



“ UNPACKING
MICROAGGRESSIONS
IN THE WORKPLACE.”

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for MCABSE

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Session Objectives:

- Learn the history of how the term **microaggressions** was coined;
- Unpack **microaggressions** in the workplace;
- Watch for **microaggressions** in schools; and
- Hear recommended strategies for addressing **microaggressions**.

Early days of my research...



“Grandma, why would that lady think I wanted to steal her purse.”

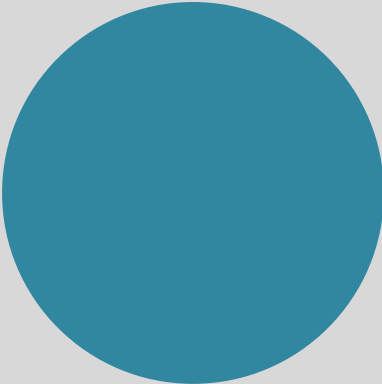
Interpretation:

- Criminalization of Persons of Color
- Adultification of Children of Color

Same or Different?



Microaggressions



Implicit Bias



Unconscious Bias

ACTION

JUDGEMENT

Who coined the term **MICROAGGRESSION**?



Dr. Charles Middlebrook Pierce

- Professor at Harvard University Medical School
- Founding President of the Black Psychiatrists of America
- **...subtle racial putdowns that degrade a person's physical health over a lifetime**



Father/Activist

To counteract the racial images of persons of color on television and media, Dr. Pierce became a key advisor who directly influenced the groundbreaking children's program, Sesame Street.

Continuing **MICROAGGRESSION** Research

- "...everyday insults, indignities and demeaning messages sent to people of color by well-intentioned white people who are unaware of the hidden messages being sent to them."



Dr. Derald Wing Sue

MICROAGGRESSION Research

“When I talk about the concept of microaggressions to a large audience of people of color and women, I’m not telling them anything new, but it provides them with a language to describe the experiences and the realization that they’re not crazy,” - Dr. Sue

CLASSIFICATION OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

MICROASSAULTS: Conscious and intentional actions or slurs, such as using racial epithets or displaying racially motivated symbols such as confederate flags or swastikas. Now we see the display of American flags to send a message “patriotism”.

MICROINSULTS: Verbal and nonverbal communications that subtly convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person’s racial heritage or identity.

MICROINVALIDATIONS: Communications that subtly exclude, negate, or nullify the thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a Person of Color.

Microaggressions Today...

“Microaggressions are **subtle but harmful actions directed at targeted groups**. Microaggressions may be verbal, behavioral, or environmental. Those targeted include **people of color, females, those with disabilities, religious minorities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.**”



TARGETS



ACTORS



ALLIES

Once heard in the workplace...

“Why would you want her to go there? How is she going to get a job? Are HBCUs even necessary?”

*Interpretation:
HBCU are not rigorous or relevant.*

Once heard in the workplace...

**“You are so articulate.
You speak so well (?)”**

*Interpretation:
Black people are not usually capable of competent intellectual conversation.*

*“...covert instances of racial and cultural bias, **microaggressions** are like an annoying plumbing issue, the slow dripping of insulting remarks, slights, and occasional not so funny jokes that target persons of color and other persons who have been marginalized by society.”*



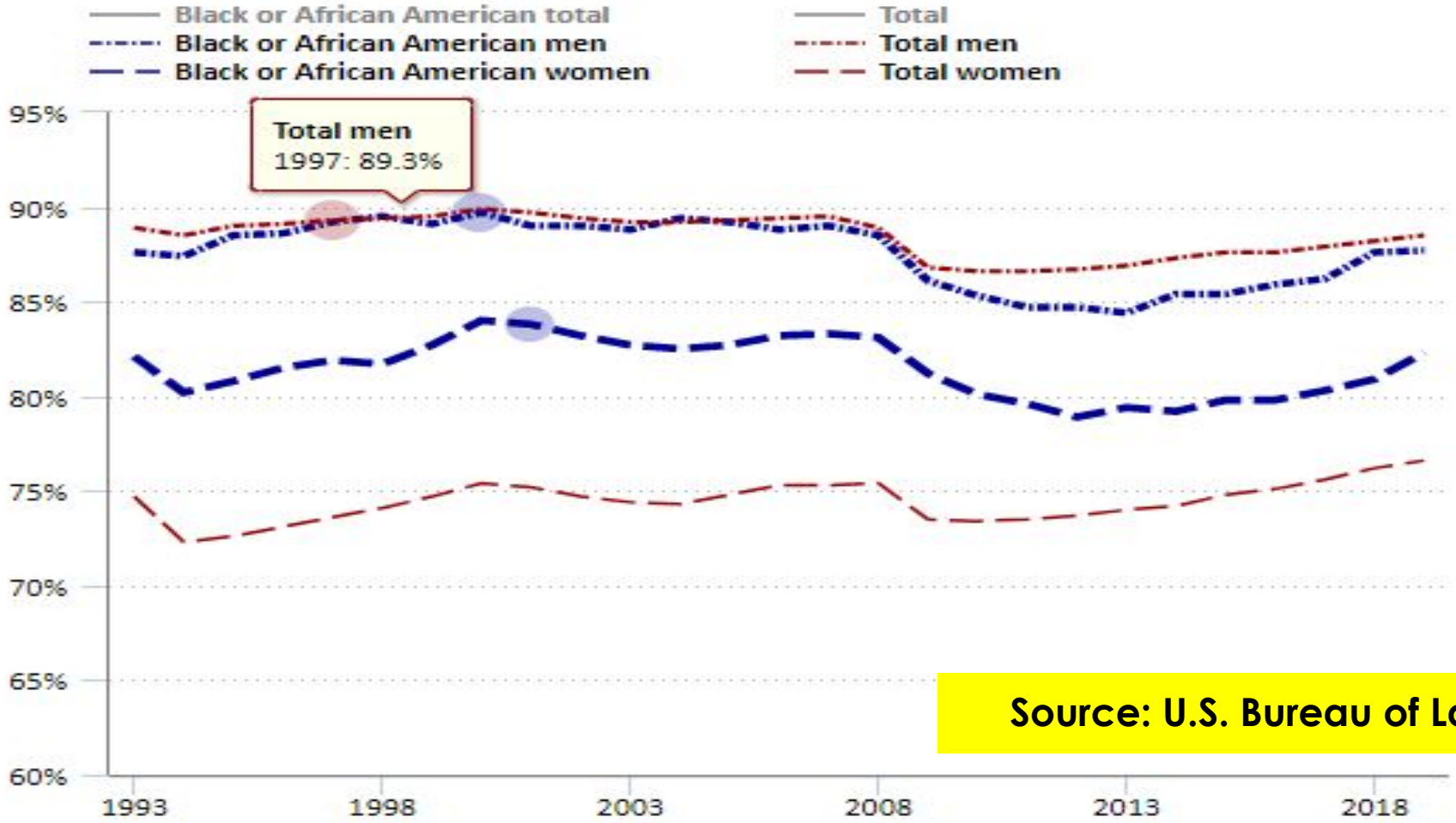
MICROAGGRESSION AT WORK



- Feeling as if they don't belong
- Feeling of being on the outside
- Feeling pressure to represent your race, ethnicity, or culture in a positive way
- Feeling the need to work twice as hard to demonstrate your worth in the organization
- Feeling self-conscious if too many persons of the same racial, ethnic, or cultural group are talking or sitting together

Contrary to the societal narrative...

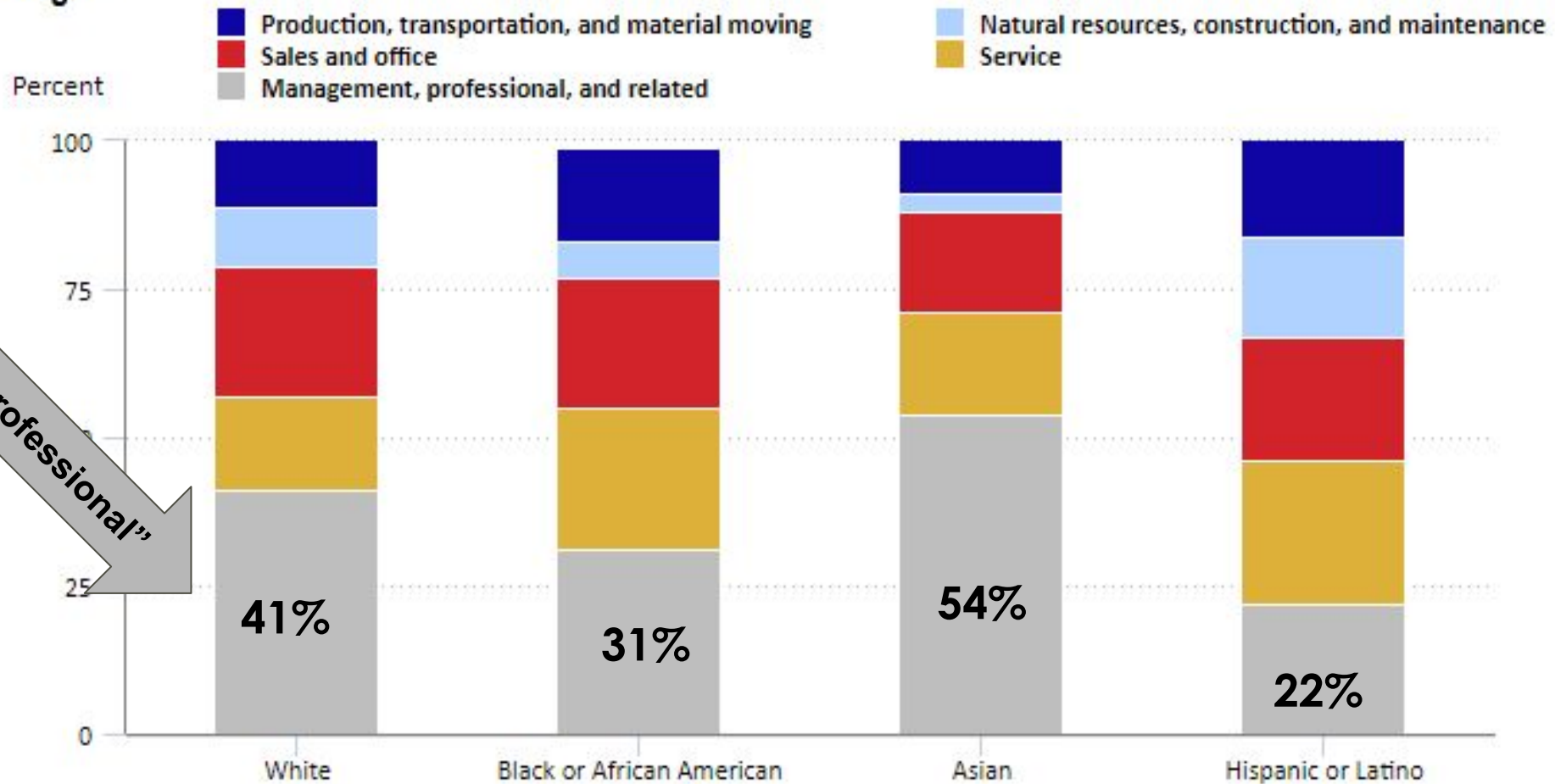
Percent of employed who usually worked full time, by gender, 1993–2019 annual averages



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

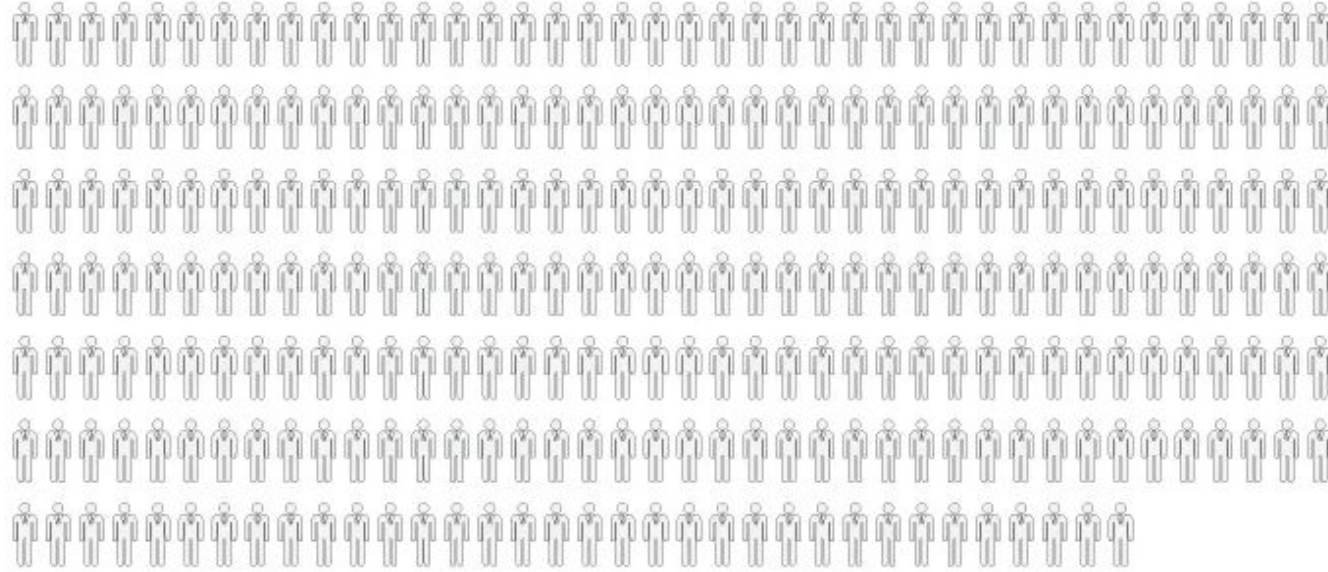
U.S. Employment by Occupation & Race

Chart 3. Employed people by occupation, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2018 annual averages



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Of the 279 top executives listed at the 50 biggest companies in the S&P 100...



274

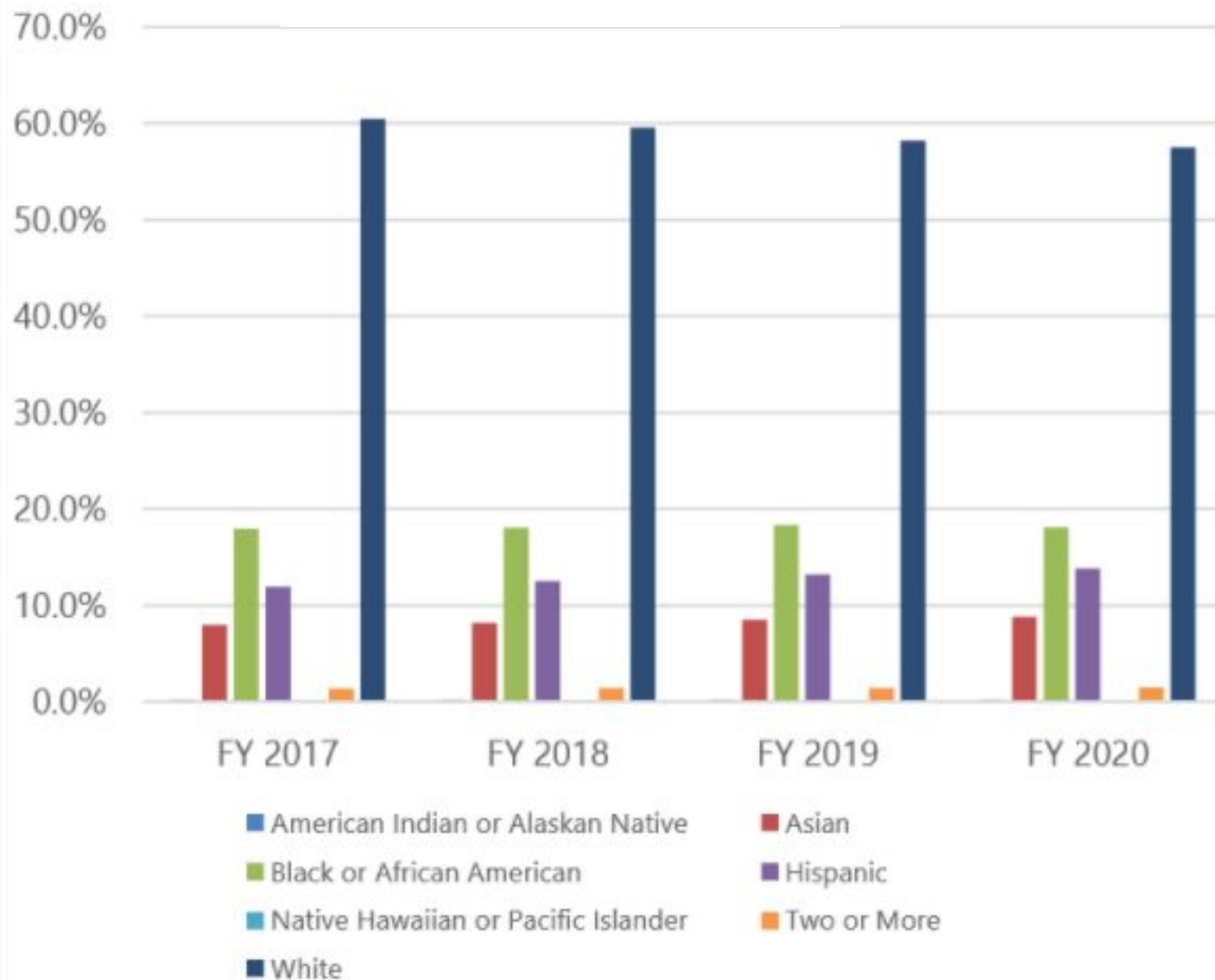
are white, Hispanic, Asian, or other ethnicity



5

are Black

(2 have recently retired)



MICROAGGRESSION AT WORK



*“I see your hair is big today!
Are you planning to wear it like
that for the presentation?”*

**Interpretation: Your natural
hairstyle is not professional.**

Once heard in the workplace...

““When I see you, I don't see color. We are all one race: the human race.”

*Interpretation:
Your experience as a Black person is no different from the experience of people of other races.*

MICROAGGRESSION AT WORK

“Everyone can succeed in society if they work hard enough.”

Interpretation: Denial that microaggressions and workplace discrimination exists; ignorance of institutionalized racism



IMPACT OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

- ❑ Diminished self-esteem
- ❑ Self-doubt
- ❑ Learned helplessness
- ❑ Denied opportunities
- ❑ Broken or lack of trust
- ❑ Psychological insecurity
- ❑ Physical health concerns
- ❑ Fragile relationships
- ❑ Lack of effort



IMPACT OF MICROAGGRESSIONS



NEWSLETTER

MEDICALNEWS TODAY

Impact of microaggressions at work?

A [study](#) appearing in the journal *Urban Education* reported that people who experience racial microaggressions have negative job satisfaction. Offensive speech and microaggressions can affect [productivity](#).

A hostile work environment may also undermine employees' safety.

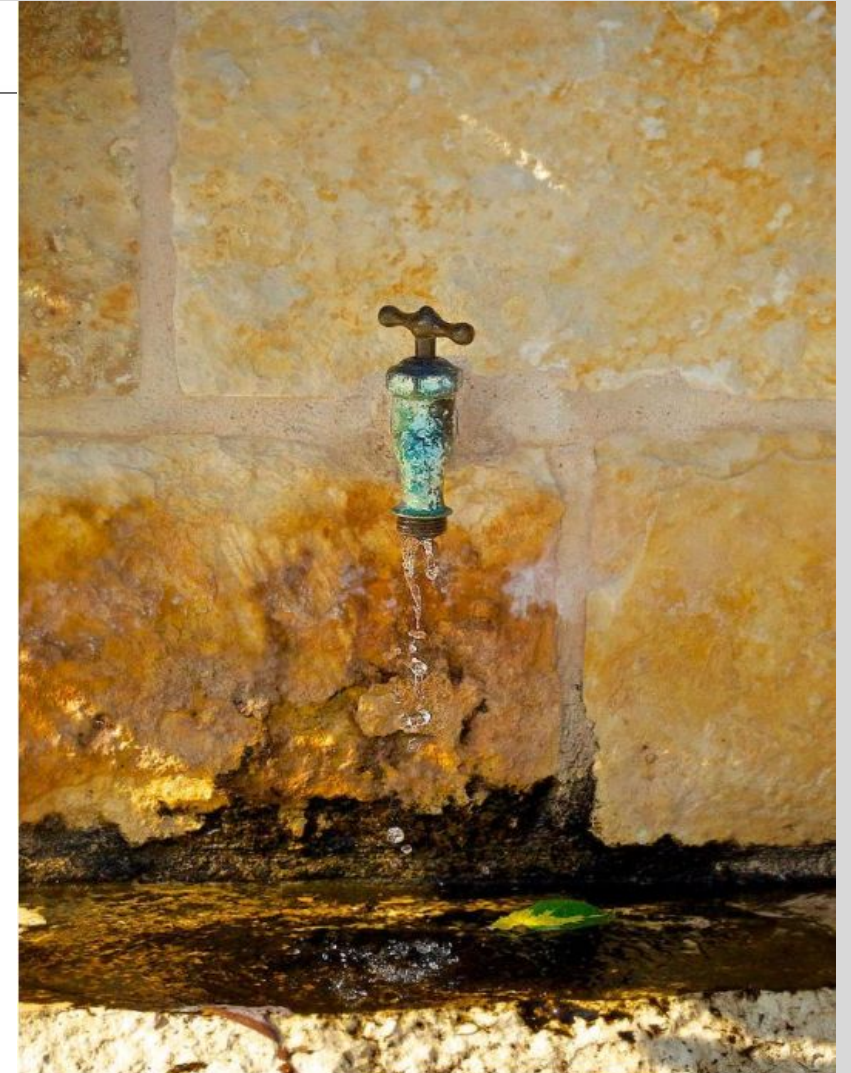
People who experience microaggressions are at risk of mental and physical health issues, which can lead to absenteeism.

Some [mental health](#) effects of microaggressions may include:

- [depression](#)
- [anxiety](#)
- suicidal ideation
- alcohol-related problems

Feelings of being undervalued from microaggressions may prevent people in targeted groups from:

- applying for jobs
- negotiating salaries
- striving for promotions



IMPACT OF **MICROAGGRESSIONS**

Black Men anticipating the impact of their race by acting preemptively: One man noted how he deliberately relaxes his body while in close quarters with White women, so he doesn't frighten them.

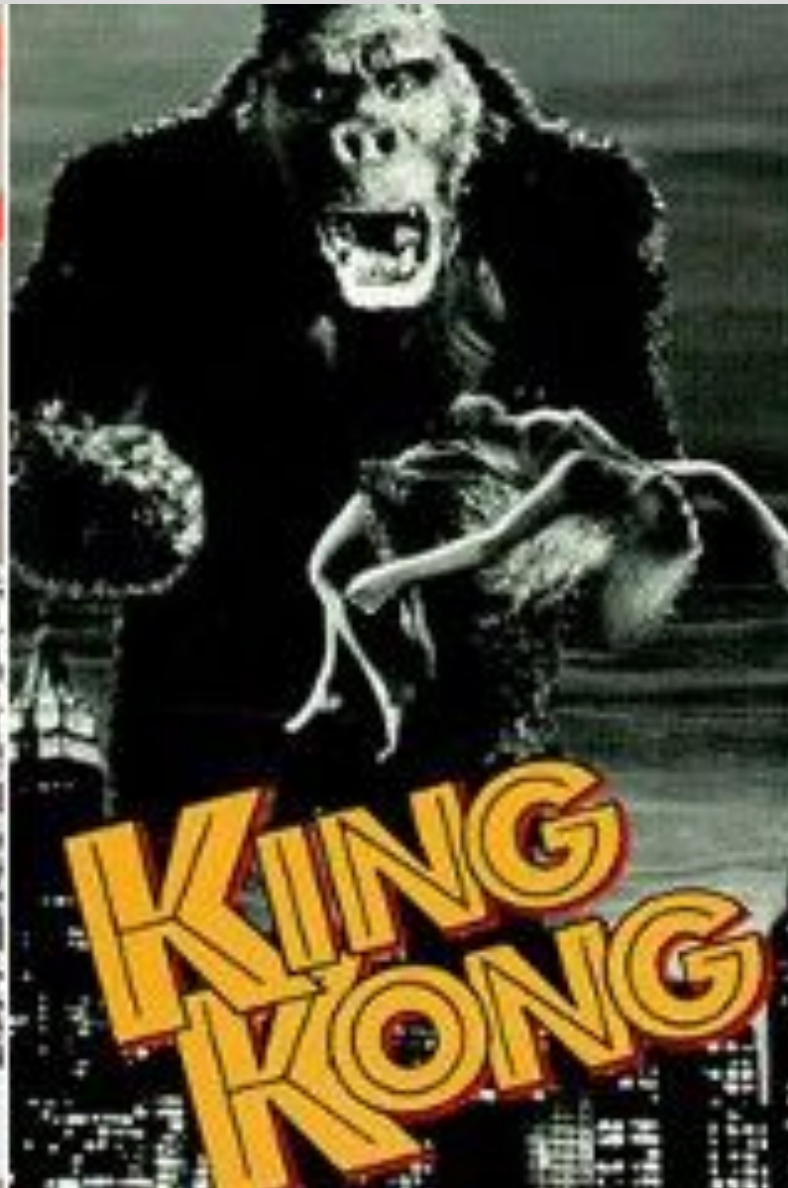


CODED LANGUAGE:

MICROAGGRESSIONS OR RUDENESS?

- I don't feel supported.
- You scared me.
- I don't feel safe.
- She's so aggressive.
- He yelled at me.
- Just calm down.

Is this a **MICROAGGRESSION**?



ADDRESSING MICROAGGRESSIONS

ACTIVE VOICE: VERIFY & RESPECTFULLY CHALLENGE

- ❑ **Observe:** Describe clearly and succinctly what you see happening.
- ❑ **Think:** State what you think about it.
- ❑ **Feel:** Express your feelings about the situation.
- ❑ **Desire:** Assert what you would like to happen.

ADDRESSING MICROAGGRESSIONS

ACTIVE VOICE: VERIFY & RESPECTFULLY CHALLENGE

- ❑ “What I heard was... is that what you meant?”
- ❑ “I do not understand what you are saying, can you say it another way.”



MICROAGGRESSIONS IN OUR SCHOOLS

From OVERT

To COVERT



MICROAGGRESSIONS IN OUR SCHOOLS

“...school patterns serve to maintain and perpetuate racial inequality in education. This occurs as well-meaning teachers and administrators tend to hold lower academic expectations for students of color; engage in racially biased discipline patterns; employ alienating curricula; and fail to address racial issues in meaningful ways when they surface in classrooms.”

Delila Owens, Dana Matthews, Christina Michelle Woloch, Achievement in Urban Schools, Strengthening School Counselor Advocacy and Practice for Important Populations and Difficult Topics, 10.4018/978-1-7998-7319-8.ch001, (1-18), (2021).

MICROAGGRESSIONS IN OUR SCHOOLS



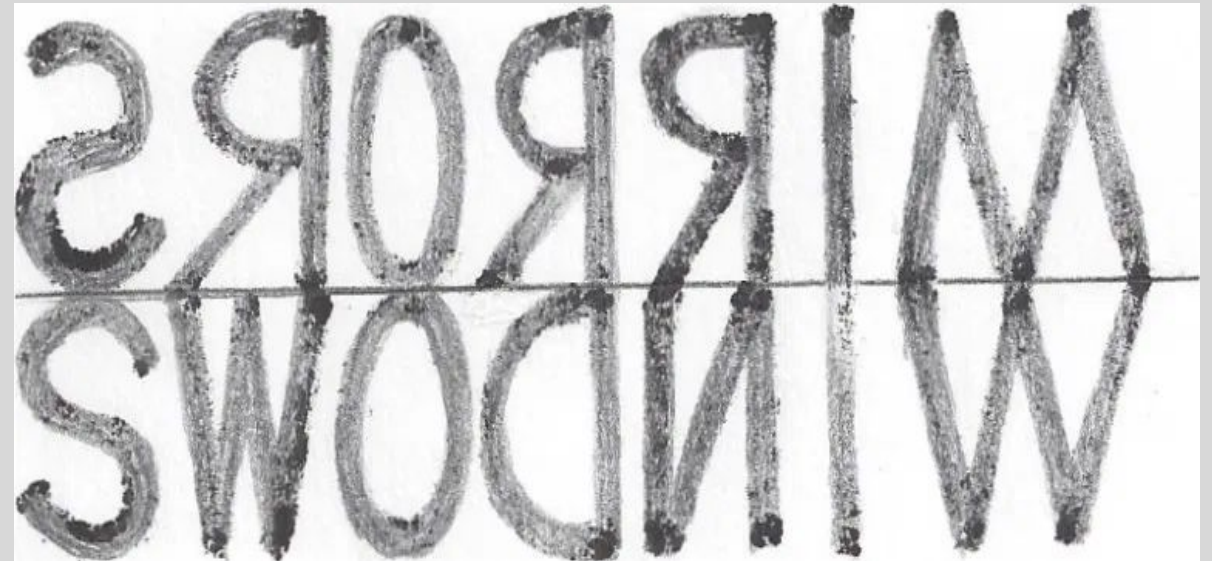
Microaggressions are the interactive form of implicit bias and in schools can manifest through low expectations for academic performance, poor assumptions of teachers regarding students' abilities, denied access to rigorous curriculum, and missed opportunities for advancement.

“When teachers frame student differences as deficits rather than as assets, a **microaggression is ignited** for the student” (Zaretta Hammond, 2015).

ADDRESSING MICROAGGRESSIONS

INTROSPECTION & SELF-AWARENESS

- Examine one's personal beliefs, values, attitudes, and perceptions.
- What experiences have shaped their personal narrative or worldview?
- How have those experiences influenced their interactions with others?



“While it is equally as important for individuals to be aware of their own blind spots and stereotypes and how these impact behaviors and decision-making, unconscious bias training and diversity and inclusion workshops should also address these systemic and structural issues that are insidious and allow bias to manifest at a greater level.”

**Systemic and
Structural
Issues -
sometimes
referred to as
Institutionalized
Racism**



THANK YOU!

RESOURCES

Society for Human Resource Management

<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/hr-qa/pages/resources-articles-workplace-bias.aspx>

A Look at Implicit Bias and Microaggressions

A primer on the impact of implicit biases in schools and how they can be expressed by students and faculty. By Todd Finley, March 25, 2019

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/look-implicit-bias-and-microaggressions>

Implicit Bias Module Series @ KIRWAN INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF RACE AND ETHNICITY

<http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/implicit-bias-training/>