

1 Article

2 Microaggressions Self-Defense: A Role-Playing 3 Workshop for Responding to Microaggressions

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8 **Abstract:** Microaggressions are subtle verbal and non-verbal slights based on group membership,
9 and they are ubiquitous in the lives of racial minorities, women, and LGBTQ individuals (Sue, 2010).
10 The goal of the current paper is to introduce a role-playing based exercise on effective responses to
11 microaggressions. The workshop draws on the prejudice responding workshops of Plous (2000) and
12 Lawson, et al. (2010) but integrates research-based strategies. The activity was tested in two groups
13 of undergraduate students, and the findings suggested that both groups felt more prepared to deal
14 with microaggressions after participating.

15 **Keywords:** microaggressions; responses to microaggressions; role-playing

16

17 1. Introduction

18 Microaggressions are subtle verbal and non-verbal slights based on social group membership,
19 and they are ubiquitous in the lives of racial minorities, women, and LGBTQ individuals (Sue, 2010).
20 Microaggressions differ from overt forms of discrimination as they are often unintentional or meant
21 in joking manner—nevertheless, they are associated with a host of negative outcomes for individuals
22 who experience them (Sue, 2010). For college students in particular, microaggressions have been
23 linked to anxiety, depression, binge drinking, and poor academic performance (Blume, 1971; Brown
24 et al., 2015; Ong, Burrow, Fuller-Rowell, Ja, & Sue, 2013; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Torres,
25 Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010; Wong, Derthick, David, Saw, & Okazaki, 2014). Since 2007, research on
26 microaggressions has grown exponentially (Wong et al., 2014), and schools and workplaces have
27 sought ways to address them. The current paper describes a research-based role-play workshop
28 designed to teach targets and bystanders effective responses to microaggressions.

29 The current study draws on two previous studies that described role-play exercises to teach
30 students how to respond to prejudiced comments. First, Plous (2000) described a session in which
31 psychology students were given (or made up) a scenario involving a prejudiced comment where
32 participants rotated through the roles of speaker, responder, and coaches. The speaker would say the
33 prejudiced remark, the responder was instructed to respond in a way that was likely to reduce future
34 prejudice, and the two coaches would give feedback on the response. Plous (2000) reported that
35 students in a seminar on prejudice and discrimination rated the exercise as very valuable and all
36 recommended using it in future classes.

37 In 2010, Lawson and colleagues (Lawson, McDonough, & Bodle, 2010) evaluated whether a
38 similar workshop would increase students' ability to describe effective responses to prejudiced
39 comments in written scenarios compared to two control groups who did not participate in the
40 exercise. All students were in psychology classes and 87% were White. The findings showed that
41 students in the experimental class increased their number of effective responses from pre- to post-
42 test, while students in the comparison classes remained the same or decreased.

43 The current study builds on these findings by presenting a modified workshop, adding
44 measures of self-efficacy for coping with microaggressions, and testing the effectiveness of the
45 workshop over the course of several months. The workshop in the current study was modified in

46 several ways: First, the focus on the workshop was specifically on microaggressions rather than
47 prejudiced comments in general. Since microaggressions are subtle, they can be more difficult to
48 respond to than overt comments, and the strategies take this into account. Second, situational factors
49 are discussed as moderators to potential responses. Third, since Plous (2000) and Lawson et al.'s
50 (2010) studies, a large amount of research on how to confront prejudiced comments has emerged, so
51 workshop participants are instructed on effective responses based on a review of this research
52 literature. Fourth, the "coach" role became a "bystander" who could also influence the interaction if
53 they chose, either on the side of the target or the aggressor.

54 1.2 Barriers to Responding to Microaggressions

55 When experiencing microaggressions, targets often feel confused and uncertain about how to
56 respond (Ashburn-Nardo, Morris, & Goodwin, 2008; Czopp, Ashburn-Nardo, Russell, & Russell,
57 2012a; Nadal, 2013). Ashburn-Nardo et al. (2008) have identified five barriers responding to
58 discrimination: 1) interpreting the incident as discrimination, 2) deciding whether it is serious enough
59 to warrant a response, 3) taking responsibility for confronting, 4) deciding on a strategy, and 5)
60 responding. Microaggressions have even higher barriers than more blatant forms of discrimination.
61 First, because they are so subtle and ambiguous, microaggressions are especially difficult to notice
62 right away. Additionally, because microaggressions are often said in a joking way or are
63 unintentional, targets may frequently feel that they are not serious enough to warrant interrupting
64 the conversation. Targets may also discount the negative continuing effects of microaggressions,
65 especially if others have told them in the past that they are too sensitive or should just "let it go".
66 Thus, targets may downplay the harm they feel and not confront.

67 The third barrier of taking responsibility may be similar for microaggressions compared to other
68 forms of discrimination. However, the fourth barrier is raised for microaggressions, because, while
69 individuals may be aware of official procedures for reporting overt discrimination and feel
70 comfortable using them, most organizations do not have similar protocols for reporting
71 microaggressions. Additionally, methods for responding to overt discrimination, such as involving
72 an authority figure, may be seen as inappropriate for microaggressions. Finally, the final barrier for
73 confronting microaggressions is similar to other forms of discrimination. The target must worry
74 about negative repercussions of their actions immediately or in the future. They may also perceive
75 that the confrontation will have little usefulness in changing the aggressor's attitudes or behavior.

76 In sum, there are many barriers to responding to discrimination, and some of these are
77 heightened for microaggressions. Thus, teaching targets how to respond will likely be seen as
78 valuable. But what strategies are best? Though few studies have examined microaggressions in
79 particular, the prejudice reduction literature does offer some potential strategies for effective
80 responses to biased comments more generally. These are reviewed in the following section.

81 1.3 Effective Responses to Prejudiced Comments

82 The following review focuses specifically on "in the moment" responses to biased comments
83 rather than other strategies intended to reduce the potential for bias or discrimination (e.g., Focella,
84 Bean, & Stone, 2015; Schmader, Croft, Whitehead, & Stone, 2013) or to cope long-term. The term target
85 is used to refer to the individual whom the remark is directed toward and who is a member of the
86 group(s) stereotyped in the comment (i.e., the target group). An aggressor is the person who says or
87 does something that the target interprets as biased. A bystander is any person who witnesses the
88 situation but is not the direct target or the aggressor. Bystanders can be targeted or non-targeted. A
89 non-targeted bystander is a bystander who witnesses the situation but is not a member of the
90 stereotyped group, whereas a targeted bystander shares a group identity with the target.

91 Strategies for responding to prejudiced comments generally fall into two categories: active and
92 passive. Passive strategies include ignoring the comment or withdrawing from the situation. Active
93 strategies include responses such as confrontation and reporting to an authority figure. Research on
94 discrimination in general and microaggressions in particular suggests that active coping strategies
95 are associated with greater well-being later on (Dickter, 2012; Grier-Reed, 2010; Miller & Major, 2000;

96 Solorzano et al., 2000; Torres et al., 2010). In particular, studies on confrontation have found benefits
97 for feelings of competence, self-esteem, and psychological well-being of the target and the reduced
98 prejudice of the aggressor (Czopp et al., 2012a; Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006; Czopp & Monteith,
99 2003; Gervais, Hillard, & Vescio, 2010). When they fail to confront, targets may feel guilty and engage
100 in rumination (Sechrist & Swim, 2008; Shelton, Richeson, Salvatore, & Hill, 2006). Bystanders also feel
101 better about themselves when they confront (Dickter, 2012; Dickter & Newton, 2013). Therefore, the
102 self-defense workshop promotes confrontation as the primary strategy for responding to
103 microaggressions.

104 For the purposes of the workshop, confrontation is defined as when the target verbally or non-
105 verbally expresses displeasure with the aggressor's behavior (Focella et al., 2015). Confrontation can
106 be especially effective when the goal is to reduce the potential of future prejudiced comments in
107 aggressors and bystanders. Individuals who are confronted over prejudiced remarks are less likely
108 to make biased remarks later (Czopp et al., 2006) and are better able to detect prejudice (Mallett &
109 Wagner, 2011). They may also attempt to compensate for their behavior to repair their relationship
110 with the target (Mallett & Wagner, 2011). Confrontation is effective because it induces negative self-
111 directed affect such as guilt and concern over discrepancies between the aggressor's self-concept (i.e.,
112 egalitarian values) and behavior (Czopp et al., 2006; Monteith, Ashburn-Nardo, Voils, & Czopp,
113 2002). Such feelings can lead the individuals to try to be more aware of their bias and to correct their
114 behavior to be more consistent with their self-concepts (Czopp et al., 2006). Furthermore, the positive
115 effects of confrontation are not limited to aggressors: bystanders also reduce their likelihood of
116 prejudiced responding when overhearing or witnessing confrontation (Blanchard, Crandall,
117 Brigham, & Vaughn, 1994; Monteith, Deneen, & Tooman, 1996).

118 The downside to confrontation is that aggressors tend to see the target who confronts as rude, a
119 complainer, or hypersensitive (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Gulker, Mark, & Monteith, 2013; Kaiser &
120 Miller, 2003; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010), especially when the prejudice is subtle (Dodd, Giuliano,
121 Boutell, & Moran, 2001; Saunders & Senn, 2009) and the confrontation more aggressive (Swim &
122 Thomas, 2006). However, some studies report that aggressors increase their liking for the confronting
123 target and try to make amends (Hyers, 2010; Mallett & Wagner, 2011). Non-targeted bystanders are
124 also more likely to see the target in a negative light regardless of how prejudiced they judge the
125 behavior (Dodd et al., 2001; Kaiser & Miller, 2003; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). On the other hand,
126 bystanders who share the target's group membership respect and like targets more when they
127 confront rather than not (Dodd et al., 2001). The negative evaluation does not seem to occur for non-
128 targeted bystanders who confront (Boysen, 2013; Dickter, Kittel, & Gyurovski, 2012; Kowalski, 1996).
129 In the end, confrontation is effective but has the potential to create a backlash.

130 Some types of confrontation are more effective than others. Generally, angry and hostile
131 confrontations are likely to be seen as violating norms of politeness and may increase the chance of
132 backlash (Czopp et al., 2006; Hyers, 2010). One study found that men imagining themselves as
133 aggressors were more likely to rate hostile confronters as irritating and unlikeable than confronters
134 who used less hostile strategies (Saunders & Senn, 2009). Additionally, describing an incident as
135 discrimination may also provoke a stronger negative response than milder forms of disagreement. In
136 one study, participants imagined witnessing one of three responses to a racist or sexist joke: 1)
137 labeling the joke as racist/sexist, 2) saying the joke was not funny, 3) ignoring the joke. The
138 participants rated the appropriateness of the response and how much they liked the target. For the
139 racist joke, labeling a joke as racist or saying it was not funny was seen as more appropriate than
140 ignoring it. There was no significant difference between the two confrontation styles and the
141 confronter was equally liked. Nevertheless, for a sexist joke, saying that it was not funny was rated
142 as more appropriate than calling it sexist (or ignoring it) and confronters were rated as most likeable
143 when they gave that response (Woodzicka, Mallett, Hendricks, & Pruitt, 2015).

144 Additional research suggests that confronted aggressors feel less anger and irritation when
145 confronted with messages focused on fairness (e.g., "Maybe it would be good to think about Blacks
146 in other ways that are a little more fair?") rather than a message focused on prejudice (e.g., "You
147 should really try to think about Blacks in other ways that are less prejudiced"), although both

148 messages were associated with less prejudiced responses later (Czopp et al., 2006). Therefore, the
149 most useful confrontation strategy may be to focus on positives, such as calling attention to the
150 aggressor's egalitarian values.

151 The literature on confrontation is limited because it does not consider microaggressions in
152 particular and the samples are mostly White college students in experimental situations (Czopp &
153 Ashburn-Nardo, 2012; Focella et al., 2015). Few studies examine responses in naturalistic settings or
154 how responses vary according to situational parameters. Nevertheless, when the goal is prejudice
155 reduction, the literature suggests that targets should use strategies that are: 1) active, 2) do not violate
156 norms of politeness, and 3) focus on positive qualities rather than accusations. The next section will
157 explain a workshop that can teach effective confrontation.

158 *1.4 The Microaggressions Self-Defense Workshop*

159 The self-defense workshop is designed to be conducted in an hour to an hour and a half and in
160 groups of almost any size. The handout in the Appendix A can be used as a visual aid. The workshop
161 begins with an introduction to microaggressions: what they are, examples, and what research says
162 about their effects. While acknowledging that most people do not confront aggressors, the facilitators
163 highlight reasons why confrontation may be a useful strategy.

164 **1.4.1 Your Goal.** Before presenting the strategies, facilitators note two situational factors to consider
165 when thinking about when and how to respond to microaggressions: 1) your goal and 2) your role.
166 Goal refers to what kind of resolution the individual seeks. For example, targets who merely want
167 to interrupt a situation in which a microaggression is expressed may choose humor as a response
168 compared to those who want to educate the aggressor. Some other reasons that individuals
169 confront prejudice are: release anger or frustration, affirm their own values, manage impressions to
170 present themselves in a favorable light, gain information about others' (i.e., bystanders') views, and
171 avoid feeling guilty or ruminating later. Since the research on responding to prejudiced comments
172 universally considers reducing the potential of future bias as the goal, some responses may not be
173 appropriate for other goals.

174 **1.4.2 Your Role.** Role refers to considering the relationship between the target, the aggressor, and
175 bystanders. For example, employees may feel more threatened when deciding to confront their boss
176 compared to a co-worker. Friends may both be more effective confronters (because the aggressor is
177 motivated to preserve the relationship) or less effective (because the confrontation is perceived as
178 less serious) (Czopp & Ashburn-Nardo, 2012). It may be easier to confront as a target than as a
179 bystander who overhears a microaggression because the target is already involved in the
180 interaction. However, a confrontation from a bystander who shares the aggressor's identity can be
181 more effective because targets are expected to confront and are seen as less credible and less
182 persuasive (Czopp & Ashburn-Nardo, 2012). Other factors are also at play in the situation, such as
183 the aggressor's level of prejudice and personality factors like agreeableness (Czopp & Ashburn-
184 Nardo, 2012). However, these are not likely to be known by the target or bystanders. The type of
185 bias (i.e., racial, gender) could also be considered, as one study has found that gender bias is
186 perceived as less worthy of confrontation than racial bias (Czopp & Monteith, 2003).

187 **1.4.3 The Strategies.** After discussing the situational factors, facilitators present the eight strategies,
188 each of which meets the criteria of being active, polite, and positive (Hillard, 2011; Nadal, 2013;
189 Plous, 2000; Sue, 2003, 2010; Swim & Thomas, 2006):

190 1) Appeal to values, for example, saying "I've always thought of you as an open-minded person
191 who wouldn't say things like that." Appealing to the aggressor's positive values, particularly of
192 fairness and egalitarianism, feels counter-intuitive because the aggressor is displaying behavior
193 contrary to those values. However, research suggests that making the aggressor aware of this very
194 discrepancy induces feelings of guilt and motivation to make their behavior more in line with their
195 values (Czopp et al., 2006; Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2000; Monteith, 1993; Monteith et al.,

196 2002). This strategy may be most effective for those lower in prejudice, because high prejudiced
197 individuals are less likely to find their behavior problematic (Czopp et al., 2006; Dovidio et al., 2000;
198 Monteith, 1993). On the other hand, a study of high-prejudice individuals that had the participants
199 reflect on their values before reading a personal website about the discrimination an Arab-American
200 faced increased behaviors such as wanting to get to know the person better compared to a condition
201 where participants did not reflect on their values (Stone, Whitehead, Schmader, & Focella, 2011). This
202 study did not examine direct confrontation, however.

203 2) Express your feelings, particularly of hurt or disappointment. This strategy can also induce
204 the value-behavior discrepancy, especially when the target and aggressor have a close relationship
205 and/or the remark is meant as a joke. This approach can also call for perspective-taking and create
206 empathy, which has been shown to reduce stereotyping and denial of discrimination (Todd,
207 Bodenhausen, & Galinsky, 2012; Vescio, Sechrist, & Paolucci, 2003). This approach has the potential
208 to backfire, however, with high-prejudice individuals and if the perspective-taking requires a high
209 amount of effort (Stone et al., 2011; Vorauer, Martens, & Sasaki, 2009).

210 3) Get the aggressor to explain, for example, asking "What did you mean by that?" "Playing
211 dumb" and asking for further information can be useful for highlighting logical inconsistencies in the
212 aggressor's words or uncovering unconscious bias. It can also provide an opportunity for the
213 confronter to introduce information to correct a false belief.

214 4) Empathize with the underlying feeling, for example, by saying, "I know it's hard to find a job
215 after college, but affirmative action isn't the problem." Using empathy can help the aggressor see the
216 target as having similar values and promote inclusion of the other in the self, where another's
217 attributes are seen as part of one's self-concept (Tropp & Wright, 2001). Affirming the aggressor can
218 also reduce feelings of threat, which has been shown reduce bias in intergroup interactions (Fein &
219 Spencer, 1997; Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997; Spencer, Fein, Wolfe, Fong, & Duinn, 1998)
220 and make aggressors more willing to acknowledge guilt after a biased action (Gunn & Wilson, 2011).
221 Some studies suggest that affirmation is more effective for high-prejudice individuals than other
222 strategies (e.g., Sinclair & Kunda, 1999).

223 5) Give information that contradicts the aggressor or gives a new perspective on the issue. For
224 example, if a White aggressor assumes that a Black target grew up in a single-parent family, the target
225 can explain that they grew up with both parents. Providing counter-stereotypic information about
226 one's self is a form of individuation that can be effective for reducing prejudice (Blair & Banaji, 1996;
227 Blair, Ma, & Lenton, 2001; Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001). However, by presenting oneself as counter-
228 stereotypic, a target may resolve prejudice against them in the moment but reinforce prejudice
229 against their group (Focella et al., 2015). Alternatively, the target can present statistics or data that
230 contradicts the aggressor, for example, by explaining wage disparities between men and women. This
231 strategy requires a high level of preparation, as the confronter will need to be familiar with relevant
232 data.

233 6) Use humor. Humor may reduce defensiveness compared to more challenging approaches
234 (Swim & Thomas, 2006), but also strongly relies on the confronter's personality.

235 7) Involve others. When no one responds to prejudiced comments, a community norm allowing
236 those comments is set. By confronting, targets and bystanders set the opposite norm (Monteith et al.,
237 1996; Stangor, Sechrist, & Jost, 2001). Involving others can be a strategy to invoke "safety in numbers"
238 to highlight the norm violation to the aggressor.

239 8) Non-verbal response. Finally, a non-verbal response such as a look or sigh may still be
240 impactful without requiring a high level of preparation or energy from the confronter.

241 1.4.4 Role-play practice. After learning about the strategies, participants are given a list of scenarios
242 or asked to generate their own. They then divide into triads and role play each scenario, with the
243 target (and bystander, if they choose), using one of the taught strategies to respond. The groups
244 discuss the effectiveness of the response(s) and rotate through each role. After about half an hour,
245 the facilitators lead a large group discussion focusing on participants' reactions to the role play and
246 their ideas about which strategies would be most successful when.

247 1.5 Efficacy of the Self-Defense Workshop

248 I examined the efficacy of the workshop in two groups of college students. My hypothesis for
249 Study 1 was that participants would feel more prepared to deal with microaggressions after the
250 workshop. My hypotheses for Study 2 were that workshop participants would feel more prepared to
251 deal with microaggressions and that they would feel more efficacy to use the responses presented in
252 the workshop both immediately after and a few months later.

253 2. Results

254 2.1 Study 1

255 Before the workshop, participants were on average very familiar with the topic of
256 microaggressions ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.01$) but only felt somewhat prepared to deal with them as a target
257 ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 0.89$) or as an aggressor ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.14$). After the workshop, however, they felt
258 somewhat to very prepared (target: $M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.63$; aggressor: $M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.58$). A paired-
259 samples t-test compared feelings of preparation before and after the workshop and showed that
260 participants felt significantly more prepared afterward as a target ($t(20) = -4.95$, $p < .001$; 95%
261 confidence interval of the difference: $[-1.218, -.496]$) and an aggressor ($t(20) = -3.01$, $p = .007$; 95%
262 confidence interval of the difference: $[-1.129, -.204]$). The effect sizes are -1.13 and -0.75 , respectively—
263 both large effects (Cohen, 1988). Participants also rated the workshop as very valuable ($M = 4.25$, SD
264 $= 0.58$) and that they would recommend it to others ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 0.68$).

265 The findings suggest that the workshop was effective in helping participants feel more prepared
266 to deal with microaggressions, so the hypothesis was confirmed. Nevertheless, the results cannot
267 speak to whether the feelings of preparedness persisted after the workshop. Study 2 explored the
268 workshop as part of a longitudinal study to better answer these questions.

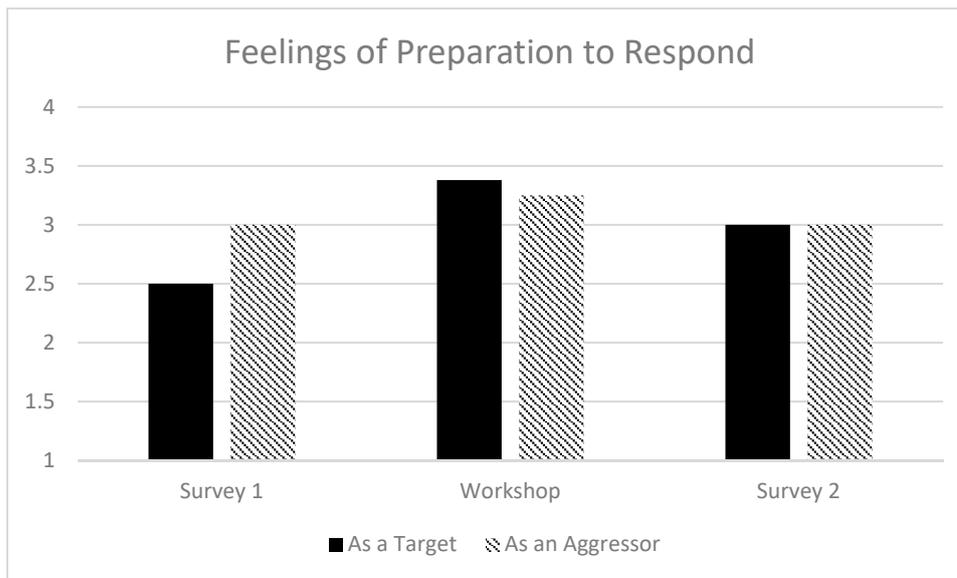
269 2.2 Study 2

270 Overall, participants rated the workshop as very valuable ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.82$) and that they
271 would recommend it to others ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.04$). At the first survey, which was on average 21.00
272 days ($SD = 12.14$) before the workshop, participants felt a little to somewhat prepared to deal with
273 microaggressions as a target ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 0.54$) and somewhat prepared to deal with a
274 microaggression as an aggressor ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.07$). Immediately after the workshop, participants
275 felt somewhat to very prepared to respond as a target ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.74$) and as an aggressor ($M =$
276 3.25 , $SD = 0.71$). Paired sample t-tests showed that the participants felt significantly more prepared
277 to respond as a target after the workshop ($t(7) = -2.50$, $p = .041$, 95% confidence interval of the
278 difference: $[-1.704, -0.046]$). The effect size was -1.38 , a large effect (Cohen, 1988). These changes are
279 illustrated in Figure 1.

280 These results suggest that the workshop was effective at increasing participants' confidence in
281 their ability to respond to microaggressions. However, by the time of the second survey, which was
282 on average three months later ($M_{\text{days}} = 54.17$, $SD = 14.25$) participants reported feeling somewhat less
283 prepared to respond as a target ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.00$) and as an aggressor ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.71$). The
284 differences between the first and second survey were not significant. Thus, without reinforcement,
285 the feelings of preparation may not be long-lasting.

286 In terms of the feelings of efficacy, there were no significant changes in participants' feelings of
287 efficacy for the eight strategies taught in the workshop immediately after the workshop or during the
288 second survey. In terms of long-term strategies, participants did experience a significant increase in
289 their efficacy to keep from feeling sad between surveys ($M_{\text{diff}} = -3.40$, $t(4) = -2.81$, $p = .048$). Overall, the
290 hypotheses in Study 2 were partially confirmed.

291



292

293

Figure 1. Feelings of preparation to respond over time

294

3. Discussion

295

The Microaggressions Self-Defense Workshop is a useful strategy for preparing participants to respond to microaggressions. It can be used in a classroom setting to teach about prejudice and discrimination or as a workshop in work settings. This workshop differed from previous demonstrations (Lawson et al., 2010; Plous, 2000) because we utilized research on confronting prejudice to teach the students effective strategies. Using these skills can help college students protect their own well-being as well as reduce the prevalence of microaggressions on their own campus by setting positive norms (Monteith et al., 1996; Stangor et al., 2001). Other strategies may also be successful, but the eight presented here represent a manageable set to remember and a range of types of confrontation.

304

A strength of this study is that we explored responses in groups that were more diverse than previous studies. We also measured long-term changes in feelings of preparation and efficacy. Sample size was a major limitation in both samples. Although all participants in the larger sample of Study 2 were invited to participate in the workshop, very few attended. Additionally, given the small sample, I did not compare workshop participants with non-workshop participants or control for outside factors, so I cannot conclude that the workshop is the source of significant changes. Future research can randomly assign students to participate in the workshop and monitor their outcomes over time. Future research can also explore the effectiveness of the workshop for other populations, such as employees. Despite these limitations, the Microaggressions Self-Defense Workshop shows promise as a teaching method and intervention that combines active-learning strategies with the latest psychological research to help reduce prejudice and promote environments of inclusivity and acceptance.

316

317

4. Materials and Methods

318

4.1 Study 1

319

4.1.1 Participants

320

Participants were 21 student leaders at a public university on the West Coast. All were leaders of student organizations serving the African, African American, and Caribbean populations on campus. The workshop was as part of an annual retreat designed to teach leadership skills, help plan for the year, and promote collaboration among organizations. The retreat was hosted by the African American resource center on campus. Participants were not asked to report their race or gender.

324

325 4.1.2 Procedure

326 Participants completed the pre-test immediately before the workshop. The workshop began
327 with a presentation about what microaggressions were and how to think about responding to them.
328 The strategies were then presented and explained with examples. The students then participated in
329 the role-playing exercise: They divided into triads, and then each group role-played for about half an
330 hour. A large-group discussion followed, and then participants completed the post-test.

331 4.1.3 Measures

332 The pre-test contained three questions: 1) How familiar are you with the topic of
333 microaggressions? Participants responded on a scale of 1 (*not at all familiar*) to 5 (*completely familiar*),
334 2) How prepared do you feel to respond to a microaggression against you or your group? and 3) How
335 prepared do you feel to respond if someone tells you that something you did or said was a
336 microaggression against them? Participants responded to these two questions on a scale of 1 (*not at*
337 *all prepared*) to 5 (*completely prepared*).

338 The post-test contained the two preparation questions, asked for a rating of the workshop on a
339 scale of 1 (*not very valuable*) to 5 (*extremely valuable*), whether they would recommend the workshop
340 to others on a scale of 1 (*no*) to 5 (*definitely*), and open-ended questions about the most and least useful
341 aspects of the workshop.

342 4.2 Study 2

343 4.2.1 Participants

344 Participants were students at the same West Coast university enrolled in a study about
345 microaggressions. The only criteria for inclusion in the study was being interested in learning more
346 about microaggressions and what to do about them. Of the 294 participants in the study, 8
347 participated in the self-defense workshop. Of these participants, the average age was 21.75 ($SD =$
348 1.83); five were women, four were seniors, and one or two each identified as Asian American, African
349 American, Hispanic/Latino, Middle Eastern, White/European American, and Multiracial.

350 4.2.2 Measures

351 The data from the current analysis includes data from the survey before participants completed
352 in the workshop and the survey after the participants completed the workshop, about four months
353 apart. Participants responded to two questions about being prepared to respond to microaggressions:
354 1) How prepared do you feel to respond to a microaggression against you or your group? And 2)
355 How prepared do you feel to respond if someone tells you that something you did or said was a
356 microaggression against them? on a scale of 1 (*not at all prepared*) to 5 (*completely prepared*). Participants
357 also completed a modified version of the Coping Self-Efficacy Scale (CSE) (Chesney, Neilands,
358 Chambers, Taylor, & Folkman, 2006). The instructions for the scale were, "When you experience a
359 microaggression, how confident or certain are you that you can do the following?". The first section
360 of the scale was labeled "In the Situation" and included the eight strategies taught in the workshop.
361 The second section was labeled "After the Situation" and contain the 13 methods of coping from the
362 original CSE in three areas (problem-focused coping, stop unwanted thoughts, and get social
363 support). The response scale ranged from 0 (*cannot do at all*) to 10 (*certain can do*).

364 4.2.3 Procedure

365 As part of the study, participants completed four surveys over the course of an academic year
366 and used a mobile app to report whenever they experienced or witnessed a microaggression. All
367 participants in the study were invited to the workshop, which was the same as described in Study 1,
368 except that participants were given a list of scenarios that they could use during the role-play.
369 Participants were compensated for completing the surveys but not participating in the workshop.

370 Immediately after the workshop, participants completed the rating, recommendation,
371 preparation, and open-ended questions described in Study 1. They also completed the “In the
372 Situation” subscale of the CSE.

373 **Supplementary Materials:** The following are available online at www.mdpi.com/xxx/s1, Study 1 Data.csv

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378 **Appendix A**

379 *Responding to Microaggressions Handout*

Responding to Microaggressions

What is a microaggression?

Microaggressions are subtle verbal or non-verbal slights and indignities based on membership in a social group. They are a form of discrimination and are hurtful even though they are sometimes unintentional or meant in a joking way. We refer to the person who says/does the microaggression as the *aggressor* and the person who they are speaking to as the *target*.

Why confront microaggressions?

Most people don't confront microaggressions, but confronting can help the other person to realize their bias and change their behavior. Confronting also sets a norm that the behavior isn't OK, so people around are less likely to do or say something similar. When thinking about responding, consider:

Your goal

•What do you want to accomplish?

Your role

•What is your relationship to the aggressor and bystanders?

How do I respond?

When your goal is to affect someone's bias, the most effective responses are polite rather than hostile and focus on positive qualities rather than accusations of prejudice.

Appeal to values	•"You're too smart to believe that!"
Express your feelings	•"That hurts my feelings."
Get them to explain	•"What did you mean by that?"
Empathize with the underlying feeling	•"I know it's hard to find a job after college, [but affirmative action isn't the problem.]"
Give information	•"Actually, most people on welfare are White."
Use humor	•"Wow, you sound like my grandpa."
Involve others	•"Did you hear that?"
Non-verbal response	•Roll your eyes

How might they react?

Most people feel negative emotions when they are confronted, but they can still learn from the experience. Here are some common reactions:

- Anger
- Denial
- Dismissal/minimization
- Attack
- Claim it was a joke
- Try to explain your misinterpretation
- Guilt or shame
- Freeze
- Get others to agree with them
- Apologize/try to make up for it

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380

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