

Exploring Microaggressions

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Learning Objectives

- Create awareness and identify common occurrences of microaggressions.
- Identify potential impacts of experiencing microaggressions.
- Explore ways to minimize occurrences of microaggressions.

Norms for Brave Spaces

Listen actively ;
respect others when
they are talking **and**
listen to understand
rather than respond

Be mindful to speak from
your own experience
instead of generalizing
("I" instead of "they,"
"we," and "you").

Do not be afraid to
respectfully challenge
one another by asking
questions; focus on ideas
to engage in the difficult
conversations

Participate to the fullest
of your ability --
community growth **and**
learning depends on the
inclusion of every
individual voice

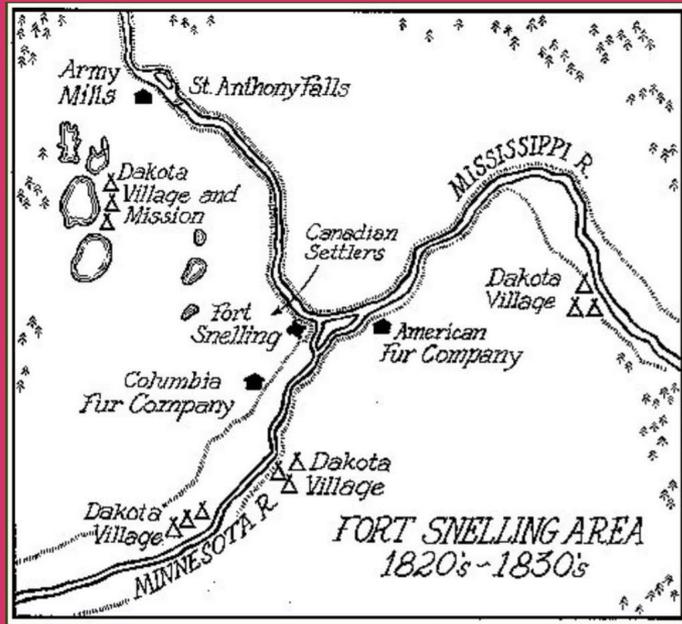
Be aware of your
positionality (power,
privilege) and how
you are showing up in
this space

Expect and accept
non-closure; the goal
is to gain a deeper
understanding.

Be conscious of body
language and nonverbal
responses; they can be as
disrespectful as words.

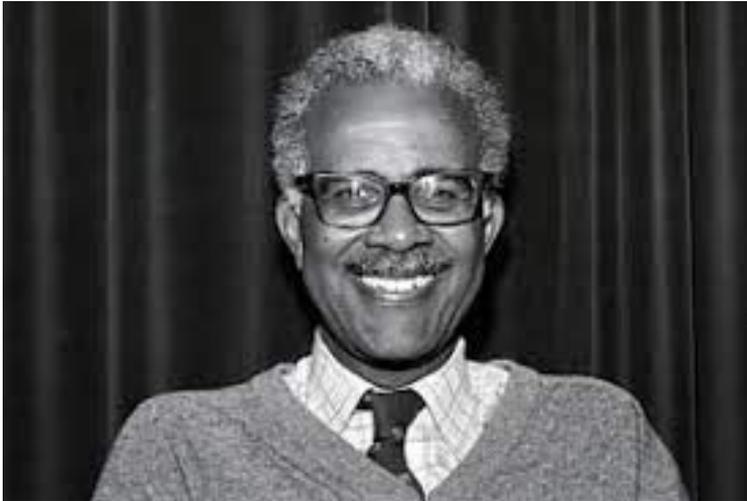
Speak your truth
from your stories and
seek to understand
the stories of others.

Land Acknowledgement



We are on Dakota land

History of microaggressions



- The term was originally coined in the 1970s by Chester M. Pierce, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard University.
 - Dr. Pierce used the term “microaggressions” to describe the subtle but insidious insults and offenses he witnessed against black people.
 - Micro is used to mean everyday, not “lesser” or “insignificant.”
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History of microaggressions



- In 1973, Mary Rowe coined the term “microinequities” to identify the quiet, systematic, sometimes hostile, but often unintentional discrimination of being overlooked, ignored, excluded or “dissed.”
 - This extended the microaggression theory to include women.
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History of microaggressions



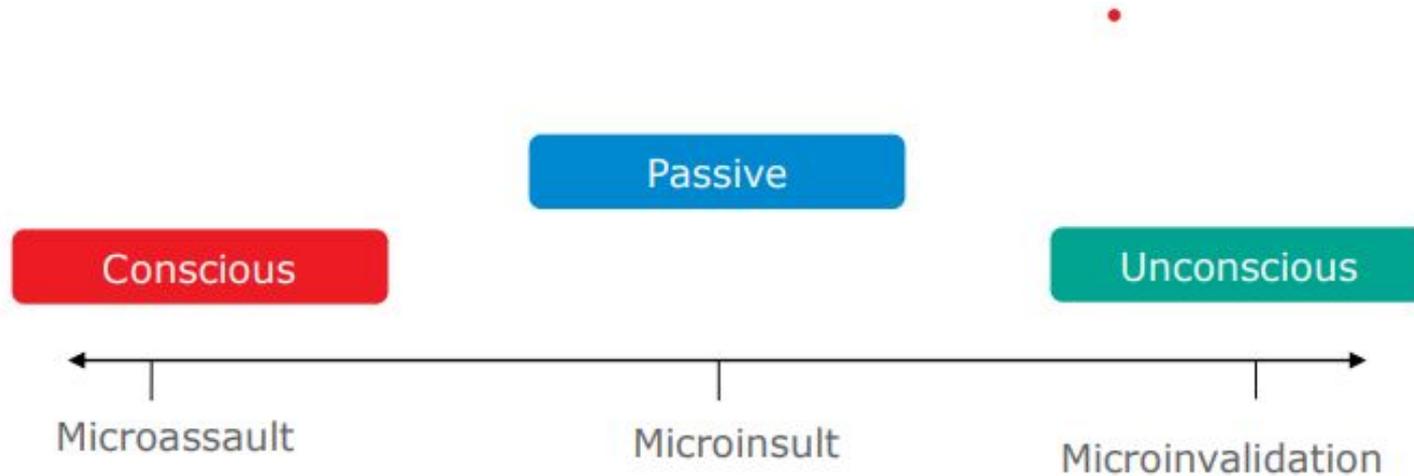
- “Everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.”-Derald Wing Sue (2010)
 - Includes all marginalized groups.
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Some Examples

- ❖ “I’m tired of the race card””
- ❖ “I look homeless/like a bum today”
- ❖ “I wish I had a handicap sticker”
- ❖ “I’m so tan, I’m almost a brown as you”
- ❖ “You’re so articulate”
- ❖ “Is that your real hair?”
- ❖ “That’s so ghetto”
- ❖ “that’s reverse racism”
- ❖ “If I was gay, I’d totally date you”
- ❖ “it was just a joke””
- ❖ “I wish I had a gay best friend”
- ❖ “they get so offended by everything”
- ❖ “I love your accent, say.....”



Spectrum of Racial Microaggressions



Microassaults

- “Old fashioned racism”
- Conscious & explicit
- Intent is to hurt someone using name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions



Examples:

Racial Slurs or discouraging interracial interactions
Giving preferential treatment to a white student
Deliberately avoiding staff of color
Not baking a cake for a same-sex wedding



Microinvalidation

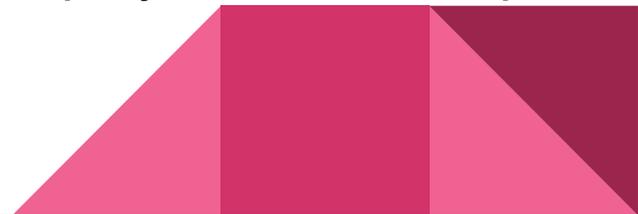
- Verbal comments that negate, exclude or nullify the thoughts, feelings and/or experiences of a person in a marginalized community
- Often unconscious

Examples:

“I don’t see color”

“Don’t be so sensitive”

“Everyone can succeed if they just pull themselves up by their bootstraps”



Microinsults

- Behavior or verbal remarks that demean another person's heritage or identity
- Subtle snubs that convey a hidden insulting message
- Often unconscious

Examples:

“You people.....those kids...”

Asking someone to speak on behalf of their marginalized community

Failing to acknowledge students of color in the classroom



Themes of Microaggressions

Theme	Microaggression	Message
Myth of meritocracy	“Everyone can succeed in America if they work hard enough.”	People of color are lazy and/or incompetent and need to work harder.
Pathologizing cultural values	Dismissing an individual who brings up race/culture at work/school.	Leave your cultural baggage outside.
Second-class citizen	A taxi cab passes a person of color to pick up a White passenger. “You people.”	You’re likely to cause trouble and travel to a dangerous neighborhood. You don’t belong and are a lesser being.
Environmental	Television shows/movies without representation of people of color.	You are an outsider. You don’t exist.

Themes of Microaggressions

Type	Microaggression	Message
Gender	“Smile! You’re too pretty for people to not see your smile.”	Your appearance defines what people think of you.
	A female doctoral student continues to receive emails from potential participants addressed “sir.”	It is unlikely for someone of your gender to pursue an advanced degree.
Sexual Orientation	“I like you, but why do others have to shove it in our faces?”	The LGBTQ experience is offensive and abnormal.
	“So who’s the man in the relationship?”	Implies that a “normal” relationship must involve a man and a woman.
Disability	Without being asked, a man helps a disabled person board the train.	You can’t function independently.

Themes of Microaggressions

Type	Microaggression	Message
Religion	<p>“You don’t look Jewish!”</p> <p>Although not explicitly celebrated, a public school displays Christmas decorations in December.</p>	<p>All Jewish people look the same.</p> <p>In America, Christianity is the most important religion. Those who practice others are outsiders.</p>
Class	<p>“That’s ghetto.”</p>	<p>Being poor is associated with negative/undesirable characteristics.</p>

What might each of these look like in your school?

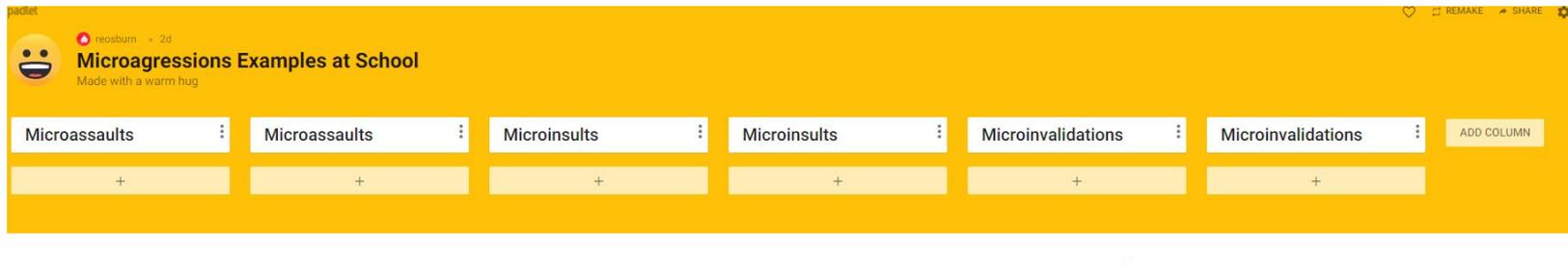
1. **Microaggressions**
2. **Microassaults**
3. **Microinsults**
4. **Microinvalidation**

Do:

1. Discuss in your breakout rooms these areas.
2. Think about how you have seen these in your school/classrooms. (see “cheat sheet” from your mailbox)
3. Add examples to the padlet with your group.

[Examples of Microaggressions Link](#)

[Microaggressions padlet link](#)



Intent vs. Impact

Intent- Part 1

Intent- Pt 2



Impact of Microaggressions

Psychological:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Low Self-Esteem
- Loss in motivation
- Sense of isolation
- Diminished cognition
- Internal dilemma



Internal Dilemma:

“Did I interpret that correctly?”

“What did he mean by that?”

“Should I say something?”

“Saying something may make it worse”

“They'll probably think I'm overreacting”

“Speaking up is going to hurt more than it helps”

Impact of microaggressions

In Schools:

- Poor attendance
- Disengagement in the classroom
- Poor academic performance
- Increased negative behaviors
- Poor relationship between teacher and parents



In the Community:

- Sub par medical services
- Increased risk for interactions with Law Enforcement
- Sense of disconnect in community
- Lack of access to resources
- Perpetuates disparities

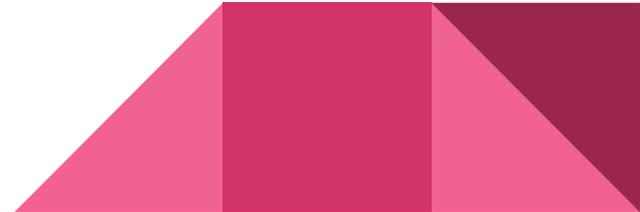


Responding to Microaggressions

Responding to Microaggressions

As the target

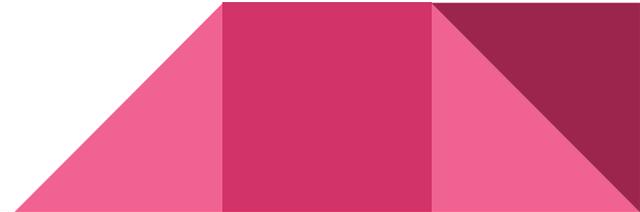
- **Personal safety**
- **Self-agency to respond or not respond**
- **External support**



Responding to Microaggressions

As the bystander

- **Personal safety**
- **Positional power**
- **External support**



Responding to Microaggressions

As the person who is called out (or in)

- **Apologize to the person you harmed**
- **Self-reflection**
- **External support**
- **Practice accountability (change your behavior)**



Becoming an Effective Ally



Paradigm Shifts

1. **Advocating equality → Advocating equity**
2. **Identifying sources of disparities in marginalized families → Eradicating marginalizing practices**
3. **Color Evasiveness (Color Blindness) → Self-examination**
4. **Learning about “other” cultures → Fighting for the rights of marginalized families**
5. **Celebrating diversity → Committing to equity**

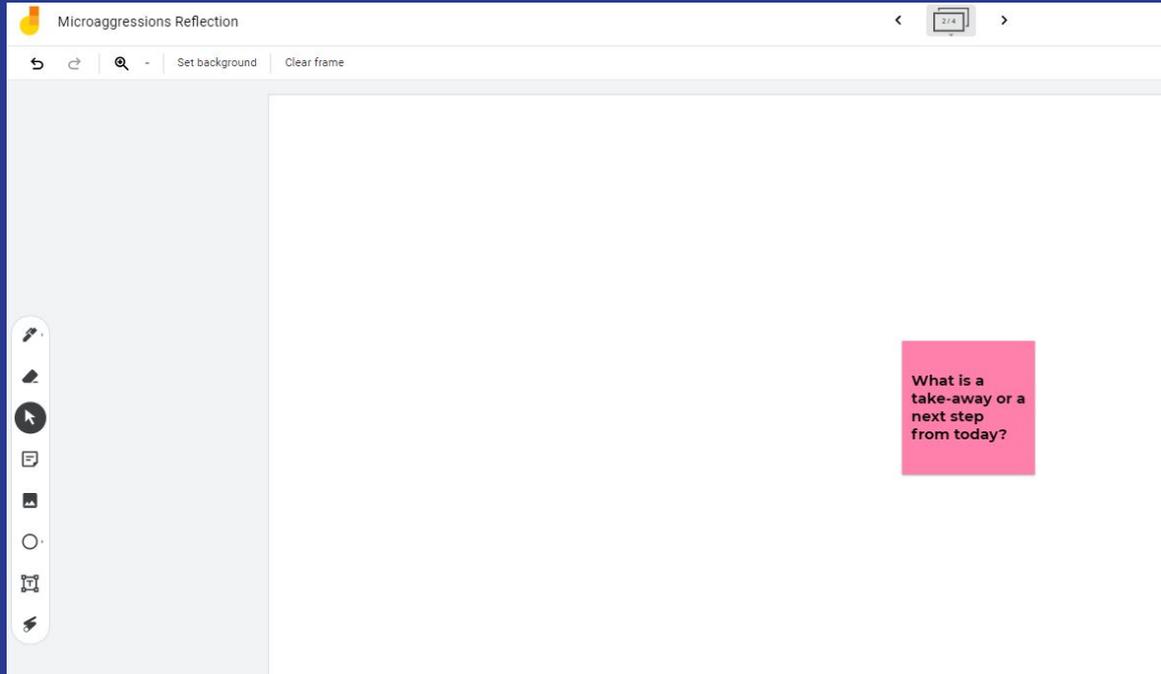
Next Steps

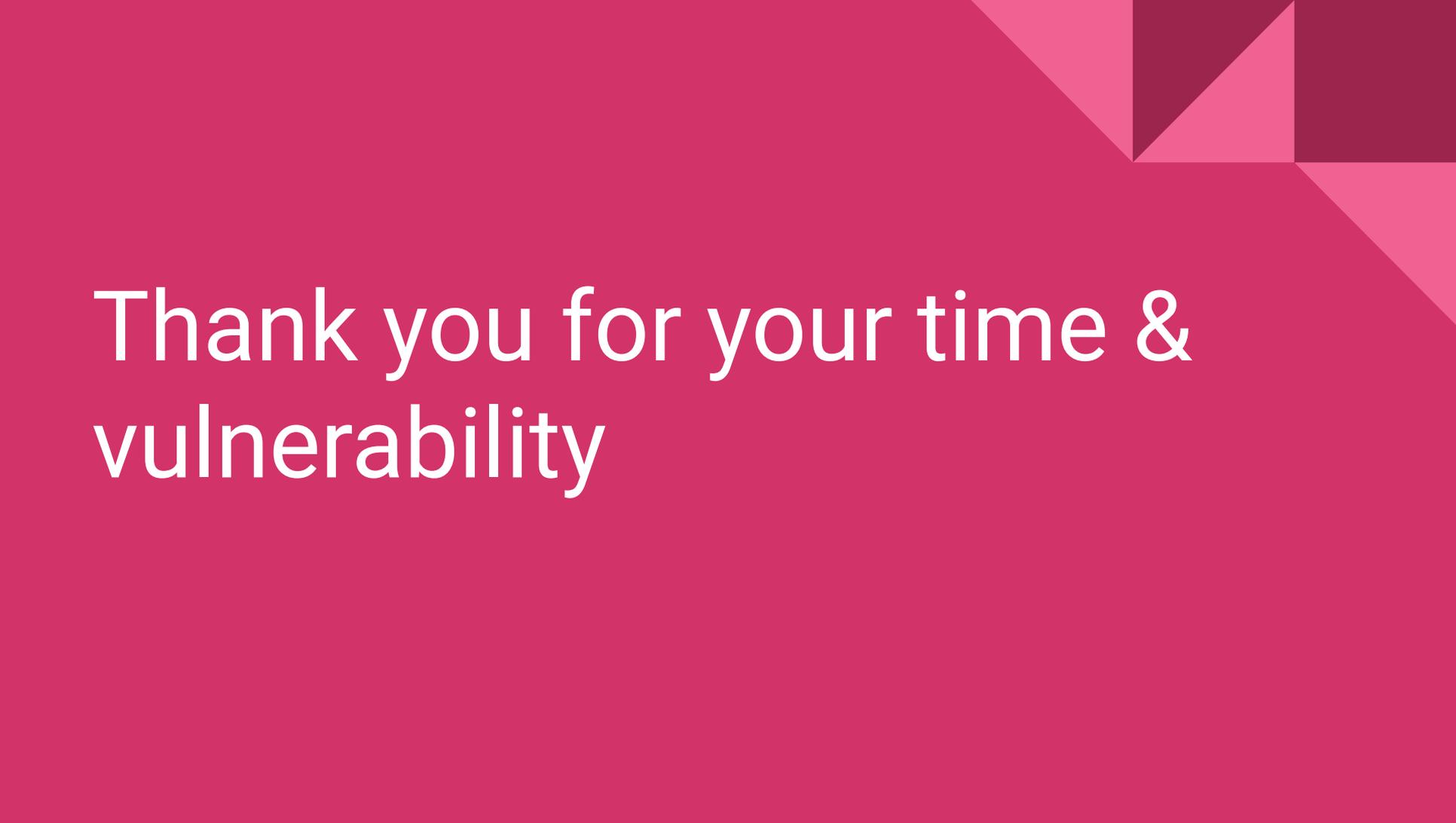
[Microaggressions Reflection Jamboard](#)

- ★ Recognize that dismissive attitudes are harmful.
- ★ Avoid making assumptions or labeling people.
- ★ Be willing to experience discomfort when addressing someone you may have hurt.
- ★ Commit to self-reflection to identify times that you may have been microaggressive at work or in your personal life.
- ★ Participate in continuing education activities.
- ★ Foster a supportive and inclusive environment in your classroom.
- ★ Collaborate with others who are committed to promoting diversity and inclusion work.
- ★ Realize that this is an ongoing journey.

Reflection time

[Microaggressions Reflection Jamboard Link](#)



The background is a solid pink color. In the top right corner, there are several overlapping geometric shapes: a dark pink triangle pointing down and to the left, a medium pink triangle pointing up and to the right, and a dark pink square partially visible on the right edge.

Thank you for your time &
vulnerability

References

<https://iwer.mit.edu/2016/02/05/quiet-discrimination-microinequities-qa-adjunct-professor-mary-rowe/>

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/6315413_Racial_microaggressions_in_everyday_life_Implications_for_clinical_practice

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