

EXPERIENCING AND WITNESSING MICROAGGRESSIONS BY
HISPANIC MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

By Aaron Harris

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ABSTRACT

EXPERIENCING AND WITNESSING MICROAGGRESSIONS BY
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Racial microaggressions are brief intentional or unintentional verbal and non-verbal behavioral actions that are hostile, derogatory, or negative racial putdowns toward people of color. The purpose of this study was to understand if middle school students have experienced or witnessed microaggressions at school and in the classroom. In this study, six middle school students, three in 7th grade and three in 8th grade, who may have experienced or witnessed microaggressions were interviewed by the researcher. The students answered six interview questions regarding experiencing and witnessing microaggressions at school. The data were analyzed thoroughly using qualitative data analysis in order to determine if students had witnessed or experienced the following microaggressions: microassaults (discrimination), microinsults (insensitivity), and microinvalidations (nullification of experience). The data from the study determined that the study participants have not experienced or witnessed all three types of microaggressions. While the data revealed that students reported instances of experiencing and witnessing microaggressions, some types of microaggressions are more prevalent with students than others, such as microassaults and microinvalidations. While not a focus of the study, it is important to note that student participants reported witnessing microassault microaggression incidents outside of the school.

Keywords: Microaggressions, Microassaults, Microinsults, Microinvalidations

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DEDICATION

This case study is dedicated to my wife, Tamela, who has always been a supportive partner in life and throughout my doctoral journey. Your encouragement has truly made a difference in my studies while I also navigated the challenges of life. Having someone who believes in me and there to offer a helping hand when needed has boosted my confidence and overall well-being. This study is dedicated to everyone who has touched my life and career by providing me with the experiences and opportunities to become a successful K-12 administrator. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my parents, James and Joyce, for setting a foundation and serving as role models, mentors, defining my skills and talents, and ultimately instilling the self-discipline and wisdom needed to lead in today's society. Life is forever changing and tomorrow is not promised, but your guidance has always been a constant. My road and travels have not been easy as this has been an arduous task, but you have given me the strength and courage to prosper throughout the journey. I will never forget home, Gary, Indiana as this is where the seed germinated and my roots began to grow.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In 2019, 7% of students aged 12–18 reported through the School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey being the target of hate-related words and 45% of Black and Hispanic students reported seeing hate-related graffiti at school during the school year as shown in Table 1 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). The NCES (2019, p. 3) reported race as the most frequently reported instance of hate related words. As found in Table 1, which shows the percentage of students ages 12–18 who reported being called hate-related words and seeing hate-related graffiti at school during the school year, 7.3% of Blacks, 6.3% of Hispanics reported being called hate related words and 24% and 21.8% respectively saw hate-related graffiti.

Because of the work Sue (2020) did, being called or seeing hate-related words are forms of microassaults where the perpetrator feels free to engage in the behavior because their actions are private and concealed and as such this an area should be studied (Sue, 2020). These brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental acts, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate unwarranted racial slights and insults to the target person or group are called racial microaggressions and have caused racial tensions among ethnicities (Sue et al., 2007). Racial microaggressions in schools have effects on students from all ethnic groups (Allen et al., 2013). African American and Hispanic/Latino students report higher instances of workplace and school microaggressions (Forrest-Bank & Jenson 2015). In this case study, the conceptual framework will help educators become aware of and identify microaggressions used against student targets, the targets response to the microaggression, and the impact of the microaggression on the target. The conceptual framework will evolve throughout the study until the findings emerge.

Table 1

2019 Percent of Students Self-Reporting Being Called Hate Words and Seeing Hate Related Graffiti by Race/Ethnicity and Type of School

	Hate-Related Words	Hate-Related Graffiti
Race/Ethnicity		
White	6.1	24.0
Black	7.3	24.8
Hispanic	6.4	21.0
Asian	4.8	14.6
Pacific Islander	‡	‡
American Indian/Alaska Native	‡	27.81
Two or more Races	11.4	35.0
Type of School		
Public	6.6	24.6
Private	3.8	6.5

Note. ‡=Reporting standards not met. Either there are too few cases for a reliable estimate or the coefficient of variation (CV) is 50% or greater. (NCES, 2019, p. 57)

Background of the Study

According to Sue et al. (2019), one must disrupt and dismantle microaggressions because of the immense harm inflicted on individuals as a result of prejudice and discrimination. Bias and discrimination often goes unchallenged as the actions of the perpetrator are disguised in ways that hide the message and intent to portray or cause one to believe that the actions are harmless and insignificant (Sue et al., 2019). Latina/o Americans report significantly higher discriminatory experiences than their White counterparts such as being treated with disrespect, considered less intelligent, or having teachers discourage them from further education (Sue et al., 2019). A person's words can have serious effects on an individual's sense of belonging and self-efficacy

(Harrison & Tanner, 2018). One must remain cognizant of their own conscious and unconscious biases, and language related to them, to know that it may have a negative impact on someone by way of language through microaggressions (Harrison & Tanner, 2018). The behaviors of the perpetrator are justified if others remain inactive and do nothing and remain passive (Sue et al., 2019).

Chapter 1 will provide a practical understanding of the problem statement, purpose of the study, and the research questions that will drive the study; thus, the reader will gain a working knowledge of the background need and all components that will drive this study. The terms used throughout the study will be defined as well as the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations that bound the scope of the study will also be presented.

Statement of the Problem

Racial microaggressions are the everyday slights, insults, invalidations, and offensive behaviors experienced by minorities through daily interactions with White Americans who may or may not be aware of their behaviors (Sue et al., 2007). For too long, minorities have accepted and become passive towards dismantling microaggressions (Sue, et al., 2019). In 2002, as an effort to educate students and reduce racial tensions within Arizona schools, the Arizona Board of Education created a Mexican American Studies program to teach Mexican American students about race and the harmful effects of racism, the positive impacts students can make, and to reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions (Romero, 2012). Hispanic students who were enrolled in the program achieved lower suspension and expulsion rates, higher graduation rates, and more students matriculated through college (Romero, 2012). House Bill 2281 was introduced to eliminate the Mexican American Studies program on the premise that it promoted resentment towards White people (Romero, 2012). The passing of the bill has left the state void

of required minority teaching practices that promote minorities and aid in the reduction of racial tensions (Romero, 2012).

Failing social structures were often attributed to mans' own desires to win rather than those created by society such as cheating to advance or an any means necessary approach to win rather than working through the prescribed modes of an activity (Merton, 1938). Sue et al. (2019) questioned what allies, bystanders, and those targeted by microaggressions can do to disrupt microaggressions that stem from programs, procedures, practices, and societal polices. Overt forms of racism are now less common as people of color are faced with less recognizable acts of microaggressions (Forrest-Bank & Jenson, 2015). Microaggression begins with the aggressor saying something that can be viewed as biased (Byrd, 2018). This has led the researcher to understand the historical perspective of microaggressions. In this case, the student participant experiences will be analyzed as they will serve as the catalyst for understanding the experiences of those who have experienced or witnessed microaggressions in the classroom and in school. According to Sue (2017), understanding microaggressions is the study of powerful emotions, subjective experiences, biases, values, and beliefs, as well as especially the pain and suffering of oppression (p. 171).

Purpose of the Study

Racial discrimination may occur in overt, tragic, violent events that convey messages of hatred, but in modern culture, racial discrimination occurs in covert, subtle ways called microaggressions (Forrest-Bank & Cuellar, 2018). Black and Hispanic/Latino students report higher instances of workplace and school forms of microaggressions (Forrest-Bank & Jenson 2015). While race has no biological basis, it has tremendous social implications (Kempf, 2020). Minority students' experience more interpersonal microaggressions and experience higher

instances of avoidance because of their ethnicity. They experience microaggressions that are related to the perceptions of their culture. The unwelcoming system of structural racism derives from privilege and advantage that are far deeper than their interactions with people of color (Thomann & Suyemoto, 2018).

The ultimate purpose of this study is to

1. understand the historical analysis of microaggressions,
2. understand the traditional public middle school Hispanic students' experiences of microaggressions in school,
3. to explore student interactions and relations in the school to determine whether or not they have been targets of macroaggressions.

The perceptions and experiences of six middle school students who may have experienced instances of microaggressions on their campus will be explored in order to explore student interactions and relations in the school to determine whether or not they have been targets of macroaggressions.

The research questions for this study will address how students perceive and experience microaggressions. As a result of the impacts of microaggressions on minorities through prejudice and discrimination, the time is now to end microaggressions (Sue et al., 2019). Ignoring the problem and being complacent has proven to be ineffective (Sue et al., 2019).

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this qualitative study:

1. In a predominantly Hispanic middle school, what microaggressions have Hispanic 7th and 8th grade students experienced?

2. In a predominantly Hispanic middle school, what microaggressions have Hispanic 7th and 8th grade students witnessed to others?

Significance of the Study

Race relations in American have escalated since the death of George Floyd in 2020 as this and similar events brought to the forefront impacts of systematic racism and the deep wounds of systemic racism that exist in America (Moody-Ramirez et al., 2021). Schools can create environments where minority students can have a sense of belonging (Gray et al., 2020). Gray et al. (2020) believed that schools should create environments centered on student experiences, cultural strengths, and citizenship practices in order for students to view schools as places where students can have the opportunity to establish a sense of belonging. Teachers play an important role as the interactions between the teacher and their students have a significant influence on the students' overall well-being in the classroom (Allen et al., 2013).

This case study will aid classroom teachers and school leaders in examining their perceptions of student classroom interactions and how they diffuse microaggressions among students that occur in middle schools. Although not conducted specifically with Hispanic students, Weng and Gray (2018) determined in their study that schools can create environments where Black (minority) students can have a sense of belonging. Weng and Gray (2018) found that schools should create environments that promote these students' sense of belonging centered on their experiences, cultural strengths, and citizenship practices, in order for them to view schools as places that matter. Teachers play an important role as the interactions between the teacher and their students have a significant influence on the students' overall well-being in the classroom (Allen et al., 2013).

The case study will examine various diverse ethnic groups' interactions toward each other through the community established from within schools. Social change occurs when all stakeholders, including students, classroom teachers, and site and district administrators, acknowledge and are aware of the microaggressions that exist. The concerted effort of all stakeholders will ultimately lead to improved relationships among students and a district-wide focus on the way administrators, students, and teachers perceive student interactions and if their behaviors will reduce racial tensions. The goal of the research is to determine whether or not Hispanic students have witnessed or experienced microaggressions at school and in the classroom.

Definitions of Terms

Critical Race Theory (CRT): the study and transforming of the relationship among race, racism, and power (Delgado et al., 2017).

Microaggressions: brief intentional or unintentional verbal, behavioral, or environmental actions that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color (Sue et al., 2007).

Microassaults: are conscious, deliberate, and either subtle or explicit racial, gender, or sexual-orientation biased attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors that are communicated to marginalized groups through environmental cues, verbalizations, or behaviors (Sue, 2010).

Microinsults: characterized by interpersonal or environmental communications that convey stereotypes, rudeness, and insensitivity toward a person's racial, gender, or sexual orientation, heritage, or identity (Sue, 2010).

Microinterventions: a framework of concrete actions to combat microaggressions (Sue et al., 2019).

Microinvalidations: characterized by communications or environmental cues that invalidate, exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of certain groups, such as people of color, women, and LGBTs (Sue, 2010).

Acronyms Used

CRT: Critical Race Theory

ESEA: Elementary and Secondary Education Act

ESSA: Every Student Succeeds Act

MRP: Microaggression Research Project

Limitations

The findings of this case study are not intended to represent the impacts on all minority middle school students, only Hispanic students. The researcher will not study any motive as to why the aggressor performs microaggressions against the target(s). The case study will not measure whether or not teacher relationships with students diffuse tensions among students and improve both classroom and school climate. Impacts of the three types of microaggressions (microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation) on race and gender will not be analyzed due to time constraints. Time also limits the researcher's ability to study the impacts on student academic achievement, dropout rates, and graduation rates.

Delimitations

The scope of this case study was framed and limited to 7th and 8th grade Hispanic students at a middle school in Arizona to be referred to as Ashley Middle School. The district is comprised of 11 schools, but only three contain grades six through eight. Only one site was selected for this study, thus the study was constrained to middle school Hispanic students at the

selected research site who have experienced a microaggression. The researcher is currently an administrator within the study school district to be referred to as the Burks School District.

The purpose of the study is to understand middle school students' experiences with microaggressions at school and in the classroom. The case study will not investigate the impacts of school programming that addresses diversity, equity, and inclusion, or teacher lesson pedagogy which could all potentially change the dynamics of student interactions and their experiences with microaggressions.

Summary

In summary, this case study will examine various microaggressions experienced or witnessed by middle school students and the nature of their exposure to the three types of microaggressions. Chapter 2 provides the conceptual framework for the case study. The conceptual framework will derive from theory included in the literature review (Collins & Stockton, 2018). The types of microaggressions will be discussed as well as how the target responds to and the impact of the microaggression. Coping mechanisms will also be discussed. There is a growing amount of research that focuses on the types of microaggressions; however, there is a lack of research on the Hispanic middle school student. The case study findings will inform schools of microaggressions experienced or witnessed in the classroom and at school by middle school students. By not addressing the occurrences of microaggressions in schools, institutionalized racism grows and the impacts of microaggressions will negatively affect students of color as avoidance by school leaders disparages marginalized students.

Organization of Study

Chapter 1 provides the framework for the study through the explanation of the problem, purpose of the study, and how the problem will be studied in a systematic way. In addition, this

study is organized into four more chapters. Chapter Two will encompass the foundational research done using a literature review. Chapter Three will explain the methodology, research design, population sample, instrumentation used, informed consent, and data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter Four will analyze the data collected and present findings in tables and narrative descriptions. Chapter Five will provide a summary of the findings, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review for this case study begins with a historical overview of microaggressions. An in-depth review of the literature was conducted on microaggressions in schools. In the quest to explore microaggressions, it was found that there was a limited amount of research that exists on middle school Hispanic student experiences, instead most of it focuses on it in higher education. This chapter includes the historical origins of microaggressions and some of the most recent studies. The conceptual framework for the problem and the justification for investigation that defines microaggressions, a taxonomy of microaggressions, victim responses, and the impacts on marginalized groups will also be presented. In this case study, the researcher provides a conceptual framework. The literature review provides an in-depth understanding of microaggressions, but indicates a need for more research on the impacts of middle school minority students in order to align the taxonomy properly. Ashburn-Nardo et al. (2008), Czopp et al. (2012), and Nadal 2013 as cited in Byrd (2018) stated that the person targeted is uncertain about how to respond when experiencing a microaggression. Ashburn-Nardo et al. (2008) identified five barriers responding to discrimination:

1. interpreting the incident as discrimination;
2. deciding whether it is serious enough to warrant a response;
3. taking responsibility for confronting;
4. deciding on a strategy; and
5. responding (as cited in Byrd, 2018, p. 2).

Byrd (2018) believed this is so because microaggressions are often difficult to recognize because they sometimes take the form of a joke or are unintentional in nature. In addition, the person

targeted may also be reluctant to address the microaggression to avoid further discrimination or consequences for reporting any actions.

Northern Arizona University's Cline Library, Google Scholar, and ProQuest Central, were search engines used to find peer reviewed literature for the literature review. Terms and phrases found most often in the literature relevant to the study include: *microaggressions*, *self-efficacy*, *minority student perceptions*, *racism in schools*, *teacher perceptions of minority students*. After reviewing the literature, the conceptual framework began to arise and is summarized next in the literature review.

Historical Perspectives of Microaggressions

Minority ethnic groups are a part of a distinct culture in the United States. Although not included in the study it is important to note that African Americans were not classified as citizens of America with full rights within the United States Constitution until 1865 (Blackwell, 1975). African Americans were subjected to legally fighting for their constitutional rights years after protection was granted (Blackwell, 1975). Black people were not afforded their full citizenship and resulted in their unification to uphold values and build strong united communities (Williams, 2020). Black people were required to form their own churches, schools, financial plans, government, and means of recreation (Blackwell, 1975). However, the 1954 landmark case, *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled separate was not equal and as a result, Black students were integrated with non-Black students (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954).

Prior to *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, *Mendez v. Westminster in 1946* set the precedent for school racial discrimination (Segregation in Schools, 1946). The Mendez ruling found that it was a violation of California law to require Mexican students attend schools separate from Whites (Segregation in Schools, 1946). School districts and families appealed the

initial decision to exclude arguing that the federal courts could not mandate which schools Mexican students could attend (Segregation in Schools, 1946). Isom- Scott (2020) stated, “build the wall” agendas are politically active thus placing the United States in a new era of “Juan Crow” characterized by mass criminalization, incarceration, and deportation of Latinxs (p. 21).

Students of color have been subjected to institutionalized racism as it contradicts their history and interests (Kohli et al., 2017). Racism was defined as a mental illness that is a false belief of inferiority over any person who is of dark skin color (Pierce, 1970). Racism has become a widespread national problem that will be costly to eradicate (Pierce, 1970). Pierce (1970), stated that racism was a contagious disease as there may not have existed a white or black man who had not experienced operating from a line drawn against a black man. Unfortunately, even the most liberal non-conforming white man probably took advantage of the hopeless black man (Pierce, 1970). Pierce (1970) contended that the offensive mechanism against the inferior would eventually lead to the person being ignored, terrorized, and minimized. A summation of offenses against inferior-led schools to fail as the education system produced generation of blacks who accepted the abuse while becoming second hand citizens (Pierce, 1970).

Before the ruling of this landmark case, K–12 schools were segregated and African American students were taught and learned with limited resources and a standardized curriculum (Kohli et al., 2017). Nearly 10 years later, federal legislation, the 1965 *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), was passed that disbanded a national curriculum allowing schools the freedom to create curricula suitable for all students. The establishment of the ESEA also provided funding for the purchase of modern materials for student usage, resources to support the educational program, and resources for teacher professional development. The ESEA (1965), which calls for reauthorization every five years, became the NCLB in 2001 under the

presidency of George W. Bush, Jr., and then reauthorized as the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) under the Obama Administration (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). The original ESEA as well as the NCLB does not specify any considerations for implementing a multicultural education curriculum in the classroom to address the needs of minority students.

Throughout the decades since the historic integration case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), White supremacy still holds whiteness as the default standard to compare all ethnicities which all other groups (Gooding & Mehrotra (2021). Hispanics are a large and diverse population representing nearly 60 million or one fifth of the population in America (Antman, 2022). The term Hispanic derives from the word Hispania and attempts to blend language and origin to represent people from all Spanish speaking countries (Salinas, 2020). The classification gender neutral Latinx is understood as complementary to Hispanic and Latino (Mora et al., 2021). The largest age group within the Latinx population is under the age of 18 as a result of how recent the identification was created also a young one, with the largest group of Latinx under the age of 18 (Mora et al., 2021). Although no date has been given for the inclusion of this classification or when it was first used, it will continue to evolve (Salinas, 2020). Salinas (2020) found that the term may be more of a fad since it has not been discomfort among Latin American people. Salinas (2020) noted that people create terms and labels to express their own realities. The word is relevant to microaggressions because most participants in the Salinas (2020) study, believe that the term is intended to be all inclusive of all people of Latin American origin and descent and those who do not identify as Latina or Latino.

The United States government in its efforts to count people have defined and classified Mexican Americans and these definitions have changed significantly over the years (Ortiz & Telles, 2012). Mexican Americans through classification were asked about being Mexican or

Hispanic through census collection since 1980 (Ortiz & Telles, 2012). According to Antman (2022), Hispanics come from diverse backgrounds and origins and face distinct challenges related to immigration status, discrimination, social factors, and economic vulnerabilities (p. 2). Hispanics have multidimensional identities and self-identification and heritage is important to preserve, but trying to adequately understand the population is difficult due to the lack of clarity in survey objectives that related to ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Antman, 2022). Antman (2022) believes clearly defined objectives will help policymakers make better decision regarding the many challenges Hispanics face in America.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is useful in understanding hostile racial climates in schools (Kohli, 2018). CRT can also be used as a method for communicating the experiences and realities of those effected by racism (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Racism is embedded in society and has negatively impacted all minority ethnicities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

While CRT is part of a much larger research tradition of investigating race and racism, which includes that done by W. E. B. Du Bois and others, CRT distinguishes itself as an approach that originated within legal studies (in part building from and responding to critical legal studies); aims to be a vehicle for social and political change; has been adopted across many career fields, including perhaps most notably education; and, in certain contexts, has come to be the umbrella term for studies of race and racism generally (De La Garza & Ono, 2016, p. 1).

In qualitative research, CRT communicates the experiences and realities of those effected by racism by challenging it directly (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT contends that race is a social, historical construct, rather than an objective truth (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). CRT holds racism is a permanent part of American society and a major component of this project

(Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). CRT brings to light the oppressive realities of people of color through research analysis (Huber, 2009). CRT is utilized in educational qualitative research studies to document the ways oppressive systems impact minority ethnicities (Huber, 2009). Historically, the majority of research studies were conducted by white male scholars and has led to limited perspectives that justify white superiority (Huber, 2009). As a result of the limited perspectives, new theories need to be developed in order to document and discuss the phenomena related to race (Huber, 2009).

Critical Race Theory scholars have developed five tenets to guide CRT research (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). These include:

1. **Centrality of Race and Racism.** All CRT research within education must centralize race and racism, including intersections with other forms of subordination such as gender, class, and citizenship.
2. **Challenging the Dominant Perspective.** CRT research works to challenge to dominant narratives and re-center marginalized perspectives.
3. **Commitment to Social Justice.** CRT research must always be motivated by a social justice agenda.
4. **Valuing Experiential Knowledge.** CRT builds on the oral traditions of many indigenous Communities of Color around the world. CRT research centers the narratives of People of Color when attempting to understand social inequality.
5. **Being Interdisciplinary.** CRT scholars believe that the world is multi-dimensional, and similarly research about the world should reflect multiple perspectives.

(Solórzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 312)

The CRT framework and analysis works towards eliminating racism by understanding how ethnicities experience subordination through forms of oppression (Huber, 2009).

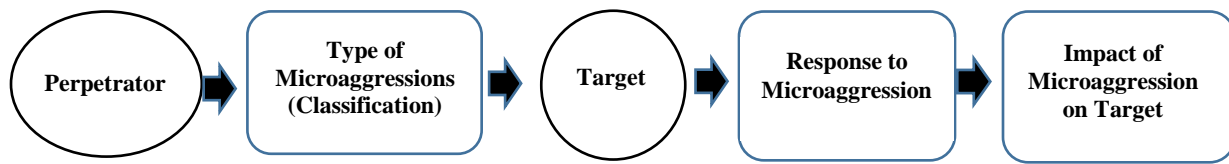
Conceptual Framework

The researcher's conceptual framework will include the microaggression classifications created by Sue (2010). The classifications of microaggression further defines the work of Pierce (1974) through the taxonomy that classifies the varying degrees of racial, gender, and sexual orientated microaggressions by awareness and how the user intended to use them in behavioral and environmental context. The conceptual framework functions as the map for how the literature flows in the study (Collins & Stockton, 2018).

The conceptual framework for this qualitative case study is adapted from the Kohli and Solórzano (2012) working model to understand microaggressions and will lead to a detailed analysis of the research problem by interviewing and observing participants to understand microaggressions through the lens of Hispanic middle school students in order to address microaggressions and promote a sense of belonging for all students. Figure 1 provides the pattern found in Microaggression. First, the perpetrator exhibits racial microaggression against a target. Byrd (2018) used the term target for whom the microaggression is directed to, aggressor who uses the microaggression, and bystander who witnesses the act, but warns that a bystander could be considered the target. This may be something said to or an act against the target. Second, the target may or may not respond to the microaggression using a microintervention. Last, the impact of the microaggression may cause depression or have other impacts on the target's health.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



The researcher will obtain data from the case study in to order to understand microaggressions, the participants' responses to microaggressions, and to determine the impact, if any microaggressions have on minority youth in the urban school district. The goal of the research is to create cultural awareness and reduce microaggressions for all stakeholders within learning environments while creating more productive relationships for all students. The research study will shed light on the impacts of microaggressions on students by creating ways to neutralize individuals from using microaggressions as they are forms of prejudice and racism used against members of marginalized groups. Social justice will prevail through increased harmony throughout schools and classroom learning environment while advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Microaggressions

Throughout the literature, racial tensions date far back to slavery in effort to make Whites dominance over African Americans through an element of critical race theory called microaggressions (Williams, 2020). Microaggressions are viewed as small acts of racism that may or may not be intentional (Williams, 2020). Chester Pierce (1970), an African American psychiatrist, first defined the term microaggressions to explain the treatment experienced by blacks in the 1960s. These acts steamed from overt interactions between blacks and whites and were viewed as putdowns (Pierce, 1970). Microaggression differs greatly from a macroaggression as it can be classified as a subtle blow as opposed to a lynching (Pierce, 1970).

The study of offensive behavior and how a person is trained deliberately to become offensive was of great concern (Pierce, 1970). Pierce (1970) studied the creation of an offensive line while he served as a freshman football coach at Harvard University. Through this lens, one could deduct how a young child could be raised to become a bigot (Pierce, 1970). Player formations were studied to determine advantages as a football coach teaches his players to win while society has an unrelenting approach in teaching white youth to utilize offensive mechanisms (Pierce, 1970).

These brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental acts, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate unwarranted racial slights and insults to the target person or group are called racial microaggressions and have caused racial tensions among ethnicities (Sue et al., (2007). Overt forms of racism are now less common as people of color are faced with less recognizable acts of microaggressions (Forrest-Bank & Jenson 2015).

Microaggression begins with the aggressor saying something that can be interpreted as biased (Byrd, 2018). Those who engage in microaggressions are usually unaware of their behavior when they interact with minorities (Sue et al., 2007). Perpetrators of microaggressions are often unaware that they engage in such communications when they interact with racial/ethnic minorities (Sue et al., 2007). Despite the known impacts of microaggressions, society is not in need of any new laws but must work to limit the behaviors of the perpetrators between the interactions of minority and non-minority citizens (Pierce, 1970).

Sue et al. (2007) presented nine categories with associated themes and hidden messages (see Table 2) to show that microaggressions are environmental and are not just limited to human contact. Understanding microaggressions is difficult as the research is developing and covert racism is omitted from research (Sue, et al., 2007. If a researcher omits microaggressions, it

conveys the message to look the other way as they are not valid or as important as overt actions that can be proven (Sue et. at., 2007). For the purpose of the current study, the researcher will be focusing on three of these aspects: #2 - Ascription of Intelligence, #4 - Criminality – Assumption of Criminal Status, and #7 - Pathologizing Cultural Values/ Communication Styles because of student referral incident data at the study school to be referred to as Ashley Middle School (AMS).

Table 2

Categories of Microaggressions

Theme	Microaggression	Message
1. <i>Alien in Own Land</i> When Asian Americans and Latino Americans are assumed to be foreign-born	“Where are you from?” “Where were you born?” “You speak good English.” A person asking an Asian American to teach them words in their native language.	You are not American You are a foreigner
2. <i>Ascription of Intelligence</i> Assigning intelligence to a person of color on the basis of their race.	“You are a credit to your race.” “You are so articulate.” Asking an Asian person to help with a Math or Science problem.	People of color are generally not as intelligent as Whites. It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent. All Asians are intelligent and good in Math/Sciences.
3. <i>Color Blindness</i> Statements that indicate that a White person does not want to acknowledge race	“When I look at you, I don’t see color.” “America is a melting pot.” “There is only one race, the human race.”	Denying a person of color’s racial/ethnic experiences. Assimilate/acculturate to the dominant culture. Denying the individual as a racial/cultural being.
4. <i>Criminality – Assumption of Criminal Status</i> A person of color is presumed to be dangerous, criminal, or deviant on the basis of their race.	A White man or woman clutching their purse or checking their wallet as a Black or Latino approaches or passes. A store owner following a customer of color around the store. A White person waits to ride the next elevator when a person of color is on it.	You are a criminal. You are going to steal/You are poor/You do not belong/You are dangerous.

Table 2 (continued)

Theme	Microaggression	Message
<p>5. <i>Denial of Individual Racism</i> A statement made when Whites deny their racial biases</p>	<p>"I'm not a racist. I have several Black friends." "As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority."</p>	<p>I am immune to races because I have friends of color. Your racial oppression is no different than my gender oppression. I can't be racist. I'm like you.</p>
<p>6. <i>Myth of Meritocracy</i> Statements which assert that race does not play a role in life successes</p>	<p>"I believe the most qualified person should get the job." "Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough."</p>	<p>People of color are given extra unfair benefits because of their race. People of color are lazy and/or incompetent and need to work harder.</p>
<p>7. <i>Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communication Styles</i> The notion that the values and communication styles of the dominant/White culture are ideal</p>	<p>Asking a Black person: "Why do you have to be so loud/animated? Just calm down." To an Asian or Latino person: "Why are you so quiet? We want to know what you think. Be more verbal. Speak up more." Dismissing an individual who brings up race/culture in work/school setting.</p>	<p>Assimilate to dominant culture. Leave your cultural baggage outside.</p>
<p>8. <i>Second-Class Citizen</i> Occurs when a White person is given preferential treatment as a consumer over a person of color</p>	<p>Person of color mistaken for a service worker Having a taxi cab pass a person of color and pick up a White passenger Being ignored at a store counter as attention is given to the White customer behind you "You people . . ."</p>	<p>People of color are servants to Whites. They couldn't possibly occupy high-status positions. You are likely to cause trouble and/or travel to a dangerous neighborhood. Whites are more valued customers than people of color. You don't belong. You are a lesser being.</p>
<p>9. <i>Environmental microaggressions</i> Macro-level microaggressions, which are more apparent on systemic and environmental levels</p>	<p>A college or university with buildings that are all named after White heterosexual upper class males Television shows and movies that feature predominantly White people, without representation of people of color Overcrowding of public schools in communities of color Overabundance of liquor stores in communities of color</p>	<p>You don't belong/You won't succeed here. There is only so far you can go. You are an outsider/You don't exist. People of color don't/shouldn't value education. People of color are deviant.</p>

(Sue et al., 2007, p. 276)

Henfield's (2011) study provided an in-depth discernment of minority middle school students understanding of racial microaggressions. The study takes place in a predominately white middle school setting and offered evidence of the effects of microaggressions; thus, leading the way to conduct research at the high school level in order to suggest evidence of the effects of microaggressive acts. Data were analyzed from the participants' experiences using two questions from a broad approach in the first question to a more focused approach in the second question:

1. What is it like to be a black student in a predominately white school?
2. I notice that you only sit by Black students at lunch, why?

The three themes that surfaced from the Henfield (2011) study were compared with the Sue et al (2007) findings during data analysis and were found to have similarities them. From the participant interviews, the criminality theme was the most common theme as they believed that they were perceived as criminals (Henfield, 2011); one student reported feeling like a second-class citizen. One participant reported feeling perceived by their peers as gangbangers and also having the ability to excel in sports (Henfield, 2011). For example, Hispanics were targeted because of their immigration status and African Americans through their perceived violent behaviors (Henfield, 2011). While two students reported not experiencing a feeling intellectually inferior; however, Black students may mask their intelligence in fear of being a traitor of their race (Henfield, 2011).

In the Forrest-Bank & Jenson (2015) study, Black and Hispanic/Latino students reported higher instances of workplace and school forms of microaggressions. Black students reported that they experienced more interpersonal microaggressions and higher instances of avoidance because of their ethnicity (Forrest-Bank & Jenson, 2015). The study is relevant because it started

with 18-year-old young adults who had been recently enrolled in high school and illustrated the effects of microaggressions after high school; thus, the need to address it as students matriculate throughout their K-12 experience. The participants shared how they experienced microaggressions that were related to the perceptions of their culture.

Williams et al., (2020) utilized focus groups to study Black students' experiences with microaggressions to validate the taxonomies created by the Sue et al. (2007) study in order for one to clearly identify microaggressions, the harmful effects, and how the experiences of the participants aligned or differed from the original types of microaggressions. Williams et al. (2020) required each focus group to respond to specific prompts:

- What examples of microaggressions have occurred in your life?
- What examples of microaggressions have you witnessed or heard about in friends, family or others in your life?
- Are there certain situations where you are more likely to experience a microaggression? What do you do?
- How do you cope? (p. 3)

The purpose of the Williams et al. (2020) study was to understand the experiences of those targeted by microaggressions. As schools move towards creating ways to reduce racial microaggressions, the development of effective tools for the reduction of racial microaggressions, taxonomies must be based created based on experience rather logic in order to accurately identify microaggressions and the associated impact. Williams et al. (2020) sought to clearly explain the experiences of those targeted by microaggressions. Participants reported being the victim of microaggressions on campus and how they caused confusion and distress (Williams et al., 2020).

Williams et al. (2020) study found 15 themes of microaggressions that are consistent with the original taxonomy created by Sue et al. (2007) in Table 2. Williams et al. (2020) expanded the taxonomy to include new themes from their data and from other researchers. The following are new categories added: Connecting via Stereotypes, Exoticization and Eroticization, and Avoidance and Distancing. Lesser studied categories identified included Sue et al.'s Denial of Individual Racism, and new categories termed Reverse Racism Hostility, Connecting via Stereotypes, and Environmental Attacks. From the taxonomy (Table 2) created by Sue et al. (2007), "Alien in Own Land" is a category based on assumptions that the victim is not an American and that a non-white person is an immigrant and aligns to "Not a True Citizen in Table 3 (Williams et al., 2020) This type of microaggression was described by Latino/a Americans in the Williams et al. (2020) study. Students in the study questioned their experiences and did not immediately attribute the perpetrators actions to a racist or prejudice intent, but would change their stance after careful review to find or ascribe no intent (Williams et al., 2020).

In comparing the Sue et al. (2007) findings taxonomy, several categories were similar and some different. For example, no difference was noted with the Criminality - assumption of criminal status, but Connecting via Stereotypes (Table 3) was added as participants reported white students tried to connect using stereotypical behavior and speech and also racial jokes believing it would aide with acceptance (Williams et al., 2020). Williams et al. (2020) hoped the study would lead to more research in the area of microaggressions that would validate microaggressions thus leading perpetrators to explore their personal bias and limit negative outcomes.

Table 3*Williams (2020) Taxonomy of Microaggressions*

Category Name	Description
1. Not a True Citizen	When a question, statement, or behavior indicates that a person of color is not a real citizen or a meaningful part of our society because they are not white.
2. Racial Categorization & Sameness	When a person is compelled to disclose their racial group to enable others to attach pathological racial stereotypes to the person; includes the assumption that all people from a particular group are alike.
3. Assumptions About Intelligence, Competence, or Status	When behavior or statements are based on assumptions about a person's intelligence, competence, education, income, social status derived from racial stereotypes.
4. False Colorblindness/Invalidating Racial or Ethnic Identity	Expressing that individual's racial or ethnic identity should not be acknowledged, which can be invalidating for people who are proud of their identity or who have suffered because of it.
5. Criminality or Dangerousness	Demonstrating belief in stereotypes that people of color are dangerous, untrustworthy, likely to commit crimes or cause bodily harm.
6. Denial of Individual Racism	When a person tries to make a case that they are not biased, often by talking about anti-racist things they have done to deflect perceived scrutiny of their own behaviors.
7. Myth of Meritocracy/Race is Irrelevant for Success	When someone makes statements about success being rooted in personal efforts and denial of existence of racism or White privilege.
8. Reverse Racism Hostility	Expressions of jealousy or hostility surrounding the notion that people of color get unfair advantages and benefits due to their race.
9. Pathologizing Minority Culture or Appearance	When people criticize others based on perceived or real cultural differences in appearance, traditions, behaviors, or preferences.
10. Second Class Citizen/Ignored & Invisible	When people of color are treated with less respect, consideration, or care than is normally expected or customary. This may include being ignored or being unseen/invisible.
11. Connecting via Stereotypes	When a person tries to communicate or connect with a person through use of stereotyped speech or behavior, to be accepted or understood. Can include racist jokes and epitaphs as terms of endearment.
12. Exoticization and Eroticization	When a person of color is treated according to sexualized stereotypes or attention to differences that are characterized as exotic in some way.
13. Avoidance and Distancing	When people of color are avoided or measures are taken to prevent physical contact or close proximity.
14. Environmental Exclusion	When someone's racial identity is minimized or made insignificant through the exclusion of decorations, literature, or depictions of people that represent their racial group
15. Environmental Attacks	When decorations pose a known affront or insult to a person's cultural group, history, or heritage.

(Williams, 2020, p. 4)

Williams Advanced the Sue et al. (2007) Study

Williams et al. (2021) furthered the work of Pierce (1970) and Sue et al. (2007) as microaggressions continued to have adverse health impacts on minorities. Subtle forms of racism, such as microaggressions, can be difficult to identify, quantify, and rectify because of their nebulous and unnamed nature. Microaggressions vary in discriminatory action from unconscious slights to more gross overt actions; thus, the need to create a taxonomy that captures the emerging categories of microaggressions experienced by minorities (Williams et al., 2020). Microaggression studies have resulted in a taxonomic analysis that defines the microaggression, behavior of the perpetrator, and strategies for the victim to use as an attempt to disarm microaggressions (Williams et al., (2021). Since microaggressions are subtle and sometimes difficult to define, Williams et al. (2021) found the need to create a taxonomy (Table 4) that aligns with and advances the Sue et al. (2007) taxonomy as show in Table 2. Williams et al. (2021) expanded the work of microaggressions by Williams et al. (2020) in Table 3 by other researchers through an analysis of 32 published qualitative and quantitative taxonomies which has led to the revised taxonomy. For the purpose of the current study, the researcher will be focusing on three aspects: #3 - Assumptions About Intelligence, Competence, or Status, #5 - Criminality or Dangerousness, and #10 - Second Class Citizen/Ignored & Invisible, based on student incident data at the study school, Ashley Middle School (AMS).

The Gooding & Mehrotra (2021) study on social worker placement for Black, Indigenous, and people of color groups who have faced historical marginalization found that Mexican Americans have experienced the microaggression of being tokenized as stated in Table 4 #11 - Tokenism. Students participating in the study shared their indirect experiences of witnessing microaggressions and how they have been told that they are smarter than other

Mexicans and that they are making the country better (Good & Mehrotra, 2021). During the interviews, participants expressed concern of being hired as a token to show that the organization promotes diversity and equity and not for their individual talents (Gooding & Mehrotra, 2021).

Table 4

Williams (2021) Taxonomy of Microaggressions

Category Name	Description
1. Not a True Citizen	When a question, statement, or behavior indicates that a person of color is not a real citizen or a meaningful part of our society because they are not white.
2. Racial Categorization & Sameness	When a person is compelled to disclose their racial group to enable others to attach pathological racial stereotypes to the person; includes the assumption that all people from a particular group are alike.
3. Assumptions About Intelligence, Competence, or Status	When behavior or statements are based on assumptions about a person's intelligence, competence, education, income, social status derived from racial stereotypes.
4. False Colorblindness/Invalidating Racial or Ethnic Identity	Expressing that individual's racial or ethnic identity should not be acknowledged, which can be invalidating for people who are proud of their identity or who have suffered because of it.
5. Criminality or Dangerousness	Demonstrating belief in stereotypes that people of color are dangerous, untrustworthy, likely to commit crimes or cause bodily harm.
6. Denial of Individual Racism	When a person tries to make a case that they are not biased, often by talking about anti-racist things they have done to deflect perceived scrutiny of their own behaviors.
7. Myth of Meritocracy/Race is Irrelevant for Success	When someone makes statements about success being rooted in personal efforts and denial of existence of racism or White privilege.
8. Reverse Racism Hostility	Expressions of jealousy or hostility surrounding the notion that people of color get unfair advantages and benefits due to their race.
9. Pathologizing Minority Culture or Appearance	When people criticize others based on perceived or real cultural differences in appearance, traditions, behaviors, or preferences.
10. Second Class Citizen/ Ignored & Invisible	When people of color are treated with less respect, consideration, or care than is normally expected or customary. This may include being ignored or being unseen/invisible.
11. Tokenism	When a person is included simply to promote the illusion of inclusivity and not for the qualities or talents of the individual: expecting one to understand or speak for a whole ethnic group.
12. Connecting via Stereotypes	When a person tries to communicate or connect with a person through use of stereotyped speech or behavior, to be accepted or understood. Can include racist jokes and epithets as terms of endearment.

Table 4 (continued)

Category Name	Description
13. Exoticization and Eroticization	When a person of color is treated according to sexualized stereotypes or attention to differences that are characterized as exotic in some way.
14. Avoidance and Distancing	When people of color are avoided or measures are taken to prevent physical contact or close proximity.
15. Environmental Exclusion	When someone's racial identity is minimized or made insignificant by excluding decorations, literature that represent their racial group.
16. Environmental Attacks	When decorations pose a known affront or insult to a person's cultural group, history, or heritage.

(Williams, 2021, p. 999)

Types of Microaggressions

Sue et al. (2010) created the taxonomy as shown in Figure 2 through an extensive review of literature on racism, the manifestation and impact, and from personal narratives of experiences from white and non-white counselors. Sue (2010) furthered the work of Pierce by creating a taxonomy classifying the varying degrees of racial, gender, and sexual orientated macroaggressions by awareness and how the user intended to use them in context. As shown in Figure 2, microaggressions appear in three forms: microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation all vary in use and the intent of the perpetrator (Sue, 2020). These three categories will be delved into further in the chapter.

Microinsults

Microinsults are best described as stereotyping other races and convey rudeness and insensitivity towards one's heritage and identity (Sue et al., 2007). The microinsults convey a hidden subtle snub to the person of color (Sue et al., 2007). The intent of microinsults are unclear (Sue et al., 2007). When a white employee asks a person of color, "How did you get the job?", the message conveyed is that they are not qualified for the job (Sue et al., 2007). Being ignored

in classroom by a teacher conveys a message that one is not important and is a microinsult (Sue et al., 2007).

Microassaults

Microassaults are conscious actions by the perpetrator that are intended by the user to be subtle or explicit acts of aggression (Sue, 2020). Microassaults are most similar to what has been called "old fashioned" racism, sexism, or heterosexism conducted on an individual level by the perpetrator (Sue, 2010). They are likely to be conscious and deliberate acts. However, because of strong public condemnation of such behaviors, microassaults are most likely to be expressed in private instances where they may lose control or feel free to engage in the behavior that afford the perpetrator some form of protection (Sue et al., 2007).

Sue et al. (2008) gave two ways in which microassaults are imposed on the victims by the perpetrator in order to give a sense of protection:

1. when perpetrators feel some degree of anonymity and are assured that their roles or actions can be concealed, they may feel freer to engage in microassaults (scrawling antisemitic graffiti in public restrooms or hanging a noose surreptitiously on the door of a Black colleague).
2. when perpetrators sense that their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs are validated by others, they are more likely to engage in microassaults by words or actions.

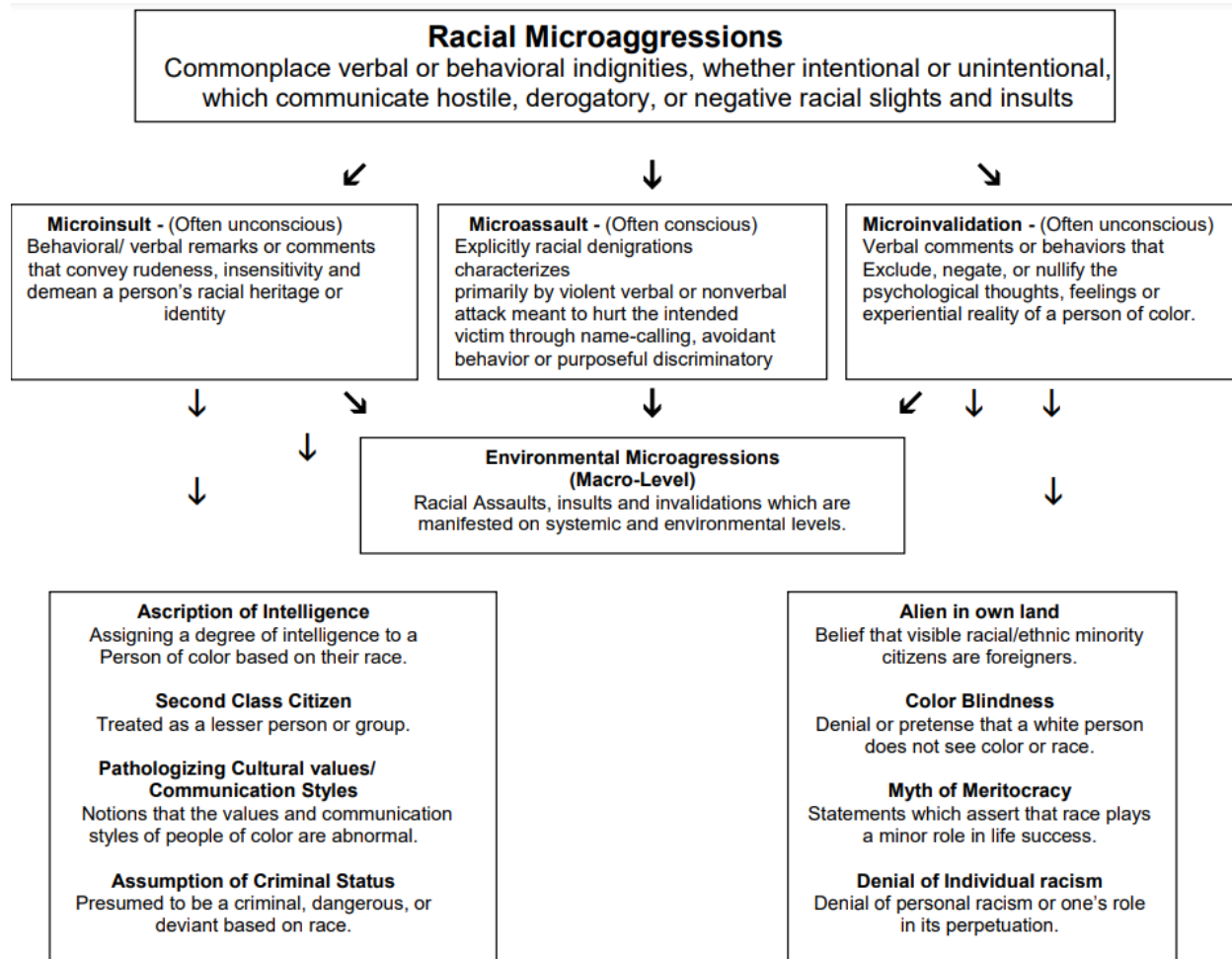
Microinvalidation

Microinvalidations occur when people seek make invisible without race, but yet constitutes a negative stereotype against marginalized ethnicities (Sue, 2019). Such subtle remarks illustrate that people of color are foreigners and not an American (Sue, 2019). The racist intent of microinsults and microinvalidations are less clear than microinsults and pose the

questions for minorities: Are the three forms of racial microaggressions equal in impact? Are some themes and their hidden messages more problematic than others? (Sue et al., 2007, p. 283).

Figure 2

Microaggression Classifications



(Sue, 2010, p. 29)

Microintervention

Sue et al. (2019) introduced a conceptual framework for responding to microaggressions below in (Figure 3). Gooding and Mehrotra (2021) believed it is very important to disrupt white supremacy through microaggressions because they can enable anti-racist education. While there

is not an adequate amount of literature and research available on how to utilize microinterventions, the framework moves beyond coping and survival to taking concrete actions through microinterventions (Sue et al., 2019). Sue et al. (2019) described how victims' responses to microaggressions may be primarily due to:

- (a) remain passive, retreat, or give up;
- (b) strike back or hurt the aggressor;
- (c) stop, diminish, deflect, or put an end to the harmful act;
- (d) educate the perpetrator;
- (e) validate and support the targets;
- (f) act as an ally;
- (g) seek social support;
- (h) enlist outside authority or institutional intervention; or (h) achieve any combination of these objectives. (p. 134)

Sue et al. (2019) organized the victims' responses into four major strategic goals of microinterventions:

- (a) make the invisible visible,
- (b) disarm the microaggression,
- (c) educate the perpetrator, and
- (d) seek external reinforcement or support (Figure 3).

Sue et al. (2019) believed it would be a mistake to assume that microinterventions alone would disarm microaggression and open the eyes of perpetrators. Microaggressions stem from biases as well as prejudices and stopping microaggressions through microinterventions is not

enough, but they potentially could have a positive impact on all those involved as well as society as a whole (Sue et al., 2019).

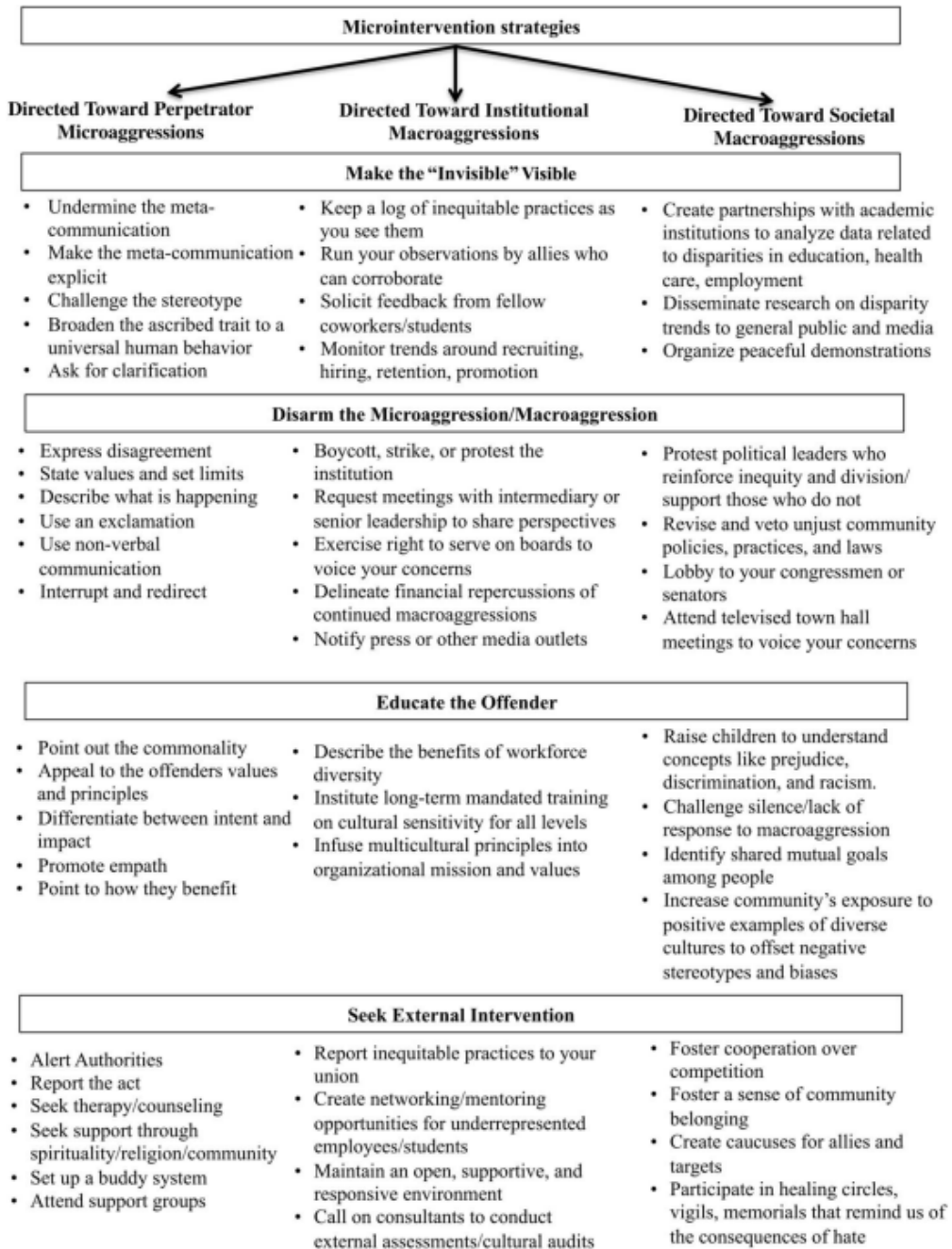
Untreated depression remains a great concern of many Americans as treatment options are not accessible for victims (Elefant et al., 2017). While online microinterventions may have short-term effects when utilized, the benefits include decreased distress and improved mood (Elefant et al., 2017). The Elefant et al. (2017) study examined the effects of microinterventions on 122 randomized groups of people who were screened to be either positive or at risk for depression. Participants were given two of the three microinterventions (breathing exercises, thought records, and a pleasant activities selector) to utilize (Elefant et al., 2017). Participants completed two of the three microinterventions by rating their mood and stress level before and after completing the microintervention (Elefant et al., 2017). The study provided the potential benefits of using online microinterventions to individuals who can reduce their immediate stress although the research does not show a long lasting effect (Elefant et al., 2017). Elefant et al. (2017) found that all the microintervention activities decreased participants' stress and improved mood, but the Breathing Exercise provided the largest effect, followed by the Thought Record, and then the Pleasant Activity Selector.

Minorities and anyone who witness microaggression benefit from knowing strategies to disarm microaggressions (Sue et al., 2019). Sue et al. (2019) believed people of color, White allies, and bystanders would benefit from being knowledgeable of concrete strategies to disarm microaggressions and proposed the conceptual framework in Figure 3. The strategies used to disarm microaggressions are utilized by the person or group responding to the microaggression and the choice and appropriateness of an action strategy may depend on which group is

responding to racism, and whether or not the strategy is directed towards the perpetrator, institution, or society (Sue et al, 2019).

Figure 3

Microintervention Strategies



(Sue et al., 2019, p. 135)

Opposition to Microaggression Research

Lilienfeld (2017) critiqued the scientific rigor of the use and misuse of microaggressions. While microaggressions are relevant in schools and of great interest in schools, the microaggression research program is without merit (Lilienfeld, 2017). He questioned how one can really know if a microaggression occurred or is imagined (Lilienfeld, 2017). Lilienfeld (2017) believed a scientific investigation of microaggressions is warranted, but acknowledged the potential impact on the behavior of participants. He felt that microaggression research is qualitative focusing mostly on the impacts to minority mental health (Lilienfeld, 2017).

According to Lilienfeld (2017), microaggression research rests on five premises:

1. are operationalized with sufficient clarity and consensus to afford rigorous scientific investigation;
2. are interpreted negatively by most or all minority group members;
3. reflect implicitly prejudicial and implicitly aggressive motives;
4. can be validly assessed using only respondents' subjective reports; and
5. exert an adverse impact on recipients' mental health. (p. 159)

Lilienfeld (2017) agreed that prejudice still exists, but overtime it has been found that prejudices occur in less subtle indirect but harmful ways. Popular culture has intensified the awareness through the Microaggression Research Project (MRP) launched on line to document instances of being targeted by microaggressions as well as through the dissemination of microaggressions at various educational institutions to warn staff and students against usage (Lilienfeld, 2017).

Lilienfeld (2017) listed 18 suggestions for strengthening the scientific claim of microaggression research while recommending the abandonment of the term microaggression,

and a call for a pause on microaggression training programs and microaggression lists pending research to address the scientific limitations of microaggression research. Lilienfeld (2017) believed the list provides a more scientific ground for microaggressions while silencing critics who are viewed as condoning prejudice and discrimination. Lilienfeld (2017) questioned the taxonomy created by Sue (2007) that he described as created in armchair fashion, specifically microinsults and microinvalidations, as they are often ambiguous not easy to determine whether or not they actually occurred. There is the notion of microaggressions being political in nature; however, participants who value equity and equality may view microaggressions as color-blindness items without being prejudiced (Lilienfeld, 2017). Lilienfeld (2017) contended that microaggression research should continue, but microaggression training and the distribution of lists of microaggressions that occur in schools should cease until scientific evidence exists to justify the benefits of the programs outweigh the risks.

Lilienfeld (2017) offered the 18 recommendations that would give microaggression research more scientific research. Such collaborations could enhance the quality of the MRP research by boosting the odds that investigations are planned, conducted, and analyzed by researchers with differing viewpoints to ensure that scientific evidence is proportional and not one-sided. The recommendations include:

1. Provide a clearer operationalization of microaggressions, with a particular focus on which actions and statements do not fall under the microaggression umbrella.
2. Examine the interrater reliability of judgments of microaggressions, especially the extent to which recipients and independent observers agree on which actions and statements reflect implicitly prejudicial actions on the part of deliverers.

3. Examine the interrater reliability of implicit “messages” associated with microaggressions among minority individuals.
4. To avoid the problem of embedded political values, enlist collaborators who do not necessarily share the core assumptions of the microaggression research program, such as that subtle racism is pervasive in U.S. society.
5. Examine the statistical relations between deliverer microaggressions and indices of deliverer prejudice and aggression.
6. Abandon the term “microaggression” and substitute an alternative term that does not imply that deliverer statements and actions are necessarily (a) aggressive and (b) extremely subtle.
7. When developing microaggression measures, adopt a self-correcting, iterative approach to test construction.
8. When generating microaggression items, use focus-group members and other individuals drawn from a wide variety of ideological perspectives, including individuals who do not necessarily perceive subtle prejudice as a serious problem in U.S. society.
9. Ensure that microaggression items contain sufficient situational context to minimize ambiguity in their interpretation.
10. Ascertain the approximate base rates of events (e.g., receiving poor service at restaurants) that are referenced in many microaggression items.
11. Expand the microaggression research program to include alternative sources of assessment in addition to self-report, especially reports from independent observers.

12. Avoid strong assertions regarding the causal relation between microaggressions and adverse mental health outcomes.
13. Conduct further longitudinal studies concerning the relation between microaggressions and adverse mental health outcomes.
14. Include measures of negative emotionality, especially those that assess the perception of oneself as a victim and hostile attribution bias, in studies of microaggressions.
15. Use microaggression measures that do not confound the frequency of experience of microaggression experiences with the subjective distress associated with these experiences.
16. Report findings examining the correlations between microaggressions and adverse mental health outcomes after both controlling, and not controlling, for measures of negative emotionality.
17. Examine the behaviors and personality characteristics of microaggression deliverers as well as microaggression recipients.
18. Examine the incremental validity of microaggressions above and beyond overtly prejudicial statements and actions for statistically predicting adverse mental outcomes. (p. 161)

Williams (2020) defended her research in light of Lilienfeld's (2017) critique that there is not data that exists to support the notion that microaggressions are real and warrant support and training in order to ease tensions in schools. Unqualified instructors could lead to improper training which makes training unhelpful (Williams, 2020). Williams (2020) believed professionals in the field must acknowledge the impacts of racism regardless of how subtle the actions of the aggressor. Advocacy and proper funding is critical in order to identify, defend, and

ultimately stop microaggressions before they occur through clinical research. Advocating for quality diversity education must continue, every person can be taught how to identify, defend against, and stop microaggressions even before they occur (Williams, 2020).

Williams (2020) aimed to defend through her response against Lilienfeld's (2017) notion that the MRP is valid with merit through:

1. Microaggressions are well defined.
2. Adequate agreement exists regarding what constitutes a microaggression.
3. Microaggressions are correlated with valid measures of racism.
4. Microaggressions can be validly assessed using respondents' subjective reports.
5. Microaggressions are linked to negative mental health outcomes.

Williams (2020) defended the argument that microaggressions are valid by bringing to light the work of Pierce (1970) who is considered the first researcher who shared experiences of his colleagues who endured microaggressions more than 50 years ago. Lilienfeld (2017) belittled the work microaggression researchers to imply that microaggressions occur simply because the perpetrators are careless and unaware of their actions and do not stem from racial biases.

Williams (2020) challenged Lilienfeld's (2017) call to conduct further research to determine if microaggressions are credible because if racism as a form of violence is accepted then more research is not necessary to justify validation.

Lilienfeld (2020) responded to Williams' (2020) response of his 2017 critique of microaggression research. Lilienfeld (2020) agreed that Williams (2020) presented helpful data that attempted to address some of his recommendations for increasing the rigor of microaggression research, but many of her responses did not adequately address his critique. Lilienfeld (2020) believed the MRP remains a promising research program that could potentially

benefit from openness to the outside criticism. Williams (2020) believed the field will benefit from findings produced by the microaggression research. Lilienfeld (2020) agreed with Williams (2020) in regard to biases, the mental health impacts and the need to continue working to reduce the impacts it could potentially have on people because both racism and prejudices are not close to ending in America. Both researchers agreed that prejudices may take both covert and overt forms, but Lilienfeld (2020) places more subjectivity on how microaggressions are interpreted depending on how used by the perpetrator. Lilienfeld (2020) clarified Williams (2020) notion that he does not believe microaggression training programs are useful by implicitly stating that he wholeheartedly supports the education of all people through balance that includes arguments and counterarguments for and against microaggressions. Lilienfeld (2020) also believed minorities are more than capable of emotionally handling any microaggression experienced. People would stand to benefit from having frank conversations regarding microaggressions in order to discuss and hear each other out if it's assumed the dialogue is sincere and well intentioned since the goal of microaggression research is to do more good than harm (Lilienfeld, 2020).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, derived from social learning theory, is defined as how one's ability affects choices made and efforts in interests and motivations (Bandura, 2007). Self-efficacy can be described as a person's self-judgment of personal capabilities to initiate and successfully perform specific tasks in the face of adversity (Bandura, 2007). The Bandura (1977) study of group dynamics found that teams with confidence in their abilities greatly impacted their performance. Students will not automatically buy into classrooms at school when they are marginalized within the community (Roxas, 2011). The Donohoo et al. (2018) study found that teams who have

shared collective beliefs can overcome adversity and the standard for collective efficacy is set through the expectations and most importantly teacher collaboration. Donohoo et al. (2018) believed efficacy in schools causes a change in the efforts of educators when faced with difficulty.

When students have students who have the opportunity to give emotional support and develop respect for their peers, will feel a sense of belonging and will provide care for their peers (Furrer et al., 2014). Students who learn through interactive tasks in the classroom, ultimately care more about other students (Heslinga, 2015). When students are taught in classrooms that are free of stereotypes, their self-efficacy to learn grows which enables them to make better choices consciously and subconsciously (Heslinga, 2015).

At the beginning of the school year, students should be given the opportunity to create shared expectations with their teacher that is centered on mutual respect and trust (Roxas, 2011). A learning environment created by teachers that fosters a sense of belonging, and care from all will increase a student's self-efficacy to care more and interact with other students (Heslinga, 2015). Students become at risk when schools are not supportive by addressing students need for belonging (Gray, et al., 2020). Teachers must also feel connected in the classroom, but their ability to create structured learning environments become compromised when they deal with unruly classroom student behaviors (Furrer et al., 2014). Teachers should have an opportunity to support their own learning and teaching in order for students to become enthusiastically engaged (Furrer et al., 2014).

In order for students to value and appreciate the similarities and differences of other students from different ethnicities, they must first find value in who they are (Brandwein & Donoghue, 2011). The feeling of rejection from peer groups leads to failure that ultimately

impacts one's self-efficacy towards student achievement and desire to continue their education after high school (Cammarota, 2014). Racially diverse friendship groups would help alleviate the feeling of alienation (Lehman, 2012). Past studies have shown that students' academic self-concept has been impacted by demeaning stereotypes made against their ethnic group from other ethnic groups (Lehman, 2012). If students can maintain a strong self-image, they will be very successful in the classroom (Lehman, 2012). Disproving a stereotype is difficult to achieve for students if they already possess a weak self-image (Lehman, 2012).

Byrd's (2018) research introduced a role play activity for people to use as a response while experiencing microaggressions. Her study was based on two previous studies that used role play to respond to microaggressions. Plous' 2000 study centered on individuals responding to various made-up scenarios as a participant, responder, and coach. Plous (2000) reported that the participants provided positive responses and recommended that responses be used in the future. Byrd (2018) concluded that the self-defense workshops showed promise in helping reduce prejudices that will lead to healthy environments, but future research should be conducted in order to determine the effectiveness of different responses to microaggressions. The second study by Lawson (2010) tested whether or not the participants would be effective when responding to prejudices. Byrd's (2018) study characterized the responses from those being targeted as active or passive.

Understanding Microaggressions

Kohli & Solórzano (2012) proposed a theory to understand teacher imposed microaggressions on students. The Kohli and Solórzano (2012) theory of racial microaggression can be best described as subtle daily verbal and non-verbal racial insults that are carried out by the perpetrator consciously or unconsciously which can have severe impacts on perceptions and well-

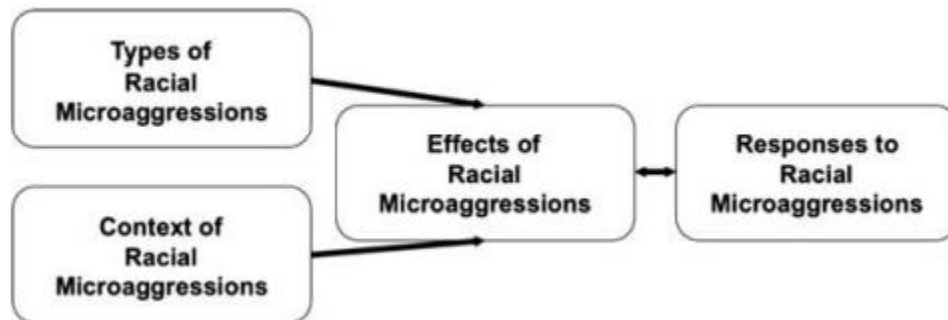
being. Minorities are typically targeted based on their language, culture that are often carried out automatically or unconsciously. People of color are usually targeted through layers based on their language and culture values (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). According to Kohli and Solórzano (2012), racial microaggressions are:

- Subtle verbal and non-verbal insults/assaults directed toward people of color, often carried out automatically or unconsciously
- Layered insults/assaults, based on one's race, gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or name
- Cumulative insults/assaults that take their toll on people of color. In isolation, racial microaggressions may not have much meaning or impact; however, as repeated slights, the effect can be profound. (p. 7)

Kohli & Solórzano (2012) believed racism goes beyond the internalized beliefs, values, and cultures of the dominant culture through the internalization of the dominant culture's racial hierarchy. Their study highlighted the harmful impacts on minority students when teachers mispronounce their names. This subtle daily microaggression can negatively impact their aspirations, motivations, and their love for their culture (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). By linking research on racial microaggressions and internalized racism, the field is expanded by drawing attention to the damage people of color experience when they begin to accept subtle, daily, racialized insults as reality (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). Kohli and Solórzano (2012) provided their working model to understand microaggressions through the four related areas as shown in Figure 4. Kohli and Solórzano (2012) believed it is important to know what microaggressions minorities experience, how the microaggression is used, the effects of the perpetrators actions on the victim, and how the victim responds.

Figure 4

A Model to Understand Microaggressions



(Kohli & Solórzano, 2012, p. 7)

The Gray et al. (2020) study discussed what contributes to the vulnerability of Black adolescents; what they become when they do not have the support of educators or when the curriculum does not represent who they are (Gray et al., 2020). Gray et al. (2020) believed students can serve as leaders in order to remedy the structures of vulnerability faced by Black youth and schools can create environments where Black students can have a sense of belonging. Gray et al. (2020) believed that schools should create environments that promote Black students' sense of belonging and be centered around their experiences, cultural strengths, and citizenship practices in order for students to view schools as places that matter. Teachers play an important role as the interactions between the teacher and their students have a significant influence on the students' overall well-being in the classroom (Allen et al., 2013). Gray et al. (2020) found that black students who have a sense of belonging at school have a more positive experience.

Black students become knowledgeable and aware of stereotypes as they enter middle school through their experiences in both overt and implicit societal messages (Gray et al., 2020). Gray et al. (2020) believed these experiences are threats to students' sense of belonging.

Students of color believe that their teachers talk down to them and act as if they are expecting trouble (Chapman, 2014). CRT informs this study by contextualizing classroom racism through teachers' interactions with students as they are able to challenge racism through their own experiences with students and construct classroom practices that are void of racism and segregation (Kohli, 2014).

Gray et al. (2020) believed educators can disrupt instances of school racism that can make students become vulnerable and have a sense of not belonging by supporting their needs. Schools can create learning environments that honor and affirm students from historically marginalized populations. Students from marginalized groups who experience uncertainty in belonging through overt and implicit societal messages will benefit from school and classroom structures that allow them to contribute using their experiences and insights (Gray et al., 2020).

Burleigh and Wilson (2021) agreed with the premise that teachers are responsible for creating microaggression-free classrooms, defending school policies that protect students, and promoting social justice. Teachers have great responsibility for ensuring all students achieve high levels, but may not be able to intervene because of a lack of knowledge about microaggressions (Burleigh & Wilson, 2021). The purpose of their study was to investigate and understand how microaggressions are addressed in classrooms. School leaders should be with clarity of their mission, vision, and values before they can adequately address instances of microaggressions (Burleigh & Wilson, 2021). Burleigh and Wilson (2021) found that teachers did not have collective efficacy about the meaning of microaggressions; thus, did not possess the tools needed to address microaggression when faced with incidents of injustice. Burleigh and Wilson (2021) found that progress can be made by starting with conversations involving all stakeholders as fault should not be placed on teachers for the frequency of microaggressions

because they are not trained in awareness and understanding the principles of microaggression (Burleigh & Wilson, 2021). Despite a lack of training, research participants address microaggressions, but feel students do not have the vocabulary to properly express themselves or know how to regulate their emotions (Burleigh & Wilson, 2021).

In his study, Baker (2019) addressed how teacher perceptions lead to microaggressions that cause African American students to be perceived as defiant more so than other ethnicities. As a result, students are microaggressed individually and systematically (Baker, 2019). The study added to previous gaps in literature on student defiance and to add new interpretations of student behavior that is not centered on blaming students. Baker (2019) defined teacher deficit thinking toward African American students as:

Deficit thinking is used to interpret the attitudes of school representatives toward defiant behavior by students, microaggression is then added in concert with deficit thinking to articulate a conception of both the attitude of school representatives toward defiant behavior, and the student's interpretation and response to being the near-daily victim of microaggressions. (p.104)

The purpose of Mann's (2020) study was to gain insight into racial and cultural microaggression barriers faced by school leaders who lead diverse learning communities in K-12 schools. Mann (2020) found that schools' leaders possess awareness and knowledge in regards to barriers that exist impacting cultural proficiency in schools but struggle transferring this into their leadership responsibilities. Mann (2020) found that microaggressions, deficient thinking, and entitlement are present in schools throughout the district. For example, a school leader reported witnessing teacher mindset deficient differences when an English language student from Russia was perceived differently than an English language student who is from El Salvador,

Mann, 2020). School leaders reported witnessing minority students being berated by their teacher because of race to the point where the leader had to explain to the teacher that the student was born in America and not to make assumptions about where students are from and whether they may not be able to speak English (Mann, 2020). According to (Mann, 2020), students who experience microaggressions from their teachers are more likely to become less confident adults who will question their ability, skill, and value.

The Baysu et al. (2021) study measured the quality of student teacher relationships over time and how the quality of their relationship evolves throughout high school along and brings positive outcomes. Another focus was to measure teacher relationships by how the schools deal with cultural diversity; they pointed out that no other research existed on these concepts (Baysu et al., 2021). Adolescence is the period when young people's views on equality and diversity are formed as they become more aware of, and susceptible to, discrimination or unfairness (Baysu et al., 2016 as cited by Baysu et al., 2021). The school environment plays a critical role in the quality of student and teacher relationships and how students perceive their teachers. Minority youth should receive support from their teacher rather than rejection (Baysu et al., 2021). According to Baysu et al. (2021), research does not exist between cultural diversity in schools and the impacts on the student and teacher relationships.

The literature proposes that through cultural diversity, schools could play an important role in extending existing evidence on diversity approaches; the authors suggest that schools could make a difference in relationship quality with teachers by signaling identity affirmation to minority students, for example, by ensuring equal treatment or valuing cultural diversity.

Summary

The literature review on microaggressions in school settings focuses primarily on instances of microaggressions in higher education and not a great deal on K-12 education. In the researcher's quest to explore microaggressions, a limited amount of research was found related to the middle school Hispanic student experiences. Microaggressions may occur in subtle discreet behaviors or remarks and may not be easy to detect by the victim. Students can be exposed to discrimination and exclusion through microaggressions that are subtle less overt forms of racism. While these acts of racism may be considered worse than acts of overt racism, acts of microaggressions can have negative impacts on students' mental and physical health.

Microaggressions can occur in three forms: microassaults through discrimination, microinsults from insensitivity of the perpetrator, and microinvalidations that seek to make experiences nonexistent. Microaggressions are prejudices toward minority marginalized ethnicities that are harmful to their overall social and emotional well-being. After a review of literature related to microaggressions, further research should be conducted to better understand how middle school students respond when targeted or witness a microaggression. The study could potentially impact how school district leaders and site administrators support student perpetrators and victims. The study findings will lead to a decrease in the frequency and impact of microaggressions through a greater cultural awareness and support for students involved in microaggressions.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Chapter three included the research design for the study as well as the research methodology. A qualitative research methodology was utilized to determine the impacts of microaggressions on middle school students. The data collection process that was utilized, along with how qualitative analysis of the survey results was conducted, will be described in this chapter. This chapter includes the problem and purpose of the study, the case study population and sample, the interview instrument for data collection, and the data analysis.

Restatement of the Problem

Racial microaggressions are the everyday slights, insults, invalidations, and offensive behaviors experienced by minorities through daily interactions with White Americans who may or may not be aware of their behaviors (Sue et al., 2007). For too long, minorities have accepted and become passive towards dismantling microaggressions (Sue, et al., 2019). In 2002, as an effort to educate students and reduce racial tensions within Arizona schools, the Arizona Board of Education created a Mexican American Studies program to teach Mexican American students about race and the harmful effects of racism, the positive impacts students can make, and to reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions (Romero, 2012). Hispanic students who were enrolled in the program achieved lower suspension and expulsion rates, higher graduation rates, and more students matriculated through college (Romero, 2012). House Bill 2281 was introduced to eliminate the Mexican American Studies program on the premise that it promoted resentment towards White people (Romero, 2012). The passing of the bill has left the state void of required minority teaching practices that promote minorities and aid in the reduction of racial tensions (Romero, 2012).

Failing social structures were often attributed to man's own desires to win rather than those created by society such as cheating to advance or an any means necessary approach to win rather than working through the prescribed modes of an activity (Merton, 1938). Sue et al. (2019) questioned what allies, bystanders, and those targeted by microaggressions can do to disrupt microaggressions that stem from programs, procedures, practices, and societal polices. Overt forms of racism are now less common as people of color are faced with less recognizable acts of microaggressions (Forrest-Bank & Jenson, 2015). Microaggression begins with the aggressor saying something that can be viewed as biased (Byrd, 2018). This led the researcher to understand the historical perspective of microaggressions. In this case, the student participant experiences were analyzed and served as the catalyst for understanding the experiences of those who have experienced or witnessed microaggressions in the school and classrooms. According to Sue (2017), understanding microaggressions is the study of powerful emotions, subjective experiences, biases, values, and beliefs, as well as especially the pain and suffering of oppression (p. 171).

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

Racial discrimination may occur in overt, tragic, violent events that convey messages of hatred, but in modern culture, racial discrimination occurs in covert, subtle ways called microaggressions (Forrest-Bank & Cuellar, 2018). Black and Hispanic/Latino students report higher instances of workplace and school forms of microaggressions (Forrest-Bank & Jenson 2015). While race has no biological basis, it has tremendous social implications (Kempf, 2020). Minority students' experience more interpersonal microaggressions and experience higher instances of avoidance because of their ethnicity. They experience microaggressions that are related to the perceptions of their culture. The unwelcoming system of structural racism derives

from privilege and advantage that are far deeper than their interactions with people of color (Thomann & Suyemoto, 2018).

The ultimate purpose of this study was to

1. understand the historical analysis of microaggressions,
2. understand the traditional public middle school Hispanic students' experiences of microaggressions in school,
3. to explore student interactions and relations in the school to determine whether or not they have been targets of macroaggressions.

The perceptions of six middle school students who may have experienced or witnessed microaggressions in the classroom or at school were examined in order to gain insight on the impact of their experiences. The research questions for this study addressed how students experienced and/or witnessed microaggressions. As a result of the impacts of microaggressions on minorities through prejudice and discrimination, the time is now to end microaggressions (Sue et al., 2019). Ignoring the problem and being complacent has proven to be ineffective (Sue et al., 2019).

Restatement of the Research Questions

The research questions for this study addressed how students perceive student interactions that impact microaggressions. The research questions that guided the development of this qualitative study include:

1. In a predominantly Hispanic middle school, what microaggressions have Hispanic 7th and 8th grade students experienced?
2. In a predominantly Hispanic middle school, what microaggressions have Hispanic 7th and 8th grade students witnessed to others?

Research Design

A qualitative case study methodology was used to gain a deeper understanding of student driven microaggressions and to examine the students' perceptions of student interactions and relations in the classroom and throughout their school. Descriptive data were systematically collected from the participant interviews. A case study approach was appropriate in order to hear the feelings and perceptions of Hispanic students' experiences with microaggressions. A case study was a more practical approach than ethnography because case studies describe the issue through a detailed analysis of the case whereas ethnography focuses on observing and interacting with the participants in their real-life setting (Creswell, 2009). A phenomenological design could have been appropriate, but the researcher did not interview any of the students who had experienced microaggressions from other ethnic groups (Creswell, 2009). A historical study was not appropriate because the researcher was not seeking to locate historical events from the past or evaluate and synthesize events from the present (Merriam, 2009). Grounded theory was not an appropriate choice for the research design as participant interviews are the only source of data and creating a theory from the study was not being sought (Creswell, 2009). The participants' perceptions were relevant to the study because they allowed the researcher to record personal perceptions and experiences regarding student microaggressions in the classroom and school in order to offer factual evidence instead of generalizations.

The researcher was responsible for the research design, data collection, data analysis, and reporting of the case study's findings. The researcher was also responsible for the recruitment and selection of participants. The school was of interest because of the high Hispanic demographics of the student population and possible instances of student microaggressions. The site was willing to participate in the study because of the number of racially motivated student

incidents that have taken place in the school. The researcher assumed the roles of interviewer, listener, interpreter, and data analyst. The researcher's doctoral committee assured the researcher's findings were saturated in the data with the appropriate themes as well. The researcher's personal biases for this study included an interest in school racial tensions. He received his BA in elementary education with an emphasis in urban education and has more than 20 years of experience in K-12 education, taught five years in urban school districts, and has always had a passion for race relations between ethnicities.

Population and Sample

The population included all 7th and 8th grade Hispanic students who may have experienced or witnessed microaggressions in a school that is mostly comprised of Hispanic students. Hispanic students were selected to participate in this study because the "New Jim Crow" system of institutional racism is currently controlling marginalized groups and is being used against the Latinx population (Isom-Scott, 2020). In order to obtain insight regarding minority student experiences with microaggressions, purposeful sampling was used in order to select six participants to be included in the project study. Creswell (2009) suggested using this method because the participants will inform the researcher with an understanding of the research problem. Student participants in this study were enrolled in 7th or 8th grade at the local middle school. Those participating in this study were minority Hispanic students between the ages of 12-14 years old. The purposeful sampling of the six student participants selected was based on whether or not they may have experienced or witnessed a microaggression in their classroom or school. The school principal assisted the researcher in selecting the students to participate in the study. This served as the criteria for selection in order to give all students at the local middle school an equal opportunity to be included in the study.

Once permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was granted (Appendix A), approval from district and site administration to interview the student participants was also received. After selection, parent contact information was obtained. Each participant and their families received a letter that was sent home through their student outlining the purpose of the study, details of the interview protocol, and the importance of confidentiality throughout the study. The research participants' identities and rights, interests, and wishes were protected throughout the study (Creswell, 2009). Participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identities. The pseudonyms were used to discuss the participants' responses in the final section of the study.

In order to obtain insight regarding school and classroom microaggressions, purposeful sampling was used in order to select six participants who have self-reported or were referred to school administration because of an experience with microaggressions. Creswell (2009) suggested using this method because the participants inform the researcher of an understanding of the research problem. Students were also recruited if they were very expressive in their way of communicating their experiences with possible microaggressions in their classroom in a reflective manner to the school principal. The purposeful sampling of the six study participants who may have experienced or witnessed microaggressions in their classroom or school served as the criteria for selection.

Informed Consent

The researcher did not collect any data without first applying for and receiving approval from the Northern Arizona Institutional Review Board. The researcher obtained parental permission as the research participants were under the age of 18 (Appendix B). All participants received a minor consent form (Appendix C). In addition to explaining the purpose of the study,

the minor consent form detailed the interview process as well as participants' rights. The participants received a hard copy detailing the term microaggression that included the definition as well as the three types of microaggressions: microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation. The researcher did not offer any incentives as this may have caused the participants to participate only for the incentive offered. Because the interviews were held during the lunch period, the researcher allowed student participants to eat their school provided lunch during them.

Data Collection Procedures

A qualitative case study approach was used in this study. Data were collected from the participant interviews. In a case study, data is primarily collected through interviews (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative interviews are used by researchers to obtain the in-depth thoughts of participants that may not be available during direct observations (Hatch, 2002). Qualitative researchers use interviews to reveal meanings that the participants assign to their experiences (Hatch, 2002). The identities of the participants were protected through the interview process as they were given pseudonyms. The interview time was limited to one hour per participant to ensure adequate time was given to express his/her experiences, beliefs, feelings, and perceptions. All student interviews took place in the school's administrative conference room to avoid any interruptions to instructional time. The qualitative interview is a distinctive type of conversation that is used by researchers to explore the participants' responses (Hatch, 2002).

The interview questions contained open-ended items (see Appendix D) that allowed the student participants to reflect and discuss their feelings, perceptions and impacts of microaggressions. The interviews gained insight as to how students experienced or witnessed microaggressions in school and in their classroom. Each of the six student participants were interviewed individually in the administrative conference room at the local middle school. The

interviews were closed to other students, parents, and staff in order to ensure privacy. The interviews took place over the course of two weeks. Data collection concluded after each participant completed their interview.

Each participants' responses to the interview questions were recorded by the researcher per the requirement of NAU Information Technology Services. All identifiable data were stored electronically on a password protected and encrypted device. All participant responses to interviews and data recorded was transcribed verbatim by the researcher after all participant interviews were completed. The transcribed data were scanned and copied to the researcher's hard drive on a password protected computer. In addition to audio recording the participant interviews, the researcher kept research field notes in a field notebook. The field notebook was used to record interview notes, concerns and questions, daily reflections, themes, and to organize the data retrieved. The researcher used the same storage and disposal for this information as discussed for the audio recorded information. The paper data will be destroyed after five years per university requirements using a paper shredder.

Data Analysis

Hatch (2002) described data analysis as an organized search for meaning. The six qualitative interview question responses were recorded by the researcher and analyzed. Data were separated and isolated for analysis by the researcher (Creswell, 2009). After all interviews were conducted, the data obtained from the interviews was transcribed and analyzed using a qualitative descriptive data narrative analysis to create findings that answered the research questions. The analysis also contributed to the scholarly understanding of student experiences/observations of microaggressions in their school and classroom.

Table 5 provides an alignment of each research question with the specific sources of information and the data analysis used.

Table 5

Research Questions, Sources of Information, and Data Analysis

Research Questions	Sources of Information	Data Analysis
1. In a predominantly Hispanic middle school, what microaggressions have Hispanic 7th and 8th grade students experienced?	IQ2, IQ2a, IQ2b, IQ2c	Descriptive
2 In a predominantly Hispanic middle school, what microaggressions have Hispanic 7th and 8th grade students witnessed to others?	IQ3, IQ3a, IQ3b, IQ3c	Descriptive

Validity and Reliability

Developing an effective interview instrument is complex and challenging (Creswell, 2012). The researcher created interview questions that were personal, attitudinal, behavioral, and open ended using clear language that were applicable for all participants (Creswell, 2012). Before the interviews were conducted, the researcher asked his committee to review the interview questions and provide feedback. The researcher asked the committee to perform a pilot test which ensured that the interview items were written without bias in order to gain the participants’ perspectives. A peer reviewer was also used through open dialogue during the data analysis stage to ensure truth value in the data (Creswell, 2009). The peer reviewer used for this project study was a professional who performs doctoral reviews.

Summary

Chapter three restated the problem of the qualitative case study, research design, the research questions, IRB approval, and the informed assent and consent process. The qualitative

research design was explained as well as the population, sample, and consent process. The findings and data analysis will be presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 will include a detailed summary of the qualitative case study, the conclusions, the implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The perceptions of six middle school students who may have experienced or witnessed microaggressions were examined to gain valuable insights on the nature of their exposure to the three types of microaggressions. Microaggressions are actions or words that can be unintentional but can still cause harm and perpetuate prejudice and discrimination (Sue et al., 2007). These intentional or unintentional acts are usually perpetrated by people who are not aware of the impact of their behavior. Microaggressions can cause harm to individuals and contribute to the perpetuation of systemic inequalities. Additionally, microaggressions can contribute to a hostile and unwelcoming environment for individuals from marginalized communities. Research has also identified strategies for addressing and preventing microaggressions, including education and awareness, promoting cultural competence and empathy, and creating safe and inclusive environments (Sue et al., 2019). It is important for individuals and organizations to recognize and address microaggressions to promote equity and social justice for all (Sue et al., 2019).

For the purpose of the current study, the researcher focused on three aspects of microaggression research:

- #2 - Ascription of Intelligence,
- #4 - Criminality – Assumption of Criminal Status, and
- #7 - Pathologizing Cultural Values/ Communication Styles (Sue et. at., 2007).

The researcher also focused on three aspects from the Williams (2020) research:

- #3 - Assumptions About Intelligence, Competence, or Status,
- #5 - Criminality or Dangerousness, and
- #10 - Second Class Citizen/Ignored & Invisible.

Participant Information

Purposeful sampling was used to select six 7th and 8th student participants who may have experienced or witnessed microaggressions with the assistance of the school administration. The students were selected in order to provide insight into microaggression experiences of minority Hispanic students within the middle school. However, it is important to consider the limitations of the sample size, which may not be representative of the entire population of Hispanic students in the school or broader population. Additionally, it was important to ensure that the selected participants would be able to provide diverse perspectives and experiences regarding microaggressions in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

The six participants included in the case study are identified using pseudonyms: P7F1, P7F2, P7F3, P8M1, P8M2, and P8M3. Their ages ranged from 12 to 15 years old. Each participant was asked to identify their ethnicity. P7F1 is a 7th grade female who identified herself as a White/Hispanic female. She has been enrolled in the study school district since kindergarten and the study school since 6th grade. P7F2 is a 7th grade Hispanic female who has been enrolled in the study school district since preschool and the study school since 6th grade. P7F3 is a 7th grade Hispanic female who has been enrolled in the study school district since kindergarten and the study school since 6th grade. P8M1 is an 8th grade Hispanic male who has been enrolled in the study school district since preschool and the study school since 6th grade. P8M2 is an 8th grade Hispanic male who has been enrolled in the study school district since kindergarten and the study school since 6th grade. P8M3 is an 8th grade Hispanic male who has been enrolled in the study school district since kindergarten and the study school since 6th grade.

Research Question 1 (RQ1) Findings

In a predominantly Hispanic middle school, what microaggressions have Hispanic 7th and 8th grade students experienced? In order to answer RQ1, IQ2a (Please share a time when you have experienced microinsult microaggressions in your school or classroom. How did you respond? How has it affected you?), IQ2b (Please share a time when you have experienced microassault microaggressions in your school or classroom. How did you respond? How has it affected you?), and IQ2c (Please share a time when you have experienced microinvalidation microaggressions in your school or classroom. How did you respond? How has it affected you?) were asked.

IQ2a

When asked IQ2a (Please share a time when you have experienced microinsult microaggressions in your school or classroom. How did you respond? How has it affected you?), none of the six participants stated they had experienced microinsult microaggressions at their school or in their classroom.

IQ2b

When asked IQ2b (Please share a time when you have experienced microassault microaggressions in your school or classroom. How did you respond? How has it affected you?), of the six participants, only one stated they had experienced a microassault. P7F3 paused and stared away before beginning to tell her microassault experience. She began to tell her story as if she was ashamed for not reporting the events to her teacher or an adult in the school. She explained:

Kids call other kids monkeys; they joke around about. It's funny to some people. I don't know how I feel about it I don't care about it because people don't really say it that much

to me. People joke around and call me a taco eater, but we're just joking around though. They were double checking with me to make sure I wasn't offended by it. It's weird because it doesn't make sense. It did make me feel bad.

After sharing how kids joke around and call each other monkey, it made her think about personal experiences where she has been targeted. She appeared to be happy to talk about her experience because an adult took interest in hearing her story.

Another participant did state that they experienced a microassault, but it occurred outside of school. P8M3 shared how one day he was walking on his block in his neighborhood and two white girls were looking at him "weird" and when he stared back "they started walking faster and looked away." He looked at me while squinting his eyes in disbelief and shrugged in shoulders. He began to slide down in his chair as he expressed how this incident was hurtful and "made him feel uncomfortable and unsafe". He also shared that he has been judged outside of school at family parties by guests. "Outside of school, people look at us. My family and I, my uncles, we dress like Chicanos. We wear dickeys." He expressed how he and his family have a unique style and cultural identity that is important to them. P8M3 was dressed in Dickey khaki pants, white t-shirt, and was wearing a black athletic cap. He discussed how he feels strongly that it is important to be able to express himself and his cultural heritage in a way that feels meaningful.

Although it happened outside of school, the behavior P8M3 described is an example of a microaggression based on race or ethnicity. This type of microaggression is a microinsult and is considered racial profiling, and it occurs when individuals make assumptions about someone's behavior or character based on their race or ethnicity. Specifically, it is a form of racism that was deliberate and carried out in private with a degree of anonymity (Sue et al., 2007). The individuals who had a confrontation with P8M3 acted on a conscious interpersonal level by

starring and swiftly walking away in an act of avoidance (Sue et al., 2019). The intent of the microassault was clear as they felt safe to denigrate a person of color because no one was present to witness their behavior (Sue et al., 2007). The behavior is consistent with the Sue et al. (2007) definition of Criminality. It is also consistent with the Williams (2020) belief of Criminality and the negative stereotypes about people of color being dangerous, untrustworthy, or likely to commit crimes is a harmful and unfair assumption.

IQ2c

When asked IQ2c (Please share a time when you have experienced microinvalidation microaggressions in your school or classroom. How did you respond? How has it affected you?), only one of the six participants stated they had experienced microinvalidation microaggressions in their school or classroom. P7F2 discussed how people think she is White because of the color of her skin. She shook her head in disbelief that she was often called white and not her actual race.

Everyone just says stuff about me because they think I am white. This happened last year in 6th grade. They were just like, ‘How are you Hispanic when you don’t speak Spanish?’ I don’t really know a lot, but I understand it. It doesn’t really make me feel like anything because I know how to shake things off. It’s just like a whatever thing.

P7F2’s responses highlighted how experiencing microaggressions may not always have implications on the target. While the student may be able to tolerate these comments, it is important to recognize the implications microaggressions may have on the target. Repeated microaggressions and assumptions about one's identity can lead to feelings of anger, mistrust, and low self-esteem (Sue et. al., 2007). P7F2 stated that her peers often question that there is no

way she could be Hispanic because of the color of her skin. This is an example of color blindness that negates her true Hispanic heritage and experiential reality (Sue et al., 2007).

Although not happening on campus, a participant did say they experienced a microinvalidation outside of school. P8M1 stated that his mother is from Mexico and is often the target of microinvalidations. P8M1 expressed how he gets angered and annoyed when he experiences microinvalidations. He shared that outside of school American families ask where he and his family are from when they attend parties. He stated, “I don’t feel not too good. What do they think I am...If I go somewhere and they ask, does it mean that I don’t look American or too Hispanic?” P8M1 and his mother do not respond to the microinvalidations but will hold onto the feelings because they do not know how to respond. Unfortunately, due to the result of the perpetrators acts, they are not able to see the psychological impact these behaviors have on the target (Sue et al., 2007).

Research Question 2 (RQ2) Findings

In a predominantly Hispanic middle school, what microaggressions have Hispanic 7th and 8th grade students witnessed to others? In order to answer RQ1, IQ3a (Please share a time when you have witnessed microinsult microaggressions in your school or classroom. How did you respond? How has it affected you?), IQ3b (Please share a time when you have witnessed microassault microaggressions in your school or classroom. How did you respond? How has it affected you?), and IQ3c (Please share a time when you have witnessed microinvalidation microaggressions in your school or classroom. How did you respond? How has it affected you?) were asked.

IQ3a

When asked IQ3a (Please share a time when you have witnessed microinsult microaggressions in your school or classroom. How did you respond? How has it affected you?), None of the six participants said they had witnessed a microinsult.

IQ3b

When participants were asked IQ3b (Please share a time when you have witnessed microassault microaggressions in your school or classroom. How did you respond? How has it affected you?), three participants stated they have witnessed a microassault. P7F1 discussed a time she witnessed students throwing water bottles at another student in the classroom. As she shared her experience, her eyes grew wider as she stared at me with a look of disbelief and her voice became louder as her anger escalated over what she had witnessed in the classroom.

In class, there is this girl who is white and everyone throws water bottles at her because she is different. It made me disappointed and sad because they think that she is different but she is not. No one told the teacher. This happened a while ago. Even though we are not the same color, we are the same people.

This behavior is an example of a microassault, which can create a hostile and unsafe environment for the targeted individual and the student who witnessed the incident. The student was able to recognize that this behavior is wrong and that everyone is the same regardless of their skin color or background. P7F1 was shocked that the behavior continued and no one intervened. It was important for her to speak up after witnessing such behavior, when people recognize that something wrong is happening and that they should intervene; however, inaction is the norm (Sue et al., 2019).

P8M2 shared two experiences of witnessing microassaults.

I don't want to say any names, but I have a friend who is white that always says the N word. He always gets caught. He has said it over three times. It doesn't matter. He will say it to anybody. It doesn't matter who tells him to stop. He has said it to Black kids. It does... it makes me... I didn't feel anything because they are all chill with it. Well, it has only happened once. I do worry about what the kid is gonna do about it.

He continued:

In 7th grade, there was this one teacher who was working here from Catapult. He got really mad and yelled at the kids. He yelled at me and told me to leave the class. He then called me a moron. I called him a moron back and he kicked me out of the class. I don't think he called me a moron because of my race.

P8M2 further shared that he has witnessed several kids being insulted. He pointed out that the black kids are called monkeys. His main concern is retaliation. He believes that eventually something will happen. He stated:

In 8th grade, about a month ago, this one kid was called monkey or black by other kids. The homies, like a friend that you can trust, really, really good friends are cool about it. I really don't think anything about it.

P8M2's experiences with witnessing students using derogatory comments were specifically targeted towards students with the intent of causing harm. It is important to note that intentional microassaults can have a profound impact on individuals and should not be dismissed or minimized (Sue, 2010). They can create a hostile and unwelcoming environment, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and other negative consequences (Sue, 2010). Staff must be knowledgeable of best practices and create spaces of respect and accountability (Sue, 2010).

P7F3 stated that she has observed student to teacher microassaults. The student was comfortable sharing her observations. She spoke in a calm conversation tone and made consistent eye contact with the researcher while speaking.

I don't know how to explain it, but would say things like if the teacher is Hispanic and their first language is Spanish, students will say things about the teacher in their face. They got in trouble; this was like last year. Students were making fun of teacher's language. It was weird because why would you make fun of someone when everyone is the same.

Earlier this year, a student was making fun of a teacher because of where she is from and her English. She knows that the teacher is from another country. Students assume teachers are foreigners, but she has never seen where teachers make students feel like foreigners.

In the case of P7F3 witnessing student-to-teacher microassaults, it is important to address these behaviors as they can be harmful due to their invisible nature (Sue, 2007). The student's microassault experience was blatant and harmful to the target (Sue et al., 2007). It is also important to recognize the detrimental impacts of microaggressions as they are dismissed as innocent behaviors (Sue et al., 2007).

IQ3c

When participants were asked IQ3c (Please share a time when you have witnessed microinvalidation microaggressions in your school or classroom. How did you respond? How has it affected you?), none of the six participants said they had witnessed a microinvalidation.

Chapter Summary

The present study highlights the existence of microaggressions on a school campus. Two of the student participants experienced microassaults and two experienced microinvalidations. As well, one of the students experienced a microassault outside of school and one student experienced a microinvalidation outside of school. Three of the students witnessed microassaults at school. Although student experiences and witnessing microaggressions outside of school were not a part of this study, it is meaningful that the students acknowledge this because passivity involves allowing the microaggression to continue without resistance, which can reinforce the idea that the microaggressions are acceptable and reinforce negative stereotypes. (Sue et al., 2019). Bias and discrimination can often go unchallenged because they are disguised in ways that make it difficult to recognize them as such (Sue et al., 2019). Discriminatory behaviors and language are disguised in ways that provide cover for their expression (Sue et al., 2019). Despite this, the student participants all expressed a feeling of uneasiness when faced with microaggressions.

P8M1 discussed how he and his mother feel frustrated by the microinvalidations they experience outside of school when asked where they are from, which have led to pent up anger and frustrations (Sue et al., 2007). Although not a focus of the study, P8M1's experiences outside of school are consistent with the Sue et al. (2007) taxonomy of Color Blindness and Williams' (2020) False Colorblindness/Invalidating Racial or Ethnic Identity though this was not a focus of the study. This is also consistent with P7F1's experience with her peers mistaking her for being white and not Hispanic.

P8M2's experiences witnessing students being called the N word and P7F3's experience being called a taco are consistent with Williams' (2020) category of connecting via stereotypes.

Connecting with stereotypes was not a focus of the study, but illustrates how perpetrators tried to connect to the victims using stereotyped speech or racist jokes.

Criminality and pathologizing cultural values were consistent with the Sue et al. (2007) and Williams' (2020) pathologizing minority culture or appearance aspects of microaggression research through the interview with P8M3's experiences. P8M3's experience was unfortunate and the microaggression was deliberate and carried out in private, which suggests that the individual felt safe to express their discriminatory beliefs without fear of consequence. P8M3 expressed feeling that two females thought he was a criminal. This is a form of racism that is difficult to address as it is not always visible or easily identifiable. The individuals who had a confrontation with P8M3 acted on a conscious interpersonal level by staring and swiftly walking away in an act of avoidance. This is a common response to microaggressions, as individuals may feel uncomfortable or unsure of how to respond. However, this response can also perpetuate the harm caused by the microaggression because it's allowed to go unchallenged. P8M3's experiences outside of school provide insight as to how one can be judged based on their culture through clothing. P8M3 expressed how he and his family are judged based on their dress.

None of the six student participants responded verbally or nonverbally to the perpetrators. It is important to recognize the potential for negative outcomes when intervening in a microaggression situation (Sue et al, 2019). While microinterventions can have positive results by challenging discriminatory behaviors and promoting inclusion, they can also be risky for the target, White ally, or bystander involved (Sue et al, 2019).

Microinterventions can play an important role in addressing the immediate impact of microaggressions, but they alone cannot solve the larger issue of systemic and structural biases. It is essential to address the root causes of microaggressions and work toward creating a more

just and equitable society (Sue et al., 2007). Sue et al. (2019) questioned whether or not arming targets with microintervention strategies would lead to challenging microaggressions. Therefore, the concept of microintervention as a means of disarming microaggressions becomes prevalent to disrupt microaggressions as inaction stems from the target not knowing what to do (Sue et al., 2019). Overall, based on the responses of the six student participants, this study underscores the importance of continuing to raise awareness of microaggressions and to equip individuals with the tools to effectively confront them, in order to create a more just and inclusive society.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 5 begins with a summary of the study along with a summary of findings and conclusions of the study. The chapter also includes implications for practice, recommendations for future research, and concludes with closing remarks.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not middle school students have experienced or witnessed microaggressions at school and in the classroom. Through participant interviews, the student reported microaggressions shared helped to gain a deeper understanding of the microaggressions personally experienced or witnessed in their classroom or school by six middle school Hispanic students. Recognizing prejudices, through small instances, is essential to advancing the study of racism and the social harms caused against the marginalized and to prove the validity of their experiences (Williams et al., 2021).

Summary of the Findings and Conclusions

It was found that the study participants have not experienced all types of microaggressions. None of the participants have experienced or witnessed microinsults. Two participants experienced microassaults, but it is important to note that one interviewee's experience occurred out of school. Three students shared that they have witnessed microassaults. Lastly, while two students stated they have experienced microinvalidations, some of the participants shared that they have witnessed some microaggression acts.

For the purpose of the current study, the researcher focused on three aspects of microaggression research:

- #2 - Ascription of Intelligence,

- #4 - Criminality – Assumption of Criminal Status, and
- #7 - Pathologizing Cultural Values/ Communication Styles (Sue et. at., 2007).

The researcher also focused on three aspects from the Williams (2020) research:

- #3 - Assumptions About Intelligence, Competence, or Status,
- #5 - Criminality or Dangerousness, and
- #10 - Second Class Citizen/Ignored & Invisible.

Only one participant had an experience with Criminality and it occurred off campus. A student experienced a cultural values microaggression when expressing his culture through his clothing, but the experience took place off campus. None of the participants experienced or witnessed microaggressions against one's intelligence or being treated as a second class citizen.

Research Question 1 (RQ1) Summary and Conclusions

It is important to recognize and validate the experiences of two participants who shared their personal experiences of being the target of a microassault. One participant's (P7F3) experience of being called "taco eater" by other kids, even if it was meant to be a joke, had a negative impact on her and made her feel bad. This is an example of a microinsult, which is a subtle or unintentional form of discrimination that communicates derogatory messages about a marginalized group (Sue et al., 2007).

Similarly, despite taking place outside of school, the other participant's experience of being judged based on his appearance and cultural identity is an example of racial profiling and criminality, which assumes that individuals of a certain race or ethnicity are more likely to engage in criminal behavior. It is important to acknowledge that microaggressions can occur both inside and outside of school, and that they can have a significant impact on the overall well-being of those who experience them.

The first participant's experiences demonstrate the effects of assumptions and stereotypes based on skin color. These microaggressions can create a sense of alienation and make individuals feel like they do not belong. While she was able to shake off these comments, it is important to recognize that these assumptions and stereotypes contribute to the larger societal problem of racism and discrimination. It is important to recognize and address these issues to create a more inclusive and accepting environment for all individuals, regardless of their race or ethnicity. While microinvalidations are not intended to be offensive, the other's experiences highlight the impact of microinvalidations on individuals and how they can lead to feelings of frustration and anger (Williams, 2020).

Research Question 2 (RQ2) Summary and Conclusions

One participant's experience highlights the importance of creating a safe and inclusive environment in the classroom. Microassaults, such as throwing water bottles at a fellow student, create a sense of fear and isolation for the targeted individual. Witnessing such behavior can also have negative effects on the well-being of the student who observed it. It is important for individuals to speak up and intervene when they witness such behavior, as silence can perpetuate the harmful behavior and make the targeted individual feel even more alone. This incident also underscores the importance of educating students on the harmful effects of discrimination and racism, and fostering a sense of empathy and respect for all individuals regardless of their background.

Another participant's peer who uses the N-word is never acceptable. The fact that the friend continues to use it despite being caught multiple times shows a lack of understanding and respect for the experiences and struggles of Black individuals. It is important for him and others to speak up and hold their friend accountable for their actions, and for educators to address the

issue and educate students on the harm caused by the use of such language. Microinterventions can be an effective way to address microassaults as they aim to educate the perpetrator about the impact of their behavior and promote empathy and understanding (Sue et al., 2019). It is the responsibility of all members of the community to address and prevent microaggressions and microassaults (Sue et al., 2019). Microinterventions can also serve as a means of empowering bystanders to become active allies and to create a more inclusive environment for all members of the community (Sue et al., 2019).

In the case of one participant witnessing student-to- teacher microassaults, it is important to address these behaviors as they can be harmful due to their invisible nature (Sue, 2007). It is also important to recognize the detrimental impacts of microaggressions as they are dismissed as innocent behaviors (Sue et al., 2007). Ignoring or minimizing microaggressions can further perpetuate a culture of discrimination and intolerance (Sue et al., 2007). Educating the perpetrator about the harm caused by their actions and encouraging them to consider the perspectives of marginalized group members can also be an effective way to prevent future microassaults (Sue et al., 2007).

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Educators and school leaders administrators, and district office staff are encouraged to take note of the following implications for practice when implementing and encouraging culturally responsive teaching practices, as well as when designing professional development. Research participants did not report any lingering effects from experiencing or witnessing microaggressions. It is still imperative to combat prejudice and discrimination in all its forms and dismantle microaggressions (Sue et al., 2019). Acceptance, silence, and inaction have long been ineffective coping strategies for responding to microaggressions (Sue et al., 2019). The type of

microaggressions experienced and witnessed by the research participants can have significant and lasting impacts on marginalized groups. (Williams et al., 2021).

Based on the student responses from the interview questions, school leaders are encouraged to consider the following implications of practice when planning to be proactive to the occurrences of microaggressions in the school and classrooms.

1. Addressing the use racist language in the classroom used by students and the harmful effects on students.
2. Examining ways to train teachers to become more culturally sensitive and inclusive in order to build stronger relationships with students.
3. Creating safe classroom environments for students that supports safe and respectful behavior and is inclusive and supportive of all students.
4. Forming positive teacher-student relationships and setting high expectations while establishing a positive and supportive classroom environment that is free of negativity.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Building upon the findings of the study, future studies recommended include:

1. Conducting research at a site where the research participants represent the minority and not the majority of the student population.
2. Replicate the study to include diverse samples of research participants including students from a range of racial, ethnic, gender backgrounds, in order to capture the experiences of a wide range of marginalized groups.
3. Conduct a study focusing on intersectionality. The intersectional experiences of microaggressions should be considered in order to examine how individuals who

- belong to multiple marginalized groups may be particularly vulnerable to microaggressions and how this may affect their experiences at school.
4. Conduct a study of a longitudinal designs. Longitudinal studies can be useful in understanding the long-term impacts of microaggressions on individuals' mental health, well-being, and academic outcomes, as well as how these impacts may change over time.
 5. Conduct a study that focuses on contextual factors, such as the school, because they may shape individuals' experiences of microaggressions and potential interventions to prevent them.
 6. A future study could examine the effectiveness of different types of interventions, such as bystander intervention training, on reducing microaggressions and promoting inclusivity.
 7. Future studies could utilize a range of research methods, such as multi-methods, in order to capture the complexities of microaggressions and their impact on students.

Closing Remarks

Based on the case study findings, the researcher believes that the study should have been conducted at a school where the research participants represented the minority student population and not the majority. Two of the case study participants' experiences with microaggressions were outside of the school. The findings may have been different if Hispanic English learners were interviewed as they represent the minority. The Black students within the study school may have also provided a different perspective as they represent the minority ethnic population within the study school. The data also revealed that students may experience or witness microaggressions out of school.

As educators, it is important to make the invisible visible through a willingness to engage in open dialogue about race and racism (Sue et al., 2007). Marginalized groups can all be subjected to microaggressions (Sue et al., 2019). It is important to recognize and address microaggressions in all their forms to create a more inclusive and equitable society. While microinterventions can be a powerful tool in addressing microaggressions, they are not the ultimate solution (Sue et al., 2019). It is important to recognize that microaggressions stem from deeply rooted societal biases and attitudes, and thus addressing them requires a long-term commitment to education, awareness, and systemic change. Ultimately, lasting change will require ongoing efforts to address and dismantle systemic inequalities and prejudices through broader anti-racist strategies that includes addressing institutional practices and policies that perpetuate bias and discrimination, as well as addressing societal structures and systems that disadvantage marginalized groups (Sue et al., 2019).

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APPENDIX A: NAU IRB APPROVAL



Office of Research Compliance

Institutional Review Board for the
Human Research Protection Program

525 S Beaver St
PO Box: 4062
Flagstaff AZ 86011
928-523-9551
<https://www.nau.edu/IRB>

To: Aaron Harris
From: NAU IRB Office
Approval Date: December 5, 2022

Project: The Impacts of Microaggressions on Middle School Students
Project Number: 1967254-2
Submission: Revision
Action: APPROVED
Project Risk Level: MINIMAL RISK
Approval Expiration Date: October 24, 2025

Review Category/ies: **The project is not federally funded or supported and has been deemed to be no more than minimal risk.**

Vulnerable Population – Children (45 CFR 46.404 and 21 CFR 50.51): As documented in the file, research involving not greater than minimal risk and adequate provisions are made for soliciting the assent of the children and permission of their parents or guardians, as set forth is 45 CFR 46.408 and 21 CFR 50.55.

Waiver of One Parental Signature (45 CFR 46.408(b) and 21 CFR 50.55(e)(1)): permission of one parent is sufficient as it is research involving not greater than minimal risk as defined in 45 CFR 46.404.

This project has been reviewed and approved by an IRB Chair or designee.

- Northern Arizona University maintains a Federalwide Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (FWA #00000357).
- All research procedures should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the guidance.
- The Principal Investigator should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that affect the protocol and report any unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others. Please refer to Guidance Investigators Responsibility after IRB Approval, Reporting Local Information and Minimal Risk or Exempt Research.
- All documents referenced in this submission have been reviewed and approved. Documents are filed with the HRPP Office within IRBNet. If subjects will be consented, the approved consent(s) are available within IRBNet upon approval notification from the HRPP Office.

Important

The principal investigator for this study is responsible for obtaining all necessary approvals before commencing research. Please be sure that you have satisfied applicable external and University requirements, for example (but not limited to) data repositories, listserv permission, records request, data use agreement, [conducting University surveys](#), [data security](#), [international](#), [conflicts of interest](#), [biological safety](#), [radiation safety](#), [HIPAA](#), [FERPA](#), [FDA](#), [sponsor approval](#), [clinicaltrials.gov](#), [tribal consultation](#), or [school approval](#). IRB approval does not convey approval to commence research in the event that other requirements have not been satisfied.

APPENDIX B: PARENTAL CONSENT FORM



Office of Research Compliance

Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: The Impacts of Microaggressions on Middle School Students

Principal Investigator: Aaron Harris

You are being asked to allow your child to participate in a research study. Your child's participation in this research study is voluntary and your child does not have to participate. This document contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to allow your child to participate. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate.

The purpose of this study is about if your child's experiences with microaggressions in their school and classroom and school and any effects it may have caused. A microaggression is a comment made by another student, interactions, body language or other behaviors that may make you feel less than another student. This study will support social change throughout the school district as students will better understand how to recognize and respond microaggressions. The study will address the problem by providing educators with a deeper understanding of racial tensions and the impact of developing and implementing equity and inclusion models in schools. The results of the study will create cultural awareness and increase cultural sensitivity for all stakeholders within learning environments while creating more productive classroom and school relationships for all students.

Students participating in this study must be enrolled in 7th or 8th grade at the local middle school. Student participating in this study must be a minority student between the ages of 12-14 years old. By participating in the study, your child will be observed in their classroom for no longer than one hour. After the classroom observation has been completed, your child will be interviewed at a later date and time that is scheduled. Your child will have one hour to complete the interview. The interview will also take no longer than one hour. Students will not receive any payment for participating in this study. Throughout the research process, participants' participation and involvement will be kept private and anonymous. All information will remain confidential. All possible benefits will be maximized throughout the study and any potential risks or will be minimized. Student information will not be shared with other researchers for this research or future research.

- Education records used by this research project are education records as defined and protected by Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. Your consent gives the researcher permission to access the records identified above for research purposes.

Your child's name will not be used in any report. Identifiable research data will be encrypted and password protected.

Your child's responses will be assigned a code number. The list connecting your child's name to this code will be kept in an encrypted and password protected file. Only the research team will have access to the file. When the study is completed and the data has been analyzed, the list will be destroyed.

With your permission, I would like to audiotape your child's interview so that I can make an accurate transcript. Once I have made the transcript, I will erase the recordings. Your child's name will not be in the transcript or my notes. The paper data will be destroyed after 5 years using a paper shredder after the researcher verifies that the data have been properly saved. Data will be secured and protected in the researcher's office and will remain solely in possession of the researcher. A hard copy of the data retrieved from this study will be stored for 5 years and will be destroyed by the researcher thereafter. The data will be shared with my doctoral committee upon request.

The information that your child gives in the study will be anonymous. Your child's name will not be collected or linked to their answers.

Because of the nature of the data, it may be possible to deduce your child's identity; however, there will be no attempt to do so and your child's data will be reported in a way that will not identify them.

Information collected about your child will not be used or shared for future research studies.

The information that your child provides in the study will be handled confidentially. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released or shared as required by law. Northern Arizona University Institutional Review Board may review the research records for monitoring purposes.

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact:

Aaron Harris
ah322@nau.edu
(480) 3889424

For questions about your child's rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact the Human Research Protection Program at 928-523-9551 or online at <http://nau.edu/Research/Compliance/Human-Research/Welcome/>.

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form, and I am aware that I am being asked to allow my child to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I affirm that I am at least 18 years of age and agree to give permission for my child to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

_____	_____	_____
Printed name of parent/LAR	Signature of parent/LAR	Date

_____	_____	_____
Printed name of subject	Relationship to subject	Date

AGREEMENT TO BE AUDIORECORDED

Parental/LAR Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C: MINOR ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH



Office of Research Compliance

Assent Procedures for Middle Aged Minors in Research

In research with children or other participants for whom the ability to give informed consent may be otherwise compromised, it is usually appropriate to obtain some form of agreement, or "assent" to participation in the data collection sessions. For example, even though children or individuals with developmental disabilities may not be able to provide informed consent for participation in research, a researcher should still describe the procedures in language that can be understood by the subjects, and obtain their agreement to participate. If an assent procedure is to be used, a prototype of the "script" of this procedure should be included in the appendices of the application.

The main thing is to explain what you want to do and also make sure the children understand that they can choose not to participate and even if they decide to participate, they can quit anytime they want. This explanation is usually read or otherwise given orally at a language level that the children would understand.

For example, "Verbal explanation of the project to the children" means what you say to the children when you explain what it is you want them to do. Some projects that deal with children, particularly those that do not take place as a regular classroom activity, must be described to the children at a language level that the children would understand.

Assent to Participate in Research

Study Title: The Impacts of Microaggressions on Middle School Students

Principal Investigator:

- You are being asked to participate in a research study.
- Your participation in this research study is voluntary.
- You do not have to participate.
- This study is about if your experiences with microaggressions in your classroom and school and the impact it made you. A microaggression is a comment made by another student, interactions, body language or other behaviors that may make you feel less than another student.
- Education records used by this research project are education records as defined and protected by Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. Your consent gives the researcher permission to access the records identified above for research purposes.
- You will be asked questions about your experiences with microaggressions. I will also observe your interactions and relationships with other students your school and classroom.
- The interview and classroom observation will take 1 hour of time.
- Your teacher and parents will know that you are in this study.
- You will not receive any money or gift for the time you spend in the study.
- Your interview responses will be shared with your parent or guardian.

If you decide you do not want to participate that is OK. Remember, you do not have to participate in the study if you do not want to.

Do you have questions?

Do you want to participate?

Printed name of minor

Signature of subject

Date

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your ethnicity? Black, Hispanic?
2. Please share a time when you have experienced one or more of the following microaggressions in your school or classroom. (RQ1)
 - a. Microinsult-
 - i. How did you respond? How as it affected you?
 - b. Microassault-
 - ii. How did you respond? How as it affected you?
 - c. Microinvalidation-
 - iii. How did you respond? How as it affected you?
3. Please share a time when you have witnessed one or more of following microaggressions in your school or classroom. (RQ2)
 - a. Microinsult-
 - i. How did you respond? How as it affected you?
 - b. Microassault-
 - ii. How did you respond? How as it affected you?
 - c. Microinvalidation-
 - iii. How did you respond? How as it affected you?

Probing follow up questions to the interview questions are as follows:

- Could you expand on your statement?
- When you say _____, what do you actually mean?
- Can you describe the experience by walking me through it, step-by-step?
- When I asked you _____, you stated _____. Could you provide an example please?

Closing Question

Is there anything else you would like to add?

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Aaron Harris Sr. was born in Gary, Indiana and currently resides in Chandler, Arizona, where he still resides today. He earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Elementary Education, from Indiana University in 2002 and 2004 respectively. He received his principal and superintendent certification from Northern Arizona University. He spent five years teaching grades 4th and 6th grades in Gary, Indiana and Phoenix, Arizona. He transitioned to school leadership in 2007 as an assistant principal, where she spent seven years. He was named Director of Federal Programs in 2014 in the Agua Fria Union High School District and continued serving in that role in the Higley Unified School District, Legacy Traditional Schools, and currently in the Isaac School District. Aaron's loving wife Tamela is also an educator. Together they have six beautiful children, his sons Vaughn (27), Carter (23), Aaron, Jr. (15) and Ashton (12) and his daughters Madison (22) and Aubrey (6), and our puppy Charlee. Aaron is looking forward to traveling, learning music, coaching, spending more time with family and friends, and enjoying attending baseball games this summer.