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### Coding Microaggressions Committed by First-Year Students

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# Coding Microaggressions Committed by First-Year Students

Katherine Kindy, Meghan Dunn, and Amy Moors, PhD  
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## Introduction

- Microaggressions are forms of sexism, racism, and homophobia communicated through derogatory slights, including telling harmful jokes or making judgements about someone's perceived identity (Sue et al., 2007).
- Previous research has shown microaggressions have a significant impact on college students sense of self and belonging, often making them feel isolated on campus (McGabe, 2009).
- To assess exclusionary behavior, we asked first year students if they have committed microaggressions and, if so, in what context.

## Methods

1. Recruited 218 first-year Chapman University students (74% women, 24% men, 2% trans/non-binary; Mean age = 18).
2. Participants took a survey asking about their overall college experiences and, in an open-ended format, whether they have intentionally or unintentionally committed microaggressions. 122 left responses.
3. Using thematic coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006), of the responses two undergraduate research assistants found 11 major themes and 8 minor themes.

## Research Question

Recall instances in which you've intentionally or unintentionally committed a microaggression on campus:



Where are you actually from?

I get people's pronouns wrong pretty often.

They dont look gay.



## Results

- The most common response was that 50% of students reported never committing a microaggression.
  - Of those, 23% couldn't think of a time it may have occurred and 9% didn't understand the term microaggression
- Among reported microaggressions, 12% were race/ethnicity-based, 7% were gender-based, and 4% were sexuality-based.
  - 8% said their behavior was intentional,
  - 8% reported it was unintentional, and 6% indicated it was a joke.
  - Only 5% of those felt inclined to change their behavior.

## Discussion

- We discovered that students are often unaware that they committed a microaggression—and few report changing their behavior.
- The results of the present study could be used in future inclusivity training to highlight contemporary microaggressions about gender, sex, race and ethnicity.
- Furthermore, additional education needs to be provided about microaggressions to encourage behavior change and foster greater campus inclusion.



Take a picture to download the abstract.

