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# Racial Microaggressions Experienced by Students On Campus

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## Introduction

Racial minorities have rated lower satisfaction in comparison to white majority students on majority white campuses (Worthington et al., 2008). One possible explanation for racial minorities having a lower satisfaction rating than white majority students can be explained by the existence racial microaggressions on campus. Microaggressions are explained as brief everyday exchanges that send degenerating messages to the victim solely due to that individual's group membership (Sue et al., 2010). Microaggressions are also defined as a brief discrimination made against members of a marginalized group that can be either intentional or indirect. The racial makeup of intuitions across the United States has been changing for some time now. Racial and ethnic diversity is currently at an all-time high (American Council on Education 2005). Increasing levels of racial diversity at institutions is resulting in changing climate, which means new interactions among individuals is taking place. These new interactions can have dire consequences. Nadal (2014) found that increased levels of microaggressions for college student's results in decreased levels of self-esteem (Nadal et al., 2014). Lower levels of self-esteem therefore can be caused by racial microaggressions leading to negative climate perception by racial minority groups. All of these contributions support the notion of racial minority students not enjoying their time at institutions of higher education. Exposure to racism is found to cause psychological and emotional reactions that may attribute to a rise in trauma (Carter & Forsyth, 2009). Increased levels of harassments which can be seen in the form of racial microaggressions may be one of many attributing factors to poorer health in racial minorities. A correlation was also found between the existence of racial microaggressions and the effect on the wellbeing for Asian Americans (Ong et al., 2013). It is evident that racial microaggressions not only lead to a negative perception of the campus environment, but it can lead to issues of physical and mental health. Another study was done looking at African Americans students to figure out factors that increase levels of stress. It was found that racial microaggressions significantly increased mundane extreme environmental stress (MEES) as they moved up in education (Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011). It is clear that microaggressions exist and they have consequences for the victims that are facing them.

Studies have been done to inquire the presence of racial microaggressions for Latinos and Blacks on majority white campuses. A study took a look at racial microaggressions that are seen by Latino/a students on majority white campuses, findings indicated an obvious presence of racial microaggressions (Yasso, Smith, Ceja, & Solorazano, 2009). Other research took a look at how black students are perceived. Blacks are viewed as threatening on majority white campuses by different authorities as well as fellow students on campus (McCabe, 2009). Both of these studies highlight the existence of microaggressions as well as negative perceptions which can lead to racial microaggressions on a majority white campus. These past studies show that racial microaggressions extend to Latinos, blacks, Asians, and many other groups. If these three groups are experiencing microaggressions then it gives the inclination to state that racial microaggressions are occurring for many different racial minority students on majority white campuses. It was found that a sense of social belonging intervention improved academic and health outcomes for students (Walton & Cohen, 2011). Interventions as such can benefit racial minority students in being better able to cope with such factors and is something institutions should look into. Based on these previous findings, the current study hypothesizes that not only will racial microaggressions be reported by college students, but racial minority students will experience higher levels of microaggressions than white students on campus.

## Methods

**Participants.** The study recruited full-time students of Carroll College who were 30.3% male and 67.3% female. 13.9% of participants reported as being minorities compared to 79.5% who reported as nonminorities. Five different races were evaluated with four being minorities. There were 222 White participants, 13 Hispanic or Latino/a participants, 9 Asian, 2 Native American, and 21 participants categorized as Mixed which includes two or more racial groups.

Carroll College Demographics as of 2018-2019:	
White	81.2%
Native American or Alaskan Native	0.5%
Black or African American	0.7%
Asian	1.4%
Hispanic or Latino/a	4.3%
Two or more races	3.6%

Current Study Demographics:	
White	81%
Native American or Alaskan Native	0.7%
Asian	3.3%
Hispanic or Latino/a	4.7%
Two or more races	7.7%

Participants were recruited through promotion by campus professors, students, and student organizations. Course credit or extra credit may have been offered to students in courses and students were encouraged to take the survey via volunteer basis; in courses where credit was offered to participants in exchange for their participation, an alternative assignment was provided to students who wish to earn credit but do not wish to participate in the study.

**Methods and Procedures.** Racial and Ethnic Minority Scale (REMS) was used in the determination of students' experiences with racial microaggression. The validity of the scale was shown by Nadal in a comprehensive study (Nadal, 2011). This scale includes a 45 question questionnaire. Participants will have two options in responses, marking a "1" if the specific event didn't occur in the past six months or "2" if the specific event did occur in the last six months. An example for a question could be "Someone assumed that I spoke a language other than English." Framing the question in such a way will allow it to be disguised from having suspicion that microaggressions are being tested. Subscales within the Questionnaire were:

- **Assumptions of Inferiority** (9 items, "Carroll student's & or staff members assumed that I would not be intelligent because of my race")
- **Assumption of Criminality** (7 items, "Carroll students &/or staff members' body language showed they were scared of me, because of my race")
- **Microinvalidations** (9 items, I was told by students &/or staff members that I should not complain about my race")
- **Assumptions of Similarity** (9 items, "Carroll students &/or staff members assumed I spoke a language other than English")
- **Environmental Microaggressions** (3 items, "I have observed people of my race portrayed positively at Carroll")
- **Workplace and School Microaggressions** (3 items, "I was ignored by students &/or staff members at Carroll because of my race")

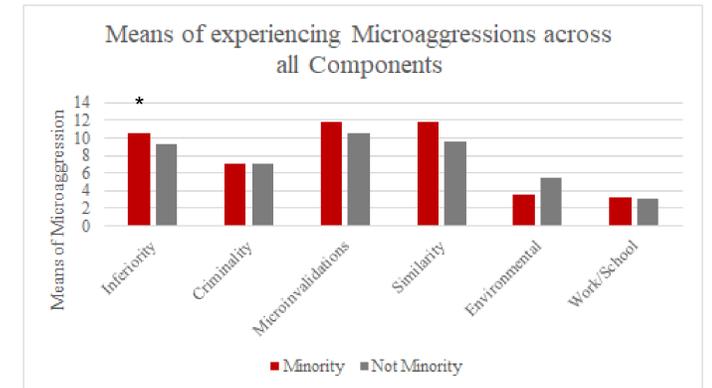
The questionnaire was made available online via Moodle. At the start of the questionnaire participants were asked general demographic questions that include racial background, gender, where one spent most of their life, and what city they are from.

## Conclusions

The greatest limitation faced during the analysis of the data was the statistical issue of having a small sample size but was still representative. Although the sample was small, it was still sufficient enough to draw significant results. Results of this study have found that individuals who reported as minorities are experiencing microaggressions on campus. Minorities experience greater microaggressions on all components except for Assumptions of Criminality. When races were compared between other racial groups through One way ANOVAs, both Latino/a or Hispanic and Native American minorities experienced greater microaggressions when compared to the other racial groups. Results also indicated that darker skin tone was correlated with experiencing microaggression on all components of the Racial and Ethnic Minority Scale (REMS). This data suggest minority students do not feel safe on campus and steps should be taken to increase the feeling of being welcomed, included and increasing the awareness of diversity.

## Results

First, t-tests were used to compare the differences between minority and non-minority students' experiences with racial microaggressions. (mark significant differences)



Next, one-way ANOVAs were used to compare the differences between White, Latino/a, Asian, Native American, and White students' experiences with racial microaggressions. (put table here)

Assumptions of Inferiority			Assumptions of Criminality			Microinvalidations		
Races	Mean (SD)	Significance	Races	Mean (SD)	Significance	Races	Mean (SD)	Significance
Native American	13 (2.83)	b	Mixed	7.11 (.32)		Native American	14.0 (5.66)	a
Latino/a; Hispanic	11.45 (3.47)	a	White	7.05 (.24)		Latino/a; Hispanic	12.9 (3.57)	b
Asian	10.13 (1.23)	b	Latino/a; Hispanic	7.0 (.00)		Mixed	11.11 (2.88)	
White	9.36 (.71)	ab	Asian	7.0 (.00)		White	10.52 (1.93)	ab
Mixed	9.21 (.71)	ab				Asian	10.5 (2.51)	

Assumptions of Similarity			Environmental Microaggressions			Workplace and School Microaggressions		
Races	Mean (SD)	Significance	Races	Mean (SD)	Significance	Races	Mean (SD)	Significance
Latino/a; Hispanic	13.22 (2.54)	a	White	5.36 (1.0)	a	Native American	3.5 (.71)	
Asian	11.86 (2.27)	b	Mixed	4.29 (1.38)	a	Latino/a; Hispanic	3.4 (.84)	a
Mixed	10.12 (1.96)	a	Asian	4 (1.26)	a	White	3.07 (.31)	a
White	9.56 (1.04)	ab	Latino/a; Hispanic	3.44 (.58)	a	Mixed	3.06 (.24)	
			Native American	3 (.00)	a	Asian	3 (.00)	

Finally, correlations were computed to show the relationship between skin color and experiences with racial microaggressions. (add \* for significant)

