Reporting Microaggressions through a Mobile App

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What are microaggressions?

Microaggressions are subtle and often unintentional verbal or nonverbal slights that demean an individual based on their membership in a marginalized group (Sue, 2010).

Examples
- Being stared at in the dining hall
- Someone asking to touch your hair because it is “exotic”
- Being told you speak English well when it is your first language
- Being mistaken for someone in a service role
What types of microaggressions are there?

- Alien in one's own land
- Ascription of intelligence
- Colorblindness
- Criminality
- Use of sexist/heterosexist language
- Denial of individual prejudice
- Myth of meritocracy
- Pathologizing cultural values/styles
- Second-class citizen
- Traditional gender role prejudice
- Sexual objectification
- Assumption of abnormality
What are the effects of experiencing microaggressions?

- Psychological effects
  - Anxiety
  - Depressive symptoms
  - Self-esteem
- Academic effects
  - Lower feelings of belonging
  - Lack of confidence in abilities
  - Poor performance
What are the limitations in the existing research literature?

- Research relies on recall weeks or months later - may be inaccurate and underestimate impact
- Need to examine how different groups are affected differently
- Daily diary studies are expensive and fatiguing
- No existing research on intervention strategies
What are the goals of the study?

- Investigate the utility of a mobile app for reporting
- Study effects of microaggressions over time
- Test a potential intervention
What is MicroReport?

- A mobile app for Android and iOS phones developed at UCSC
- Users can report microaggressions and view others’ anonymized reports
What is the structure of the study?

- Use the app for one academic year
- 4 surveys
  - Perceptions of campus
  - Academic outcomes
  - Psychological well-being
  - Identity beliefs
- 2 workshops each quarter
  - Basics
  - Responding to microaggressions
Workshops

**Basics**
- What are microaggressions?
- Themes
- Previous research

**Self-Defense**
- Appeal to values
- State your feelings
- Use humor
- Give information
Who are the participants? (Survey 3)

- 211 UCSC undergraduate and graduate students (70% women)
- 31% Android users, 68% iPhone users
- 18% lesbian, gay, or bisexual
- 26.5% Asian/Asian American, 5.2% Black/African American, 30.3% Hispanic/Latino, 26.1% White/European American, 8.1% Multiracial
- 57% first generation college students
What are the measures?

- BAPC (.72)
- Basic Needs Satisfaction - Competence (.79)
- Basic Needs Satisfaction - Belonging (.82)
- College Satisfaction (.80)
- Racial-Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (.93)
- Self-reported GPA
What are the measures?

- CES-D (.74)
- Oxford Happiness Scale (.82)
- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (.90)
- Perceived Stress Scale (.87)
- Coping Self-Efficacy
  - In the situation (.78)
  - Problem-focused (.90)
  - Social support (.71)
  - Stop unpleasant thoughts/feelings (.91)
Reports

- 74% have made a report
- 0-24 per person
- Mean # of reports: 1.73 (SD = 3.23)
- Mean bothered rating: 55.52 (SD = 28.41)
- Not correlated with survey measure of racial microaggressions
Longitudinal Relations for Racial Microaggressions

- Time 1 (November) to Time 3 (April)
- Belonging (ns)
- Self-esteem ($p < .001$)
- Feelings of competence ($p = .041$)
- Happiness (ns)
- Depressive symptoms ($p = .001$)
- Stress ($p = .027$)

Controls: time 1 outcome, gender, race, social class, days between surveys
Discussion

- App usage
- Longitudinal findings
- Logistical considerations
- Next steps
Thanks to…

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