Making Everyday Microaggressions: An Exploratory Experimental Vignette Study on the Presence and Power of Racial Microaggressions

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The term "microaggression" has experienced a lively existence in the field of psychology since its introduction in 1970s. Sociology has recently come to study microaggressions, yet serious gaps remain in the study of microaggressions. In particular, sociological analysis has not taken into account how exposure to microaggressive interactions may affect racial attitudes, how variations in microaggressive interactions have different effects, and what racial and gender positions render one more or less likely to engage in, or fail to oppose, microaggressions. Based on a GSS-based survey and an experimental vignette design, we address the following two questions: First, how might the *presence* of racial microaggressions affect racial attitudes? Second, what is the *power* of specific types of interactional microaggression? Results indicate that both exposure to microaggressions and the type of microaggressions are correlated with changes in specific racial attitudes associated with the marginalization, problematization, and symbolic and physical repression of people of color.

Introduction

A tone-deaf inquiry into an Asian American's ethnic origin. Cringe-inducing praise for how articulate a black student is. An unwanted conversation about a Latino's ability to speak English without an accent. This is not exactly the language of traditional racism, but in an avalanche of blogs, student discourse, campus theater, and academic articles, they all reflect the murky terrain of the social justice word du jour—microaggressions—used to describe the subtle ways that racial, ethnic, gender, and other stereotypes can play out painfully in an increasingly diverse culture. —Vega 2014—

So wrote the *New York Times* in March 2014 in the wake of a spate of police violence against People of Color, legal attacks on voting rights and affirmative action, and the creation of hundreds of programs to catalog the subtle yet systemic insults against people of color on college campuses—deemed "microaggressions" (Balsam et al. 2011; Keller and Galgay 2010; Pierce 1970, 1974; Rowe 1990; Smith 2010; Sue 2007). The term has significant advocates and critics alike—from coverage in *Time* that proclaimed the concept is

"neither profound nor complex—it's just bullying disguised as progressive thought" (McWhorter 2014) or treatment in the *Atlantic* that wrote that "None of this is surprising to sociologists, who have long held that one major way community cohesion is promoted is by defining it against out-groups" (Etzioni 2014).

The term "microaggression" has experienced a lively existence in the field of psychology since its introduction in 1970s. Originally describing dismissals toward People of Color due to white cognitive prejudices, the term has experienced a rebirth and revision within higher education and the sociology of race and ethnicity in recent years. In the former, campuses hotly contest the presence of microaggression surveillance, while others argue for its necessity in keeping students of color emotionally and physically safe. With the latter, many sociologists, working in the "new racism" paradigm, use the term to show how linguistic patterns, embodied dispositions, racial identity formations, and interactional patterns depend on the normalized and subtle variation of microaggressions—from assaults and insults to invalidations and threats (cf. Bobo 1998; Bonilla-Silva 2014; Essed 1991, 2008).

Despite these advances, sociological analysis has not taken into account how exposure to microaggressive interactions may affect racial attitudes and how variations in microaggressive interactions have different effects. These gaps gesture toward a couple of salient questions: First, how might the *presence* of racial microaggressions affect racial attitudes? Second, what is the *power* of specific types of interactional microaggression? To answer these questions, we employ vignette research methodology (cf. Boysen 2012:127) to design and implement an experiment in which participants were randomly assigned to read a vignette (based on Sue 2010) describing either (1) a racial microaggression between white and black individuals, (2) a racial microaggression between Asian and Latino individuals, or (3) a control scenario with no microaggression. Utilizing racially varying microaggressive vignettes allows us to more closely examine the nuances of race relations in U.S. society.

Background

First introduced by Pierce (1970), the concept of "microaggression" was used to refer to unintentional discriminations against African Americans, akin to subtle insults and diminutives. In 1974, Pierce expounded on the concept, outlining that "[t]hese assaults to black dignity and black hope are incessant and cumulative. Any single one may be gross" (515). Explicitly linking microaggressions to "racism," Pierce (1974:515) argued that they were "the major vehicle for racism in this country ... offenses done to blacks by whites in this sort of gratuitous never-ending way." Concluding that microaggressions are "minidisasters" that threaten "stability and peace," Pierce maintained that

"Almost all black–white racial interactions are characterized by white put-downs, done in automatic, pre-conscious, or unconscious fashion. These mini-disasters accumulate. It is the sum total of multiple microaggressions by whites to blacks that has pervasive effect to the stability and peace of this world" (1974:515).

Nearly half a century later, the term has been re-employed to better understand the link between social inequality and insults directed at women (Rowe 1990 [1973]), the poor (Smith 2010), the differently abled (Keller and Galgay 2010), and LGBT identified (Balsam et al. 2011), among other socially stigmatized categories and lived experiences. While the term has experienced ebb and flow in terms of its scholarly popularity, it experienced a rebirth in relation to research on race and ethnicity due largely to Derald Sue (cf. 2007). Following Pierce (1970), Sue argues that microaggressions are generally short and commonplace interactions and rely on relatively unconscious biases that denigrate people solely because of their perceived membership in a stigmatized racial category (Sue 2010; Sue et al. 2007, 2008). Importantly, Sue et al. (2008) found that microaggressions are "the new face of racism"—denoting a shift from overt and explicit forms of racial discrimination to subtle and covert forms of racism (cf. Hughey and Parks 2014; Parks and Hughey 2011).

Importantly, the concept has been shown to vary in form (Sue et al. 2007): First, there are "microassaults" or explicit racial derogation such as name-calling, avoidant behavior, and discriminatory actions; second, there are "microinsults" in which rude and insensitive communications demean a person's racial heritage or identity; and third, there exist "microinvalidations" or interactions that exclude, marginalize, or nullify the thoughts, feelings, and/or experiences of a person because of their perceived membership in a specific racial group. Sue's work has set the agenda for an array of research on microaggressions that has crossed over disciplinary boundaries into nearly all branches of the social sciences.

As the pace of this research has quickened, it has not progressed evenly. Two major gaps in the research remain. First, we know little about the effects of exposure to microaggressions, compared with no exposure. While there is a voluminous literature that catalogues and evaluates the effect of exposure to racial inequality on health outcomes (cf. Harrell et al. 2011; Lamont 2009; Sewell 2016), microaggressions are understood more as subtle even unintentional aspects of the symbolic and interactive order, rather than the entrenched inequities of the racialized social structure. While these are two aspects of the multidimensional character of race and racism, they can overlap and become co-constitutive (cf. Hughey 2015). Despite this relationship, we have much to learn about the causal weight of microaggressions in particular. In order to specify when and how a particular phenomenon creates action and order, we

need more comparative models and generalizable principles.[1] By restricting observations about microaggressions only to cases in which the microaggression has been observed (while excluding the cases in which microaggressions are either absent or vary in large measure), any inferences about possible causal weight cannot be validated or falsified.

Moreover, Minikel-Lacocque (2013:458) argues that racial microaggressions are often "contested" through a "process by which the target of a microaggression names and contests the perceived racist act" and notes that "given the very nature of microaggressions, it is most likely that these protests will be met with denial on the part of the perpetrator; however, more research is needed on this process." Further, scholars have not yet specified how differences in exposure to microaggressions relate to the structural position or racial attitudes of those exposed. For instance, Alabi (2015), drawing from a survey of librarians, found that both whites and People of Color witnessed, experienced, or recognized microaggressions while at work. However, the study notes, "many non-minority participants commented that they had not seen any instances of racism in their libraries.... it may be more likely that these respondents are not sensitized to issues of racism" (Alabi 2015:189).

While focused more on experience than the perception of certain events or interactions as racial microaggressions, Forrest-Bank and Jenson (2015:146) explored, "the prevalence and types of microaggression experienced by different racial and ethnic groups." They find that whites experienced significantly less racial microaggressions than their non-white counterparts did. Further, Forrest-Bank and Jenson (2015) found differences between other non-white racial groups and African Americans: African Americans experienced higher levels of microaggressions than other racial groups, while Asian and Latino/Hispanic participants were most likely to experience exoticization. However, the extent to which structural positions affect differences in sensitivity, awareness, and effects of exposure to racial microaggressions remains to be revealed. Hence, rather than arguing from a psychological standpoint that a microaggression must be consciously recognized as such for it to have a certain effect, we contend that the sociological effect of exposure to microaggressions must be analyzed. We examine the impact of the presence of microaggressions on racial attitudes as well as the effect of variation in the racial makeup of microaggressive interactions on racial attitudes.

Second, a long-standing and newly revived critique (cf. Campbell and Manning 2014; Garcia and Johnston-Guerrero 2016; Robbins 2016) of microaggressions research pertains to an assumption that microaggressions are everywhere, in the proverbial ether. As a nearly invariant force, they operate within the black box of the mind, causing a host of behavioral issues related to

ignorance, prejudice, or hate. Rather than assuming that microaggressions derive from these cognitive mechanisms, we are better served by examining the relational character of microaggressions, that is, how changes in the actors involved may impact the power of microaggressions. That is, we know very little about how variance in forms of microaggressions (white to black or Asian to Latino) has differential effects on those exposed to those microaggressions. The overwhelming majority of studies on microaggressions is rarely comparative and focuses on one particular group—particularly African Americans (e.g. Donovan et al. 2012; Harper et al. 2011; Hotchkins and Dancy 2015; Lewis et al. 2013; Pittman 2012). Preliminary work has also found that Latino/a students are subject to microaggressions (Minikel-Lacocque 2013). For instance, Franklin, Smith, and Hung (2014) found that Latino/a students are likely to experience "racial battle fatigue" (Smith, Allen, and Danley 2007) whereby racial microaggressions often cause psychological stress, but do not often lead to other physiological or behavioral responses. As noted above, Forrest-Bank and Jenson (2015:155) explore the differences in experiences of racial and ethnic microaggressions among Asian, Latino/a, and white populations, finding that "non-white racial and ethnic groups experienced racial and ethnic microaggression significantly more frequently than whites" but that the types of microaggression varied significantly across racial groups. Despite these important findings, the field has been relatively silent on how differences in the racial identity of the aggressor and the recipient may affect those exposed to those microaggressive variations. Without additional study, we are left with a vague description of the supposed effects of microaggressions (*explanandum*) absent a scholarly clarification of its operations (*explanans*).

We have designed a study that moves in a preliminary direction toward answering these questions. While we have empirically based answers, we believe this article also serves as a clarion call toward a new direction in the sociological analysis of microaggressions, thereby opening a new chapter on the external social causes and consequences of racialized subtle jibes, insults, and put-downs.

Theoretical Framework

As covered in the preceding pages, the term "microaggression" is well ensconced in psychology. We argue that the relative quarantine of the concept as a psychological *qua* cognitive operation suffers from at least three significant problems. First, the concept is subject to what Fanon (1967 [1952]) called "thingification," reified as a cognitive function that has a presocial existence. Treated as a psychoanalytic force that controls actors' words and behaviors, "microaggressions" lurk in everyone just beneath the surface, always at the ready.

Such reification leads us to the second issue of reductionism whereby the cognitive realm is the beginning and end of analysis. As Thomas and Carson Byrd (2016:193) contend:

> Discussions of race and racial inequality in the post-Civil Rights era are most often marked by individualistic perspectives focused on a person's characteristics and efforts, rather than on formal discussions of group-based stereotypes …. Similarly, the colorblind era is marked by the subtlety of racial discrimination in more covert forms, such as "microaggressions" and slight changes in behaviors to mark differential treatment or avoidance …. Explicit racists are frequently framed by mass media outlets as "bad apples," and we are encouraged to not let them spoil the "bunch."

Framing microaggressions as merely individual-level phenomena reduces collective action and interaction to individual-level explanations (i.e., we psychologize what is sociological). As seen above, the relevant discussion of "stereotypes" tends to locate the cause of racial inequality within biased individuals without attention to the social processes that produce those individuals and biases. While individual biases may certainly exist, the social, material, and symbolic boundaries that mutually constrain and enable our racialized social order operate through various ideologies, institutions, interests, identities, and interactions which can be independent of, and thus not reducible to, such biases (Hughey 2015).

Third, microaggressions qua individually held stereotypes are treated as unidirectional variables.[2] Bryson and Davis (2010: 163) explain:

> The action of this mechanism [stereotyping] is unidirectional. Person A can have a stereotype of Person B, and Person B can have a stereotype of Person A, but these two things need not have any effect on each other. Social and cultural exclusion, on the other hand, is relational. Groups are defined against one another and Group A is changed if a member of Group B gains access to Group A's space.

Without specification of the relational (i.e., social) character of boundary-making in the production of microaggressions, we artificially isolate the operations of the concept and thereby ultimately neuter the explanatory power of the term.

To alter tack, we recommend a retheorization of "microaggressions"[3] drawn from the sociological approach of Essed (1991). Meant to identify, as theoretically relevant, the lived experiences of racial oppression, the term "everyday racism" denotes the accumulation of recursive practices in day-to-day life that reproduce racial inequities. Essed emphasized three mutually dependent processes within this accumulation: (1) the marginalization of People of Color; (2) the problematization of non-white cultures and identities, and (3) symbolic or physical repression through humiliation or violence (Essed 2008:448). If we examine how each of these processes manifests in first, how the

presence/absence of racial microaggressions affects racial attitudes, and second, what the varied effects of different microaggressions are, we can better illumine the social à la relational dynamics of *everyday microaggressions*.

Data and Methodology

Undergraduate students at a mid-size, New England area university were approached about participating in a research study. Surveyed in courses, primarily sociology based, the sample ($n = 320$) was composed of: 59.4 percent women, 38.1 percent men; 67.8 percent white, 10.3 percent African American, 20.3 percent "other," and 1.6 percent non-response (see Table 1 for overview). The mean age of respondents was 19.42 years old. Because all participants were undergraduate students, the average number of years of education was only 13.36 years, with a range of only 5 years. The sample participants come from relatively well-educated families. The mean number of years of education respondents' mothers attained was 15.40. See Table 1 for greater detail. The research was vetted and approved by an Institutional Review Board. All respondents gave their informed consent and were promised confidentiality.[4]

The relationship between the exposure to microaggressions and attitudes toward race relations was measured through exposure to a series of vignettes developed by Sue (2010) and augmented by research by Aguinis and Bradley (2014) and Boysen (2012). We employed two vignettes describing microaggressive interactions between (1) a white professor and African American student, (2) an Asian professor and a Latino student, as well as (3) a control vignette with no microaggressive interaction (vignettes available in Appendix 1). Vignette condition exposure was randomly assigned. A total of 218 students received one of the two stimuli vignettes (inclusive of microaggressive interactions), while 102 students received the control vignette (no microaggressive interaction). We chose to employ vignettes in this study as it enables systematic control and observation of the sensitizing effects of variations in microaggressions while avoiding the problematic ethical implications of directly exposing respondents (particularly those who are People of Color) to potentially harmful real-life microaggressive behaviors.

After reading one of the three vignettes, all participants were asked to fill out a survey designed from demographic questions and race relation attitude measures from the General Social Survey (1990–2014). These questions focused on the history of race in personal relationships, attitudes on racial integration and segregation, and beliefs about the causes of racial inequality. A list of measures used in our analyses is shown in Table 1.

We conducted a basic statistical analysis, inclusive of *t*-tests, to determine whether there existed differences between the means of different populations. Those populations were constituted by exposure to stimuli or control,

Table 1
Descriptive for Demographic and Racial Attitudes Variables

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Notes
Age	315	19.44	2.12	17.00	41.00	Age in years
Gender	312	.61	.49	.00	1.00	Female = 1; Male = 0
People of color	315	.31	.46	.00	1.00	1 = People of color; 0 = Whites
Education	302	13.36	1.30	12.00	17.00	Education in years
Mother's education	299	15.40	2.63	7.00	25.00	Mother's education in years
Closeness to blacks	313	5.99	2.06	1.00	9.00	1 = Not at all close; 9 = Very close
Closeness to whites	314	7.18	1.77	1.00	9.00	1 = Not at all close; 9 = Very close
Good friends of a different race	263	4.75	4.01	.00	30.00	Number of good friends who are a different race
No close friends of a different race	313	.16	.36	.00	1.00	1 = No close friends; 0 = At least one close friend
Trusts primarily people of same race	302	.59	.49	.00	1.00	1 = Mostly same race; 0 = Equal or mostly different race
Shared commonalities	311	.35	.48	.00	1.00	1 = Equal in common to all; 0 = Identifies with a racial group
Wouldn't change the rules of segregated clubs	304	.07	.26	.00	1.00	1 = Would not try; 0 = Would try/wouldn't belong to the club
Cause of racial inequality is inborn disability	301	.15	.35	.00	1.00	1 = Yes; 0 = No or does not know

Table 1
(continued)

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Notes
Cause of racial inequality is discrimination	304	.15	.36	.00	1.00	1 = Yes; 0 = No or does not know
Cause of racial inequality is lack of education	301	.64	.48	.00	1.00	1 = Yes; 0 = No or does not know
Cause of racial inequality is lack of will	303	.18	.39	.00	1.00	1 = Yes; 0 = No or does not know
Minority experiences should be taught by minorities	313	.32	.47	.00	1.00	1 = Disagree; 0 = Neutral or agree
People best represented by leaders of own background	306	.48	.50	.00	1.00	1 = No, Background does not matter; 0 = Yes
Assimilation favorability	307	3.90	1.39	1.00	7.00	1 = Low favorability; 7 = High favorability
No law preventing housing discrimination	306	.14	.35	.00	1.00	1 = Agree, homeowners choose; 0 = Disagree, law to prevent, or neither
Blacks should not push themselves where not wanted	310	.10	.30	.00	1.00	1 = Agree; 0 = Disagree
Whites can keep blacks out of neighborhoods	311	.04	.20	.00	1.00	1 = Agree; 0 = Disagree
Low sympathy for blacks	309	.25	.43	.00	1.00	1 = Not often or never; 0 = Often

Table 1
(continued)

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Notes
Low admiration for blacks	306	.22	.42	.00	1.00	1 = Not often or never; 0 = Often
Conditions for blacks have improved	317	.32	.47	.00	1.00	1 = Conditions improved; 0 = Conditions not improved/don't know
Racial entitlement scale	303	2.31	.69	1	4.50	1 = Low entitlement; 5 = High entitlement
Should be freedom to express offensive opinions	312	.28	.45	.00	1.00	1 = Agree; 0 = Neutral or Disagree
Prejudiced people can hold public meetings	314	.29	.45	.00	1.00	1 = Should be allowed; 0 = Shouldn't be allowed/can't choose

differences by racial and gender identification, and differences in exposure to the two stimuli variations.[5] The majority of the racial attitudes variables used in the analyses were recoded into dichotomous variables.[6] We used *t*-tests to examine the difference in the proportions of each racial attitudes variable by stimulus and control groups, by type of stimulus received, by racial groups, and by gender.[7]

We also analyzed comments made on the surveys (*n* = 15). These comments were not responses to open-ended questions, but were unsolicited comments written on the surveys. Through a qualitative content analysis technique (Krippendorff 2004:18), we made inferences based on the context of their appearance and use. Following the recent use of unsolicited comments as qualitative data (cf. Maliski and Litwin 2007), we drew conclusions about the message as it relates to the context of interracial interaction and the presence or absence of a microaggression narrative (cf. Mayring 2000).

Our findings are limited by relatively small sample size and the extremely low number of participants of color in the sample. Hence, gender and racial effects may not be well reflected due to both sample size and racial homogeneity. Our analytic format was designed based on these limitations for three primary reasons. First, this non-probability experimental survey project is exploratory. By testing for differences in the effects of microaggressions and in the propensity toward microaggressive beliefs, we are able to identify links between specific racial attitudes and microaggressions. Second, examining basic differences allows us to identify which topics will provide fields of future research into racial microaggressions. Third, although there are many benefits to using the GSS racial attitudes module, one drawback is the lack of continuous variables. Because of different metrics, scaling variables was largely impossible (with one exception—see Table 2 and footnote 4).[8] Consistent with prior recommendations, we propose that future research aims for larger samples and more racial heterogeneity. Moreover, we recommend that researchers expand beyond collegiate undergraduates as the primary pool from which participants are culled.

Another concern was that the recruitment of participants to engage in microaggression research is complicated by IRB stipulations that alert participants, and thereby prime them to consider race, the racial order, and microaggressions. This runs the risk of respondents giving answers guided by social desirability bias.

Findings

Below, we first explore whether or not exposure to microaggressive interactions has an impact on racial attitudes. Second, we examine how the presence of racial variations in the actors and recipients of microaggressive interactions

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for the Racial Entitlement Scale

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Notes
Racial Entitlement Scale (α = .746)						
Whites get more attention from the government than they deserve	305	2.21	.80	1.00	5.00	1 = Much more; 2 = more; 3 = about right; 4 = less; 5 = much less
Blacks get more attention from the government than they deserve (reverse-coded before scaling)	307	3.53	1.06	1.00	5.00	1 = Much more; 2 = more; 3 = about right; 4 = less; 5 = much less
Hispanics get more attention from the government than they deserve (reverse-coded before scaling)	307	3.78	.91	1.00	5.00	1 = Much more; 2 = more; 3 = about right; 4 = less; 5 = much less
Asians get more attention from the government than they deserve (reverse-coded before scaling)	309	3.67	.83	1.00	5.00	1 = Much more; 2 = more; 3 = about right; 4 = less; 5 = much less

(in the vignettes) has an impact on racial attitudes. Third, we qualitatively analyze the remarks that participants wrote on the surveys.

The Presence of Racial Microaggressions

We consider the first question through a comparison of stimulus versus control responses. Below we limit our discussion to the findings that were statistically significant (see Table 3).

In terms of racial closeness, People of Color in the control group reported that they felt closer to blacks than People of Color who received the racial microaggression stimuli, although the relationship fell .01 short of the .10 cut-off. The priming of a racial microaggression had a small, albeit measurable, effect on feelings of closeness to blacks. While Dawson (1995) acknowledges many People of Color, especially African Americans, hold the collective sentiment that one's individual prospects are generally tied to the prospects of other African Americans, we observe that exposure to a story about racial microaggressions was able to somewhat weaken that feeling of closeness. This finding indicates a rise in racial individualism when encountering microaggressions, in a likely attempt to gain distance from the problematization of non-white cultures. Whereas past research indicates the use of the status of the racial group (both relative and absolute) as a proxy for individual utility and well-being, exposure to racial microaggressions appears to cue respondents into an affective disassociation with the racial status targeted by the microaggression.

Moreover, the exposure to a racial microaggression also had an effect on how respondents reported having friends of different races. In specific, People of Color in the stimulus group reported having a higher mean number of friends of different races than did People of Color in the control group. That is, exposure to a racial microaggression led respondents of color to report having a more racially diverse and cosmopolitan background and identity (compared with the respondents of color in the control group), to eschew a racially monolithic or ethnocentric identity. Respondents of color—once primed with the microaggression—are likely to appear slightly less stereotypically "black," "Latino," and/or "Asian" via over-reporting friends of different racial groups.

We also found that a lower proportion of respondents from all racial backgrounds in the stimulus group (compared with the control group) trusted mainly people of their own race; exposure to the microaggression stimulus seemingly caused respondents of all races to have more trust in members of other races. For People of Color, the quest to place faith in racial outgroups may be similarly explained. The microaggression stimuli may again prompt People of Color to reject their own operations of trust as limited to their racial in-group. Rather, they are more likely to embrace a view of themselves as racially cosmopolitan and egalitarian, trusting people freely across the color line so as distinguish

Table 3
t-Test for Difference in Proportions for Stimulus and Control Group

	All				People of Color				Whites			
	Stimulus	Control	t-test	N	Stimulus	Control	t-test	N	Stimulus	Control	t-test	N
Closeness to whites	7.15	7.25	.43	314	6.16	5.78	–.87	95	7.63	7.77	.68	216
Closeness to blacks	5.96	6.04	.33	313	6.47	7.26	1.62	95	5.72	5.61	–.41	215
Good friends of a different race	5.09	4.68	–.61	264	7.26	5.00	–2.15*	65	4.28	4.53	.37	197
No close friends of a different race	.14	.19	1.12	313	.13	.07	–.80	95	.14	.24	1.71†	215
Trusts primarily people of same race	.55	.67	2.03**	302	.34	.36	.19	90	.65	.77	1.80†	211
Shared commonalities	.31	.43	2.09*	311	.29	.22	–.63	97	.32	.51	2.71**	211
Wouldn't change the rules of segregated clubs	.10	.01	–3.03***	304	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Cause of racial inequality is inborn disability	.13	.18	1.06	301	.19	.16	–.30	89	.10	.19	1.70†	210
Cause of racial inequality is discrimination	.66	.76	1.74†	304	.75	.84	.87	90	.63	.75	1.70†	211
Cause of racial inequality is lack of education	.62	.69	1.08	301	.68	.76	.74	88	.59	.65	.87	210
Cause of racial inequality is lack of will	.19	.17	–.59	303	.19	.28	.89	89	.20	.13	–1.19	211

Table 3
(*continued*)

	All			People of Color				Whites				
	Stimulus	Control	t-test	N	Stimulus	Control	t-test	N	Stimulus	Control	t-test	N
Minority experiences should be taught by minority group	.29	.37	1.58	313	.22	.30	.70	94	.31	.40	1.35	215
People best represented by leaders of own background	.47	.50	.61	306	.30	.41	.96	93	.54	.54	–.05	210
Assimilation favorability	3.85	4.01	1.01	307	3.67	3.59	–.24	94	3.92	4.14	1.12	180
No law preventing housing discrimination	.13	.17	.88	306	.10	.04	–.97	92	.13	.21	1.47	211
Blacks should not push themselves where not wanted	.10	.12	.50	310	.11	.19	1.02	93	.09	.09	.03	213
Whites can keep blacks out of neighborhoods	.04	.04	–.23	311	.01	.00	–.63	94	.06	.04	–.56	213
Low sympathy for blacks	.25	.25	.02	309	.19	.15	–.52	94	.28	.30	.31	211
Low admiration for blacks	.23	.21	–.26	306	.19	.12	–.98	93	.24	.24	–.02	209
Conditions for blacks have improved	.32	.32	–.11	317	.27	.26	.02	97	.35	.34	–.22	216

Table 3
(*continued*)

	All			N	People of Color			N	Whites			N
	Stimulus	Control	t-test		Stimulus	Control	t-test		Stimulus	Control	t-test	
Racial entitlement scale	2.33	2.28	−.60	303	1.98	2.07	.67	92	2.50	2.34	1.64†	208
Should be freedom to express offensive opinions	.28	.26	−.33	312	.29	.23	−.57	95	.27	.27	.01	213
Prejudiced people can hold public meetings	.30	.27	−.53	312	.28	.19	−.95	95	.30	.31	.11	215

Notes: *Breakdowns by race were not possible due to small Ns.
***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$; †$p < .10$.

themselves from the kind of racial persona that would likely be targeted by a microaggression—a form of "stereotype threat" connected to views of what kinds of racial performances are microaggressively targeted by whites. Yet, for whites the same stimuli effect may also be translated as impulse to appear racially cosmopolitan not to escape microaggressive steering, but to escape the label of "racist" or "prejudiced"—the stereotypical persona who would likely act as a microaggressor. This interpretation is in line with extant research that whites use ambiguous references to black friends to avoid seeming racist (Bonilla-Silva 2014) or seek "color capital" through symbolic association with People of Color (Hughey 2012a).

Moreover, when asked with what racial groups one shares the most commonalities, respondents of all racial backgrounds in the control group responded that they had equal commonalities with all racial groups—a decidedly "color-blind" response (cf. Bonilla-Silva 2014). Hence, respondents exposed to a racial microaggression story were more likely to identify with their racial in-group. Similar results have been recorded, whereby exposure to microaggressions raises the likelihood of racial in-group solidarity (e.g., Jones and Galliher 2015) and conversely, exposure to microaggressions and discrimination lowers the likelihood that People of Color will hold attitudes of cross-racial closeness or believe in cross-racial commonalities (e.g., Barnes 2011; Tropp 2007).

A 9 percent higher proportion of respondents from all racial backgrounds in the stimulus group (compared with the control group) indicated that they would try to change the rules of an organization that wished to be racially segregated. Hence, exposure to a story concerning a racial microaggression appears to make respondents more likely to oppose an official stance of segregation held by an organization. The presence of a racial microaggression may coerce people (compared with the control group) to more actively consider "everyday racism" (Essed 1991) and thus agree to oppose segregation in specific instances, such as forcing integration through rule changes.

A higher proportion of white respondents in the control group (compared with the stimulus group) reported that racial inequality is due to inborn disability. Beliefs in the biological inferiority of People of Color (in comparison with whites) are long-standing, and some studies indicate a resurgence of this ideology in recent years (Byrd and Hughey 2015). That white respondents in the control group appeal to this trope as an explanation for inequality is relatively unsurprising. However, the priming of a racial microaggression reduced this explanation among whites. That is, when whites encountered the stimulus of a racial microaggression story, whites were primed to think that racial inequality is more likely caused by social forces than from inborn disabilities, just like the very racial microaggression described in the stimulus. Some research

indicates that white exposure to racism increases support for the causes of that racism (e.g., whites are more likely to support harsher criminal justice penalties when shown that black people are unfairly targeted by the criminal justice system, cf. Hetey and Eberhardt 2014; Peffley and Hurwitz 2007). However, the racial microaggressions in this study may more closely align with what college-age whites believe "racism" is, for several reasons. First, the encounter describes a professor–student relationship with which they are familiar and attuned. Second, the encounter is individualist, rather than systemic, and may be a more conventional style of "racism" that whites already conceive of as wrong because of the limits toward individual liberty and freedom once under assault by the microaggression (cf. Bonilla-Silva 2014 on "abstract liberalism"). Additionally, the presence of the microaggression may prime respondents to identify more closely with the cosmopolitan worldview, causing them to consider yet another form of "everyday racism"—the marginalization of People of Color.

Yet, other findings limit the optimism of this one result. While exposure to the microaggression lowered whites' beliefs that racial inequality is natural (caused by inborn disabilities), all respondents, especially whites, in the control group (compared with those in the stimulus group) had a higher proportion who believe racial inequality is caused by discrimination. This finding suggests exposure to the stimuli lowered individuals' acknowledgement of structural inequality. This relationship was not significant for People of Color, but was largely the same as the full sample for whites. While exposure to the microaggressions did seem to pull whites' explanations away from a reliance on biology or nature as the cause of inequality, it also pulled whites toward individualistic explanations for inequality. That is, it is likely that the microaggression was not understood as evidence of a systematic or patterned string of normalized racist discourse that demeans and belittles the recipient, but as the result of an individual bump in an otherwise smooth "postracial" path. In this scenario, it seems that frames of individualism and liberty were more impacting than a desire to present a cosmopolitan worldview and establish distance from aspects of "everyday racism."

The Power of Racial Microaggressions

To further illuminate how the presence of racial microaggressions impacts racial attitudes, we compare the effects of each type of stimulus. This analysis excludes the control group and compares the effects of the two stimuli vignettes (see Table 4).

In terms of interracial trust, respondents who received the Asian-Latino vignette had a 12 percent lower proportion (than those that received the white–black vignette) that primarily trusts people of their same race. The Asian-Latino

Table 4
t-Test for Difference in Proportions For Types of Stimulus

	White–black Stimulus	Latino-Asian Stimulus	*t*-test	N
Closeness to whites	7.12	7.19	.30	208
Closeness to blacks	5.94	6.00	.22	207
Good friends of a different race	4.45	5.72	1.04	173
No close friends of a different race	.15	.13	−.35	207
Trusts primarily people of same race	.61	.49	−1.71†	201
Shared commonalities	.29	.33	.67	208
Wouldn't change the rules of segregated clubs	.06	.15	2.24*	202
Cause of racial inequality is inborn disability	.13	.13	−.17	199
Cause of racial inequality is discrimination	.69	.65	−.54	202
Cause of racial inequality is lack of education	.63	.62	−.06	200
Cause of racial inequality is lack of will	.18	.21	.49	201
Minority experiences should be taught by minority group	.23	.34	1.75†	206
People best represented by leaders of own background	.40	.54	2.00*	203
Assimilation favorability	3.67	4.02	1.98†	201
No law preventing housing discrimination	.10	.15	1.08	203
Blacks should not push themselves where not wanted	.10	.09	−.20	206
Whites can keep blacks out of neighborhoods	.03	.06	1.17	206
Low sympathy for blacks	.24	.26	.28	205
Low admiration for blacks	.21	.25	.75	203

Table 4
(continued)

	White–black Stimulus	Latino-Asian Stimulus	t-test	N
Conditions for blacks have improved	.31	.34	.38	210
Racial entitlement scale	2.32	2.34	.16	198
Should be freedom to express offensive opinions	.28	.28	−.10	206
Prejudiced People can hold public meetings	.31	.29	−.20	207

Notes: ***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05; †p < .10.

vignette aligns less closely to the more well-defined racial scripts about the black–white binary and how most commonly understand racial conflict as a primarily black–white issue. As a consequence, the greater likelihood of holding in-group racial trust may be driven by exposure to people and objects coded as culturally "black" (Hughey 2012a) or collective schemas about what constitutes racial conflict. That is, as mentioned in the prior section, we found that a lower proportion of respondents from all racial backgrounds in the stimulus group (compared with the control group) trusted mainly people of their own race. Hence, while exposure to an Asian-Latino microaggression mediates that effect, the black–white microaggression has a greater effect.

Moreover, in consideration of social desirability bias, the priming effect of the Asian-Latino vignette may have led to less self-consciousness about being perceived as either "prejudiced" or "racist" if a respondent answers that they primarily trust their own race. Those who were exposed to the white–black vignette would be more likely to report a politically correct response of claiming to trust people of a different race just as much as people of their own race, rather than those who were exposed to the Asian-Latino vignette. The above findings suggest exposure to microaggressions impacts the acknowledgement of "everyday racism" in complicated ways, increasing acknowledgement in some instances while decreasing it in others.

Respondents who received the Asian-Latino stimulus had a higher proportion (compared with those that received the white–black vignette) that does not think the experiences of People of Color should be taught by a member of that specific racial group. In the Asian-Latino vignette (a microaggression between two individuals who are potentially considered "honorary whites" [Bonilla-Silva 2004]), it might be construed as simply an issue of intercultural miscommunication rather than interracial hostility or aggression. This finding is consistent with previously noted evidence from extant survey research on microaggressions, suggesting that Asians and Latinos are more likely to face stereotyping as "exotic" or as having a "foreign" culture in contrast to African Americans who more often reported experiencing assumptions that they are inferior (cf. Forrest-Bank and Jenson 2015). The Asian-Latino vignette may thus cultivate perceptions that the negative result of the experiences of People of Color being taught by another group would be intercultural confusion and miscommunication without the question being mapped onto the more deeply entrenched racial power dynamics and feelings of resentment and conflict activated by the white–black vignette. In this case, the enduring legacy of the black–white racial script in U.S. society acts to sensitize respondents to "everyday racism."

Likewise, respondents who received the Asian-Latino vignette (opposed to those who received the white–black vignette) had a higher proportion that

believe the background of political leaders does not matter (political leaders need not be racially representative of their communities). Similar to the above, respondents may believe they provide a more politically correct answer because they understand that having political leaders of the same race as the population they are serving is a "progressive" or "liberal" stance aligned with variants of antiracial nationalist politics. This intersubjectively shared interpretation could be primed by reading the white–black vignette—a story more commonly recognized as a traditional instance of "racism" in which a white authority figure imposes upon a black student.

Finally, those exposed to the Asian-Latino vignette have a .35 higher mean score on assimilation favorability, meaning they are more favorable to assimilation than those exposed to the white–black vignette. Asian Americans, especially when compared to African Americans and Latino Americans, are generally perceived as more Anglo-assimilated due to shared beliefs in the "model-minority" trope and due to their higher representation among university students than other non-white racial groups. Additionally, as majority–minority rhetoric increases, there is a general notion that Latinos will have to assimilate more in the future. To contrast, black people are far more likely to be seen as incapable or unwilling to assimilate (cf. Vickerman 2007).

The Analysis of Unsolicited Comments

A handful of comments were left on the surveys ($n = 15$). Overall, they represent only 4.69 percent of the respondents, yet given that they were unsolicited, they reflect three divergent interpretations of racial attitudes and microaggressions that the respondents felt important enough to share. First, a few comments, written almost exclusively by respondents of color, indicated a higher consciousness concerning the causes and effects of racial inequality and microaggressions. For example, in response to the prompt, "Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without special favors," an 18-year-old black male student wrote, "What is this crap? I don't understand special favors. Black people never got special favors, we were SLAVES!" Additionally, at the end of the question, "On the average blacks have worse jobs, income, and housing than White people. Do you think these differences are: Mainly due to lack of education?" an 18-year-old black male respondent commented "Yes, but due to discrimination." One white respondent wrote a comment that aligned with such racial consciousness. A 22-year-old white female respondent wrote, "Never!" in response to "Do you think there should be laws against marriages between blacks and whites?"

Second, another group of comments pertained to color-blind ideology, whereby any attention to race was deemed an unnecessary distraction and that

people should be able to do or say what they wish, regardless of racialized concerns. Many of these comments glorified individual rights as the guiding principle, rather than a concern for racial equality of opportunity or outcome. These comments came from respondents across the color line. For instance, a respondent who did not supply any demographic information wrote, "It's his house sell it to he wants [sic]" after a prompt about whether people should be allowed to racially discriminate in housing sales or whether such discrimination should be banned. In response to the question, "Should people prejudiced against any racial or ethnic group be allowed to hold public meetings?" a 21-year-old male identifying as "other" wrote in a separate answer: "The meetings should consist of members of the group prejudiced against" and in response to the question, "Do you think that blacks get more attention from government than they deserve?" the same respondent wrote, "Don't know enough, but seems probable." Yet, throughout other questions throughout the survey, the respondent wrote the phrase "Depends on the individual." A 21-year-old black female respondent chose the response that a "Leaders background doesn't matter" in answering the question "Do you feel that people are best represented in politics by leaders from their own racial or ethnic background, or doesn't the leader's background make very much difference?" And she also wrote after the question that, "An open-minded leaders background makes no difference." Also after a question about whether the government should give "special treatment to blacks" given that African Americans have "been discriminated against for so long", the respondent wrote, "not special treatment; give blacks the opportunities afforded to others."

And third, mainly white respondents wrote comments dismissive of the import and effect of microaggressions. For instance, questions 11, 12, and 13 provided three different scenarios that asked whether or not people should be considered for positions "purely on the basis of ability" or because of "racial or ethnic background." A white male, age 20, wrote on the survey that "If they know what they are doing they know not to have any racial bias and can handle matters of race appropriately [sic]." In response to the question, "In general, do you favor or oppose the busing of black and white school children from one school district to another?" a white male, age 20, in the control group responded that they opposed busing and wrote, "I was in one of the Programs and it was a complete failure." In response to the question, "Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. blacks should do the same without special favors" an 18-year-old white male chose the closed-ended answer, "Agree strongly" and also wrote, "(But they're already equal...)" and after answering "Never" to the question, "How often have you felt sympathy for blacks?", he also wrote, "There's nothing to sympathize for." Finally, at the conclusion of Stimulus A (the microaggression

between a white professor and black student), it reads: "To the professor's sur-prise, Justin and several other students of color seemed offended and insulted by the praise." A white male student, age 21, wrote at the end: "I am surprised too. What more do these students possibly want?"

Overall, these few comments demonstrate a spectrum of approaches to the relationship between racial attitudes and microaggressions. The comments pro-vide a bit of qualitative nuance in support of our larger finding—the respon-dents of color are more racially conscious of inequality and its social causes and white respondents appear much more indifferent to the import of racial inequality and are more likely to engage in or dismiss racial microaggressions.

Discussion

Our aim was to provide preliminary findings for future sociological, rather than psychological, research on microaggressions (cf. Lau and Williams 2010:316–317). Because of sampling limitations, our analysis was simplified to test only for how the presence of microaggressions affects racial attitudes and how variance in the type of microaggressions holds differential power. We identified links between specific racial attitudes and microaggressions upon which future research, especially within the "everyday racism" paradigm, may build. Below we highlight our contributions as well as areas ripe for additional interrogation.

The Marginalization of People of Color

First, while "linked fate" (Dawson 1995) and "group threat" (Bobo and Hutchings 1996) literature contend that in-group racial identity formation and both the racialization and protection of resource interests come in response to prejudice and maltreatment, we witness a reversal with exposure to microagg-ressions; exposure to microaggressions among People of Color can weaken, rather than strengthen, feelings of racial in-group closeness. In terms of microaggressions, we may be witnessing a rising strategy whereby People of Color report less affinity with their racial in-group in order to mitigate potential subtle jabs and harassment aimed at that group. However, such racial individu-alism then may run the risk of reproducing the marginalization one seeks to avoid, given that non-white networks, communities, and identities are often employed as stopgaps in the everyday navigation of white controlled and/or dominated social structures.

The Problematization of Non-White Cultures and Identities

Second, and related to the prior point on marginalization, exposure to racial microaggressions leads People of Color to report holding more (com-pared to People of Color in the control group) racially diverse friendship

networks. This finding could well reflect a structurally produced and intersubjectively shared sentiment related to "racial stigma" (Hughey 2012b; Lenhardt 2004; Loury 2003) or "stereotype threat" (Beilock, Rydell, and McConnell 2007; Steele 1997; Steele and Aronson 1995). Given that People of Color are already hyperaware of how their "cultures" and identities are perceived as a manifestation of the quintessential Du Boisian (1903) "problem," the exposure to microaggressions becomes a stark reminder of that status. A disavowal of strong and predominant in-group racial ties may stand as a measure of how some attempt to distance the racialized "contempt and pity" *qua* microaggressions directed at many People of Color today. We here witness a collective recognition and reflexive concern for how People of Color imagine racial outgroups, particularly whites, imagine themselves, à la Cooley's (1902:152).

Yet, there is a strong reason to believe that such distancing is strategic. We also find that exposure to the microaggression stimulus is correlated with more likelihood to identify with their racial in-group. While non-white groups may hypothesize that less diverse and "ethnocentric" racial networks translate into increased targeting from outgroups, People of Color exposed to microaggressions are more likely to see themselves as a part of their racial group. Such "double consciousness" is the gift of a "second-sight in this American world" in which People of Color see one's self through one's own eyes while concurrently "looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (Du Bois 1903:7). Just as Anderson (2011:186, 189) explains the code-switching between, and spaces that are concurrently marked by "ethnocentricity" and "cosmopolitanism," these orientations are cultural logics that help one to navigate interactional (and interracial) encounters.

Symbolic or Physical Repression Through Humiliation or Violence

Exposure to microaggressions also pertains to how symbolic or physical repressions may be understood and enacted. On the one hand, exposure to a microaggression made respondents more likely to oppose a specific organization that is officially segregated. This finding contradicts the "principle–policy gap" (Bobo 1998) thesis, which indicates an increasing support for racial equality in the abstract, alongside lukewarm support for, or even opposition toward, specific attempts to achieve that racial equality through legal or policy changes. On the other hand, among all respondents (but especially whites), exposure to microaggressions lowered the acknowledgement of structural inequality and increased the likelihood of using individualistic explanations for racial inequality. A focus on merely a singular interaction as an instance of microaggression seems to limit the ability of respondents, particularly whites, to understand both the symbolic and physical toll of racism as a systemic and ongoing effect as

well as see microaggressions as manifestations of systemic and symbolic violence toward People of Color.

Conclusion

Our analysis found that exposure to microaggressions had varied effects in relation to racial attitudes, that the type of microaggression affected the outcome of those effects, and that in consultation with existing theory, that those most likely to use microaggressions are the ones most likely to benefit from the current arrangement of racial and gender social order—white men. Moreover, we advance a social/relational perspective to explain these effects drawing from Essed's (1991) theory of "everyday racism."

Yet, the scholarly discussion of microaggressions is not without controversy. Campbell and Manning (2014) claim that talk of microaggressions signals the appearance of a new "culture of victimhood" that has supplanted a "culture of dignity" that "existed perhaps in its purest form among respectable people in the homogenous town of mid-twentieth century America" (714). Here, actors supposedly dismissed insults and slurs. We are told that in our new victimhood culture, we no longer calmly and serenely—and with dignity intact—let insults slide. Rather, we are told, we publicly and without shame call attention to these "minor" acts in the hopes that full force of law and stigma fall upon these evil perpetrators.

Aside suffering from a vulgar, reductionist historiography, this narrative relies upon a time in the "mid-twentieth century" in which Jim Crow was the law of the land; People of Color had little recourse and did not have full access to the moral economy of "dignity" in which whites participated freely. The Civil Rights movement, which reached its apex at the close of the mid-twentieth century in the United States, was a response to the broken promise of social dignity, which excluded—in both *de jure* and *de facto* realms—nearly a quarter of the country's sons and daughters.

To be clear, the recognition and reporting of "microaggressions" is nothing new. The quiet whispers about chattel slavery's banal symbolic violence that degraded and dehumanized even the most "dignified" of human chattel; Asian Americans' informal discussions of where to shop, eat, work, and sleep without the incessant but informal duress of Anglo-jingoism in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s; Latino migrant workers' discussion of how to respond to the accusations of laziness and thievery that rationalized their unfair treatment by white trade unionists; and the continued fight by women of color in academe not to be "presumed incompetent" (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012; see also Rosino, forthcoming).

Today, the research on microaggressions, and the very social movements that employ the concept, is not spurred forth by any enjoyment of victimhood.

The cry of racial "microaggression" is not the wail of the victim or the attempt to besmirch an individual (who may or may have said anything intentionally), but it is the audacity to take back the dignity once stolen by calling attention to the normative discursive operations that habitually demean and defame people because of their race. It is a moral and empirical enterprise to call one another to witness what some would say is little more than "complaints and other specimens of victimhood" (Campbell and Manning 2014:718).[9] But as actors cope with these aggressions, and either confront, brush off, or redirect (Harper 2015) them, we have much to learn about the full impact of how such negotiations for dignity may result in either "racial battle fatigue" (Smith, Allen, and Danley 2007) or what some call "John Henryism" (Hudson et al. 2015; James 1994). In considering the negative effects (from physical and mental health, to loss of resources, status, and opportunities) of continued exposure to microaggressions, it is clear that there not much that is "micro" about "microaggressions." The size of the interaction does not mean it has little power. Rather, the term denotes the interactional and discursive mechanisms that reproduce the unequal racial order as a normal, and moral, fixture of our social landscape.[10]

ENDNOTES

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[1]While "generalizable" can be understood in the statistical sense (e.g., inference from observation in sample to larger population), we also emphasize its meaning in the sense of theoretical and logical generalizability, also understood by some as "transferability" (cf. Lamont 2009:43–48).

[2]We draw our definition of stereotype from Hamilton and Trolier (1986:133): "a cognitive structure that contains the perceiver's knowledge, beliefs, and expectancies about some human group."

[3]This paradigm shift would be particularly effectacious for the line of inquiry undertaken in the recent work of Sue (2010), Boysen (2012), and Aguinis and Bradley (2014).

[4]A copy of the questionnaire is available upon request from the authors.

[5]Only two demographic measures (gender and race) were used in the analyses. Gender was recoded from a three-category ("male," "female," and "other") to a two-category variable ("male" and "female"). The "other" category was dropped due to small sample size ($n = 3$). Similarly, small subsample sizes led us to recode race from a three-category variable ("white," "black," and "other") to a two-category measure ("white" and "People of Color").

[6]The two racial closeness variables were treated as continuous and not recoded. Each item asks respondents how close they feel to whites and blacks, and respondents choose a number between 1 (not at all close) and 9 (very close). "Good friends of a difference" is also continuous, as respondents write-in the number of good friends they have who are of a different race. A related measure is "No close friends of a different race," which asks if respondents have any close friends who are of a different race. The original metric of this variable is dichotomous.

[7]We measure interracial trust by an item indicating if respondents trust primarily people of their same race. The original question asks if the people they trust are "almost all the same race as you," "mostly the same race as you," "about evenly divided," "mostly a different race as you," or "almost all a different race than you." The first two categories were recoded into "mostly same race," and the remaining three were combined into "equal or mostly different race." The measure "shared commonalties" asks with which racial/ethnic group respondents identify. The original measure lists a number of racial and ethnic identities as answer categories, as well as "equal in common to all." All racial and ethnic categories were combined into "identifies with at least one racial group," with "equal in common to all" retained as the other racial category.

There are two measures grouped under the heading of "abstract liberalism." The first, which indicates respondents' level of agreement with the statement that individuals should not be allowed to express offensive or harmful opinions, related to discursive abstract liberalism. The original answer categories included five categories ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. "Strongly agree," "agree," and "neither agree nor disagree" were combined into one "agree/neutral" category, and the remaining two combined into a "disagree category. The second abstract liberalism measure is action-oriented and asks respondents whether prejudiced people should be allowed to hold public meetings. The answer categories "should definitely be allowed" and "should probably be allowed" were combined into one "should be allowed" category, and "should probably not be allowed," "should definitely not be allowed," and "can't choose" were combined into a "should not be allowed/neutral" category.

The next measure asks whether respondents would try to change the rules of a social club they belong to if it discriminated based on race. The categories "yes" and "wouldn't belong [to a discriminating social club]" were combined into one category, leaving "no" as the remaining category. The next two measures deal with the causes of racial inequality. Respondents are asked, in turn, whether inequality is due to discrimination and inborn disability. The answer categories for both variables are "yes," "no," and "I don't know;" a dichotomous variable was created by combining "no" and "I don't know" for each measure.

There are two variables that refer to racial representation. The first asks whether minority experiences Should Be Taught by Minority Group, with five answer categories ranging from "strongly

agree" to "strongly disagree." The categories for this variable were combined in the same fashion as the freedom to express offensive opinions measure. The second racial representation measure asks respondents if people are best represented by political leaders of their own race. The original metric is dichotomous. The assimilation favorability measure is treated as continuous; on a scale of 1–7 where 1 represents maintaining distinct cultures and 7 represents total blending of cultures, respondents are asked to select their level of favorability for assimilation.

Assimilation is followed by three measures of racial segregation. The first measure asks respondents which housing law they would vote for: one that states homeowners can decide who to sell to, even if they prefer not to sell to blacks, one that prohibits discrimination, or neither. We created a dichotomous variable in which the categories "prohibit discrimination" and "neither" are combined to compare with those who think homeowners should be able to decide for themselves. The second measure asks respondents how much they agree with the statement that whites should be able to keep blacks out of their neighborhoods. "Agree strongly" and "agree slightly" were combined into one "agree" category, and "disagree slightly" and "disagree strongly" were combined into one "disagree" category. This measure does not include a neutral category. The third measure asks respondents to indicate their agreement with the statement that blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted. The answer category and recoding are exactly the same as the previous variable.

We also include a measure asking respondents whether they think conditions have improved for blacks over the years. The answer categories include "improved," "gotten worse," "about the same," and "don't know." We wanted to know how people who think conditions have improved differ from everyone else, so we collapsed the three latter categories into one. We also include a measure of sympathy for blacks. Respondents are asked how often they feel sympathy for blacks. The four answer categories range from "very often" to "never," with no neutral category. The two "often" categories were combined, as were "not very often" and "never."

[8]We used one scale in the analyses, which is shown in Table 2. The scale is comprised of four items asking if different racial groups (whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians) receive "much more," "more," "about right," "less" or "much less" attention from the government than they deserve. The items measuring government attention to blacks, Asians and Hispanics were reverse-coded, and the four items were then added together and divided by four, to maintain the original metric. A higher score on the scale means higher racial entitlement.

[9]Moreover, Campbell and Manning (2014) repeatedly cite false accusations of microaggressions as evidence of a ultramodern cultural moment, as if dishonestly is a dewy fixture of the new social order of "victimhood."

[10]We wish to thank the anonymous reviewers, the special guest editors, and the editor-in-chief for their insightful and helpful suggestions and criticisms on prior drafts of this manuscript.

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Appendix 1: Vignette 1 (Stimulus A: Microaggressive interaction between white and African American)

Standing before his classroom, Charles Richardson, a white professor, asked for questions from the class. He had just finished a lecture on Greco-Roman contributions to the history of psychology. An African American male student raised his hand.

When called upon, the student spoke in a frustrated manner, noting that the history of psychology was "ethnocentric and eurocentric" and that it left out the contributions of other societies and cultures. The student seemed to challenge the professor by noting that the contributions of African, Latin American, and Asian psychologies were never covered.

The professor responded, "Robert, I want you to calm down. We are studying American psychology in this course and we will eventually address how it has influenced and been adapted to Asian and other societies. I plan to also talk about how systems and theories of psychology contain universal applications."

Rather than defusing the situation, however, Professor Richardson sensed that his response had raised the level of tension among several students of color. Another Black male student then stated, "Perhaps we are looking at this issue from different perspectives or worldviews. Just as language affects how we define problems, maybe we all need to evaluate our assumptions and beliefs. Maybe we are ethnocentric. Maybe there are aspects of psychology that apply across all populations. Maybe we need to dialogue more and be open to alternative interpretations."

Throughout the semester, the professor had sensed increasing resentment among his students of color over the course content (he could not understand the reasons) and he welcomed the opportunity to say something positive about their classroom contributions. He responded, "Justin [who is a Black student], I appreciate your exceptionally thoughtful and intelligent observation. You are a most articulate young man with good conceptual and analytical skills. This is the type of nonjudgmental analysis and objectivity needed for good dialogues. We need to address these issues in a calm, unemotional, and reasoned manner."

To the professor's surprise, Justin and several other students of color seemed offended and insulted by the praise.

Vignette 2 (Stimulus B: Microaggressive interaction between Asian and Latino)

Standing before his classroom, Charles Richardson, an Asian American professor, asked for questions from the class. He had just finished a lecture on Greco-Roman contributions to the history of psychology. A Latino male student raised his hand.

When called upon, the student spoke in a frustrated manner, noting that the history of psychology was "ethnocentric and eurocentric" and that it left out the contributions of other societies and cultures. The student seemed to challenge the professor by noting that the contributions of African, Latin American, and Asian psychologies were never covered.

The professor responded, "Robert, I want you to calm down. We are studying American psychology in this course and we will eventually address how it has influenced and been adapted to Asian and other societies. I plan to also talk about how systems and theories of psychology contain universal applications."

Rather than defusing the situation, however, Professor Richardson sensed that his response had raised the level of tension among several students of color. Another Latino male student then stated, "Perhaps we are looking at this issue from different perspectives or worldviews. Just as language affects how we define problems, maybe we all need to evaluate our assumptions and beliefs. Maybe we are ethnocentric. Maybe there are aspects of psychology that apply across all populations. Maybe we need to dialogue more and be open to alternative interpretations."

Throughout the semester, the professor had sensed increasing resentment among his students of color over the course content (he could not understand the reasons) and he welcomed the opportunity to say something positive about their classroom contributions. He responded, "Justin [who is a Latino student], I appreciate your exceptionally thoughtful and intelligent observation. You are a most articulate young man with good conceptual and analytical skills. This is

the type of nonjudgmental analysis and objectivity needed for good dialogues. We need to address these issues in a calm, unemotional, and reasoned manner."

To the professor's surprise, Justin and several other students of color seemed offended and insulted by the praise.

Vignette 3 (Control: No microaggressive interaction)

Larry is a financial analyst in the risk assessment division. He is currently undergoing his bi-annual performance evaluation with his supervisor, Chad. Chad says: "Larry, I have reviewed your progress and there seems to be a slight increase in your performance towards the end of the second quarter. Was there any reason why this happened? I hope we can talk about that and ways we all set and achieve performance goals."