noticing a microaggression may express disapproval physically and indirectly.

According to our findings there are three types of responses to microaggressions in which there was a significant difference between targets and observers. In each of these instances, the significance was that the response was more common for targets. Our results indicate that we can be 95% confident that targets are more likely than observers to respond in these ways:

1. “Stayed silent deliberately,” with targets responding 54.5% and observers 38.0%.
2. “Reached out to family,” with targets responding 51.5% and observers 18.3%.
3. “Sought support from a student organization/group,” with targets responding 22.7% and observers 6.3%.

The first statistically significant relationship can be made sense of through the lens of what researchers call “racial battle fatigue.” This idea posits that many students of color suppress

their natural reactions to subtle racism because of the exhausting effects of a life-long accumulation of microaggressions and a lack of hope in the efficacy of their responses (Smith et al. 2007). It is quite possible that this framework applies in the context of our data, in which we see that more than half of targets (54.5%), who are mostly students of color (see Graph 1), develop a practice of consciously suppressing the urge to react to a microaggression by the time they reach college, and that observers are less likely to deliberately stay silent (38.0%). The reaction of observers in our data can also be explained within this framework by noting that they are mostly white (see Graph 1). Thus, observers might be less exposed to microaggressive behavior and therefore have less of the symptoms of exhaustion and hopelessness associated with “racial battle fatigue.”

Additionally, our findings that targets, who again are mostly students of color (see Graph 1), were significantly more likely to respond that they “Reached out to family” and “Sought support from a student organization/group” are interesting because they confirm the findings from prior research (see Reactions to MAs section of Literature Review). This substantiates the idea that students of color place strong importance on their personal relationships when coping with a microaggression.

As mentioned in the heading for Table 6, the full list of response categories in this chart can be viewed in Appendix A. The full list includes the categories which have a response percentage of less than 10% and phi values that are not valid.

*Do students respond differently based on their subject position by class year?*

We took these responses and partialled them by class year to see if there were significant differences. The data was mostly invalid because the cell counts were too low. Additionally, it seems illogical to discuss any “significant” findings of particular class years since there aren’t consistent groups with high enough cell counts to compare them to.



*Do students respond differently to microaggressions based on their subject position as a student of color or as a white student?*

**Table 7: Most Common Responses to Racial Microaggressions in the Classroom, According to Race. (In Descending Order Based on Students of Color, SOC)**

Responses to a microaggression in the classroom	SOC	White Students	Phi Value
Reacted nonverbally	65.0%	63.7%	-.012
Stayed silent deliberately	53.3%	36.6%	-.15*
Stayed silent “froze” in moment	51.7%	45.8%	-.051
Contacted another student	50.0%	44.7%	-.046
Reached out to family	48.3%	6.2%	-.325*
Confronted gently	38.3%	38.5%	.002
Sought support from student group or org	23.5%	4.5%	-.283*
Confronted forcefully	15.0%	5.7%	-.149*
Confronted enactor later	8.3%	11.7%	.047
Contacted professor	6.7%	5.6%	-.02
Left classroom	3.3%	1.7%	Not valid
Sought support for mental health	3.3%	0.6%	Not valid
Responded/called out in public space (social media)	3.3%	3.8%	Not valid
Reported MA to another professor, staff, admin	1.7%	2.2%	Not valid
Reported MA using Community Incident Bias form	0.0%	0.6%	Not valid

**\*Indicates statistical significance**

According to our findings, there are four types of responses to microaggression in which there was a significant difference between students of color (SOC) and white students. In each of these instances the significance was that the respective response was more common for students of color. Our results indicate that we can be 95% confident that students of color are more likely than white students to respond in these ways:

1. “Confronted Forcefully,” with SOC responding 53.3% and white students 36.6%
2. “Stayed Silent Deliberately,” with SOC responding 48.3% and white students 6.2%
3. “Reached out to Family,” with SOC responding 23.5% and white students 4.5%
4. “Sought Help from a Student Organization,” with SOC responding 15.0% and white students 5.7%

The first two statistically significant differences above are compelling because they are on the opposite ends of the spectrum of reaction, from reacting in the most direct way possible (Confronted Forcefully) to the least direct way possible (Stayed Silent Deliberately). This dichotomy would be an interesting subject for further research, however, it also speaks to the very situational aspect of microaggressions. That is, the way a student responds may depend on who the target is (Boysen 2012; Ford 2011; Harper 2013; Salazar 2009; Solaranzo 2000). Thus, in some situations students of color may feel more comfortable confronting the enactor forcefully, while in others they may choose to stay silent.

The third and fourth statistically significant differences confirm our prior research of scholarly literature which states that students of color are more likely to reach out to student organizations for support as well as to family and to those they have personal relationships with because these groups likely provide understanding and validation (Boysen 2012; Soloranzo 2000). Previous research also suggests that students of color are more willing to seek out professors of color in order to cope with microaggressions (Harper 2013). This would be another interesting idea for further research

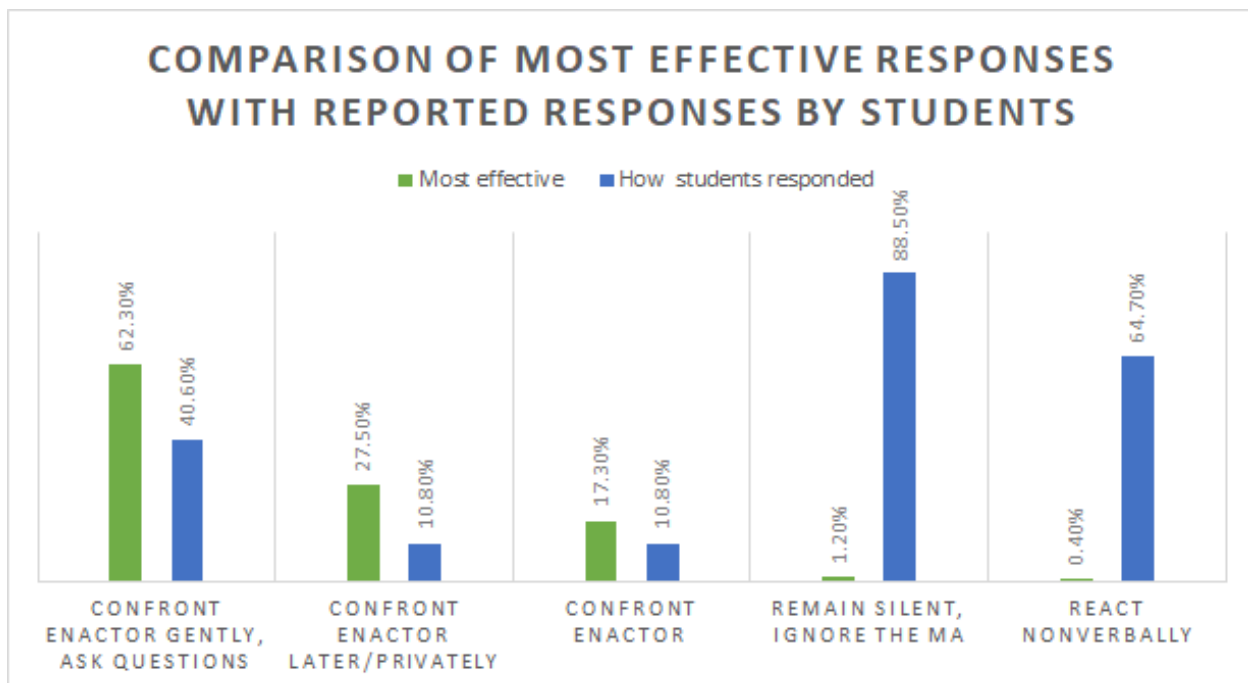
*Do students respond differently to microaggressions based on their class year?*

We took the responses that were significantly different between students of color and white students, and partialled them to see if there were significant differences by class year. The data was mostly invalid because the cell counts were too low. Additionally, it seems illogical to discuss any “significant” findings of particular class years since there aren’t consistent groups with high enough cell counts to compare them to.

**Research Question 3:** *Which responses to microaggressions do students view as most effective and which do they view as least effective? How does this compare to how professors and students actually respond?*

We compared what students view as the most effective responses to microaggressions with how students actually respond when microaggressions occur in the classroom. The following graph compares of the three most effective responses with actual student behavior, as well as the two most common student responses with students’ views of the effectiveness of those responses.

**Graph 6. Comparison of the most effective student responses to MAs with reported responses by students in the classroom. See Appendix A for a full list of response categories.**



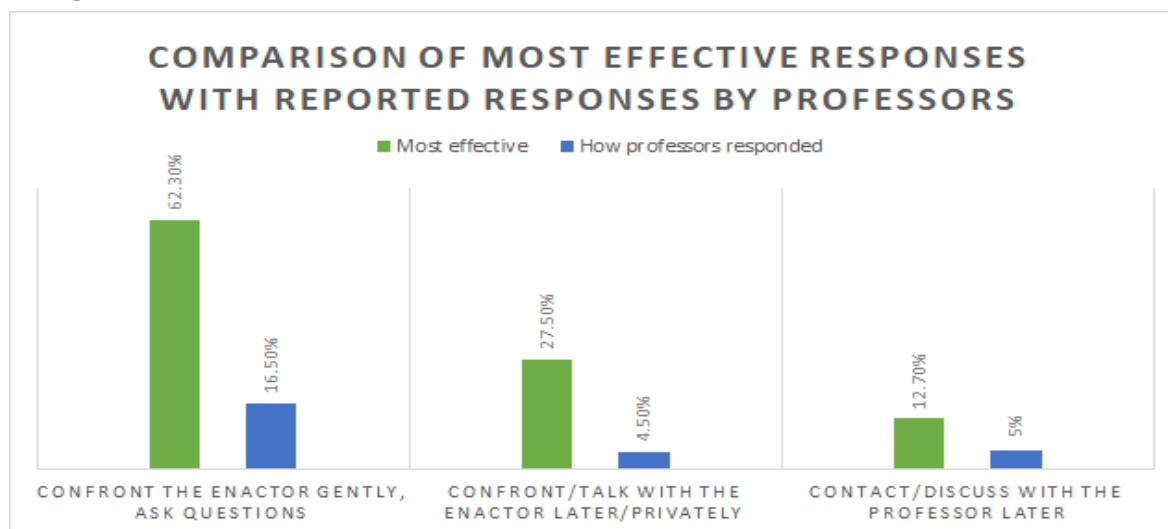
As discussed previously, we asked respondents what they view as the most and least effective responses to microaggressions, using open-ended questions with the option to refer to the response categories from previous questions or to add new information. Students reported that the most effective response to MAs in the classroom is to confront the enactor gently and to ask questions, with 62.3% of students viewing this as the most effective response and 40.8% reporting that they respond in this manner. The next most effective responses, according to student perceptions, are confronting the enactor privately and/or later at 27.5% and confronting the enactor in general at 17.3%. These response categories do not specify how to confront, as this survey question was asked in open-ended form and many did not indicate how to confront the enactor of a microaggression.

Most striking are the last two response categories in the graph. The most common responses to MAs by students, “remain silent, ignore the MA” and “react nonverbally,” are also responses that students do not view as effective (1.2% and 0.4% respectively). This indicates a major discrepancy for students at this institution, and likely for other institutions, in that people do not react to microaggressions effectively and thus perpetuating the “normalcy” of microaggressions when they occur.

These findings are not surprising, in light of Salazar’s (2009) and Boysen’s (2012) studies which conclude that people do not always act in ways they believe to be right. Boysen goes so far as to call this “aversive racism,” in other words, asserting that the hypocrisy of people’s actions versus their espouse beliefs is inexcusable (2012). Consequently, the college needs to find ways to teach students how to better recognize and then address microaggressions in a productive manner that promotes growth and education for everyone involved in the incident. Looking at our data and prior scholarship on the most effective methods of responding to MAs, we can begin to develop our recommendations from this research project.

We then asked students to report what they perceive are the most effective responses for professors when a microaggression occurs in the classroom, and we compared these results with how professors actually respond, as reported by students. The following graph shows this comparison.

**Graph 7. Comparison of the most effective professor responses to MAs with reported responses by professors in the classroom. See Appendix A for a full list of response categories.**



Graph 7 illuminates the differences between what students perceive as the most effective responses to microaggressions and how students said professors actually responded. While students most commonly agreed that “confront enactor gently” is the most effective response to a microaggression (62.3%) only 16.5% of students said that professors responded in that way. Furthermore, 36.1% of students said that professors either “ignored the microaggression, stayed silent, or changed the subject,” and 27.8% said that the professor “didn’t notice the microaggression or wasn’t in the room nearby.” It is difficult to determine how professors actually respond to microaggressions by using survey data from students, but the discrepancy in these results does reveal a disconnect and possible frustration between how students likely wish their professors would respond, and they perceive their professors responses. One student said,

“The onus needs to be on the professors to inform their students to call out, and how to call out both them, and fellow students when microaggressions occur. Students are often scared to confront authority, but when professors open up discussion, students might be more likely to speak up.”

One response, not included as a response category in our survey yet raised in response to open-ended questions is a professor starting a discussion concerning the microaggression. Boysen (2012) and Salazar (2009) state that this is a method of response preferred by both students and professors. Therefore, it is undoubtedly a worthwhile response to consider when training professors and students on how best to respond.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Microaggressions are happening in St. Olaf classrooms, and students of color are often targets. However, white students disproportionately report being neither a target nor an observer. This gap in experiences with and observations of microaggressions is likely because many white students do not recognize microaggressions when they occur. Several respondents stated that they don’t think racism is a problem at St. Olaf. As one student wrote “I have literally never seen an instance of racism, “institutional racism,” or microaggressions on this campus.” Obviously, many of the personal stories shared in our survey disprove this statement. As another student said, “There is racism on this campus. It’s explicit, it’s pervasive, it’s personal, it’s institutional.” Training about recognizing and addressing microaggressions could decrease this gap in perceptions.

Additionally, our results show a gap between how students say they respond to microaggressions and what students view as the most effective ways to respond. This discrepancy is probably because students are confused on how to respond and have not been taught effective strategies. As one student in our survey said, “I don’t know how to call out/respond to a microaggression when I see/hear one.” As another said, “I’m genuinely terrified to talk to anyone and potentially cause a racial microaggression.” This speaks to a theme in our data: many students do not know how to react to microaggressions. Several students noted that it should be the responsibility of St. Olaf as an institution to provide students with ways to respond to microaggressions. Important to note is that our results reflect students’ perceptions of the most effective ways to respond to microaggressions, as opposed to vetted behaviors that are proven to be effective. Further research should identify specific behavioral responses, compare them with students’ perceptions of effective responses, and implement them in training.

Professor responses to microaggressions similarly do not correlate with what students view as most effective. A common theme in our open-ended responses was students asking for professors to take the lead in modeling how to respond to microaggressions. Again, as one student said,

“The onus needs to be on the professors to inform their students to call out, and how to call out both them, and fellow students when microaggressions occur. Students are often scared to confront authority, but when professors open up discussion, students might be more likely to speak up.”

Finally, only 0.7% of students report using the Community Bias Incident Form, only 2.9% say they have reported microaggressions in some other way (see Table 2), and only a very small percentage of students view reporting as effective. In part, this may come from a stigma associated with reporting microaggressions. The current procedures for reporting force students to reveal themselves. Calling professors out as enactors of microaggressions can be very sensitive, and students should be able to ensure their anonymity when reporting. Otherwise, the power difference between students and their professors will preclude accurate reporting of microaggressions. This seems to be the case, as the majority of open-ended responses to the survey were reports of microaggressions in the classroom that were never reported in a formal way. Another reason that students might be hesitant to report microaggressions is the perceived lack of trust for the college's administration. Students might wonder why they should report something when they think that nothing is going to change. In part, this perception could improve if students were informed of how their reports of microaggressions will be addressed, including who will read the reports.

Our recommendations include:

1. Training for faculty, staff, and students in recognizing microaggressions in the classroom
2. Further research to determine the best practices for responding to microaggressions, and implementing them in faculty, staff, and student training
3. A way to report microaggressions that 1) is anonymous for reporters, 2) discloses who is able to read the report, 3) alerts the reporter when their report is read, and 4) informs reporter how the microaggression will be addressed

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## Appendix A: Additional Tables

**Table 1: Most Common Positionality (Target, Observers, Both, or Neither) Regarding Racial Microaggressions in the Classroom for SOC and White students**

Positionality	% of SOC	Count of SOC (out of 127)	% of White students	Count of White students (out of 464)
Target Only	5.5%	7	0.2%	1
Target and Observer	24.4%	31	1.9%	9
Observer Only	17.3%	22	35.6%	165
Neither	52.8%	67	62.3%	289

Target Combined (Target and observer + target only)	29.9%	38	2.1%	10
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**Table 2: Most Frequent Responses to Racial Microaggressions in the Classroom from Target Combined AND Observers Categories (In Descending Order)**

Student response to a microaggression in the classroom	Yes Frequency	Yes Valid Percentage
Reacted nonverbally (rolled eyes, shook head, sighed, gasped, etc.)	180/278	64.7%
Stayed silent because you froze or didn't know what to say	131/278	47.1%
Contacted another student in the class later	126/278	45.3%
Stayed silent deliberately	115/278	41.4%
Confronted enactor gently	113/278	40.6%
Reached out to family or friends for support	72/278	25.9%
Confronted the enactor later	30/278	10.8%
Sought support from a student group or organization	28/278	10.1%
Confronted enactor forcefully	21/274	7.7%
Contacted the professor of the class later	14/278	5.0%
Responded or called out the person publicly (via social media or verbally in public space)	9/281	3.2%
Reported the microaggression to another professor, staff member, or administrator	8/278	2.9%
Left the classroom	7/278	2.5%
Sought support for mental health (Boe House, Campus Ministry, etc.)	5/278	1.8%
Reported the microaggression using the Community Bias Incident form	2/278	0.7%

**Table 3: Professor Responses to Racial Microaggressions in the Classroom which Students Have Observed Most Often (In Descending Order)**

<b>Professor responses to a microaggression in the classroom</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Frequency (out of 133)</b>
Ignored the microaggression, stayed silent, or changed the subject	36.1%	48
Didn't notice the microaggression or wasn't nearby or in the room	27.8%	37
Confronted the enactor gently	16.5%	22
Professor was the enactor (with no information about response)	9.8%	13
Professor was the enactor and responded in some other positive way	5.3%	7
Reacted nonverbally	4.5%	6
Confronted the enactor later	4.5%	6
Led a discussion about microaggression(s)	4.5%	6
Confronted the enactor forcefully	3.0%	4
Professor was the enactor and was defensive	2.3%	3
Contacted student(s) later	1.5%	2
Professor was the enactor and apologized	1.5%	2
Laughed it off	0.8%	1
Professor was the enactor and responded in some other negative way	0.8%	1

**Table 4: Student Views of the Most Effective Ways to Respond to a Microaggression in the Classroom (Top Ten Effective Responses)**

<b>Responses to a microaggression in the classroom</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Frequency (out of 244)</b>
Confront the enactor gently, ask questions	62.3%	152
Confront/talk with the enactor later/private	27.5%	67
Confront or call out the enactor (no info on how), address the MA immediately (no info on how)	17.3%	42
Report the MA (using the Campus Bias Incident Form, to a professor or staff member, or in general with no reported cited)	17.0%	44
Contact/discuss with the professor later	12.7%	31
Seek support generally or from a student group/org or for mental health (Boe House, Campus Ministry, etc.)	11.4%	28
Teach/train enactors, faculty, students, etc., provide guidelines regarding MAs in class	6.5%	16
Have an open discussion about the microaggression(s) in class	5.7%	14
Confront the enactor forcefully	5.3%	13
Discuss with other students later	4.1%	10



**Table 5: Student Views of the Least Effective Ways to Respond to a Racial Microaggression in the Classroom (In Descending Order)**

Responses to a microaggression in the classroom	Percentage	Frequency (of 272 who answered this question)
Confront enactor forcefully (including yelling, arguing, name-calling, etc.)	49.6%	135
Stay silent or otherwise ignore the incident	48.5%	132
Leave the room	2.6%	7
Call out publicly or on social media	2.6%	7
React nonverbally (roll eyes, gasp, shrug, etc.)	1.5%	4
Report officially	0.7%	2
Other	4.5%	12

**Table 6: Most Common Responses to Racial Microaggressions in the Classroom, According to Target Grouped and Observer Only Categories (In Descending Order Based on Target Grouped)**

Responses to a microaggression in the classroom	Target Grouped	Observer Only	Phi
Reacted nonverbally	63.6%	66.3%	.024
Stayed silent deliberately	54.5%	38.0%	-.144*
Confronted gently	51.5%	38.0%	-.118
Reached out to family	51.5%	18.3%	-.323*
Contacted another student	47.0%	45.7%	-.011
Stayed silent "froze" in moment	39.4%	50.5%	.095
Sought support from student group or org	22.7%	6.3%	-.233*
Confronted enactor later	12.1%	10.6%	-.021
Confronted forcefully	12.1%	6.3%	-.094
Reported MA to another professor, staff, admin	7.6%	1.4%	Not valid
Contacted professor	6.1%	4.8%	-.024
Responded/called out in public space (social media)	4.5%	2.9%	Not valid
Left classroom	3.0%	2.4%	Not valid
Sought support for mental health	3.0%	1.4%	Not valid
Reported MA using Community Incident Bias form	1.5%	0.5%	Not valid

\*Indicates Statistical Significance

**Table 8: Extended table of aggregate data comparing what students perceived as most effective versus how students actually respond (all Responses)**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Most effective (%) out of 244</b>	<b>How people actually responded (%) out of 278</b>
Confront the enactor gently, ask questions	62.3%	40.6%
Confront/talk with the enactor later/privately	27.5%	10.8%
Contact/discuss with the professor later	12.7%	5.0%
Confront or call out the enactor (no info on how)	10.7%	48.3%* *includes both gentle (40.6%) and forceful confrontation (7.7%)
Report the MA using the Campus Bias Incident Form	8.6%	0.7%
Report the incident to a professor or staff member	7.4%	2.9%
Address the MA immediately (not info on how)	6.6%	48.3%* *includes both gentle (40.6%) and forceful confrontation (7.7%)
Have an open discussion about the MA(s) in class	5.7%	
Teach/train enactors, faculty, students, etc.	5.7%	
Confront the enactor forcefully	5.3%	7.7%
Reach out for support	5.3%	37.8%* *includes seeking support for mental health (1.8%) and from student groups (10.1%), and from family (25.9%)
Discuss with other students later	4.1%	45.3%
Seek support from/contact a student group or organization	4.1%	10.1%
Talk to/check in with the target	3.7%	
Report the incident (no specific reportee mentioned)	2.0%	3.6%* *Includes reporting using Community Incident Bias form (0.7%) and reporting to St. Olaf faculty, staff, administrator (2.9%)
Seek support for mental health (Boe House, Campus Ministry, etc.)	2.0%	1.8%
Remain silent, ignore the MA	1.2%	88.5%* *includes stayed silent because you froze (47.1%) and stayed silent deliberately (41.4%)
Provide class guidelines for preventing/addressing MAs	0.8%	
There is no effective way to address this	0.4%	
Ask professor to address the MA	0.4%	
Talk with the professor (if the professor was not the enactor)	0.4%	
Leave the classroom	0.4%	2.5%
React nonverbally (rolled eyes, shook head, sighed, etc.)	0.4%	64.7%

**Table 9: Aggregate Data comparing what students perceived as most effective versus how professors responded**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Most effective response (%) out of 244</b>	<b>How professors actually responded (%) out of 133</b>
Confront the enactor gently, ask questions	62.3%	16.5%
Confront/talk with the enactor later/private	27.5%	4.5%
Contact/discuss with the professor later	12.7%	5.0%
Ignored the microaggression, stayed silent, or changed the subject		36.1%
Didn't notice the microaggression or wasn't nearby in the room		27.8%

## APPENDIX B: Survey Questions

1. Have you been a target or observer of any racial microaggressions in your classes this semester? Please check one answer.

I have been a target.

I have been an observer.

I have been BOTH a target and an observer.

I have been NEITHER a target nor an observer. (Please SKIP to question 17.)

2. Thinking about the racial microaggressions you experienced or observed this semester, how did you react? If you have been a target, please base your answers on your experiences as a target. If you have NOT been a target, base your answers on your observations. Check all that apply. Options continue in the next question. If you reacted in some other way, please describe it in the open-ended question near the end of the survey.

- A. Confronted or called out the enactor forcefully (such as calling them racist)
- B. Confronted or called out the enactor gently (such as by asking questions or explaining that the statement or behavior is a microaggression)
- C. Reacted nonverbally (such as rolled eyes, shook head, sighed, gasped, etc.)
- D. Stayed silent deliberately (chose to ignore the incident in the moment)
- E. Stayed silent because you "froze" or didn't know what to say in the moment
- F. Left the classroom
- G. Confronted the enactor of the microaggression later
- H. Contacted another student in the class later to discuss the microaggression
- I. Contacted the professor of the class later to discuss the microaggression
- J. Reached out to family or friends for support
- K. Sought support from a student group or organization
- L. Sought support for mental health (Boe House, Campus Ministry, etc.)
- M. Reported the microaggression using the Community Bias Incident form
- N. Reported the microaggression to another professor, Resident Life, the chair of the department, another staff member or administrator, etc. (other than filing an official Community Bias Incident Report form)
- O. Responded or called out the person publicly (via social media or verbally in a public space)

3. If you have observed another student(s) being targeted by a racial microaggression in a St. Olaf classroom this semester, please tell us how you reacted. You may use the letters from the options above or provide your own description. If you have NOT observed another student being targeted, please SKIP to question 12.

4. If you have been targeted or have observed another student(s) being targeted by racism in a St. Olaf class this semester, , how did your professor react, as far as you know? You may use the letters from the options in questions 9 and 10 above or, if the professor reacted in some other way, please describe it.

5. What do you think are the most effective ways to respond to a racial microaggression in the classroom? You may use the lettered options in questions 9 and 10 or provide your own responses. You may also consider different scenarios such as student-to-student and professor-to-student microaggressions.

6. What do you think are the least effective ways to respond to a racial microaggression in the classroom? Again, you may use the letters from the options in questions 9 and 10 or simply explain.