

Abstract

In recent years, microaggressions, forms of discrimination where the intent is ambiguous in nature, have started to gather more attention in the psychological community. Slightings about race, gender, sexual orientation, or other minority status have started to shift from blatant forms of discrimination into small, mosquito bite-like offenses. One or two bites are not so problematic, but sustain a few bites every day for the rest of your life, and you might have a problem. This is where my mind went as I started to delve into research about microaggressions. The psychological community, although very divided about how to define microaggressions, is aware of the existence of these experiences. Participants in many different studies have discussed their experiences with microaggressions, but little has been done to see how individuals are impacted by these statements or how these "bites" affect an individual long term (emotionally or cognitively, for example). This is what I set out to do. The purpose of this project was to provide quantitative data regarding the impact of these microaggressive experiences.

As I participated in this project, I learned how to overcome the challenges of the research - process. Trying to prepare a way to measure something quantitatively when only qualitative data had been conducted was extremely challenging. I really had to get creative to figure out how to measure the cognitive impact of these experiences. Luckily, I happened across an automated task I could use in the lab. Several issues arose as I started collecting data, and I really had to brainstorm how to ensure we did not lose any of that data we had collected. Additionally, while I did not have significant findings, I am motivated to continue this research and make adjustments in hopes of honing in on future methodologies to help provide answers to an area of psychology not quite understood. Most importantly, I appreciated the gratification and accomplishment I felt upon finishing a thesis I worked to develop for over a year.

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