

Microaggressions: Impact on African American Candidates in a Teacher Preparation Program

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Problem

Teacher preparation programs (TPP) at predominately white institutions (PWI) struggle to

- attract,
- retain,
- and graduate Black candidates.

Problem

Bellarmino University SOE

- Attracts 1-2 Black candidates in each cohort
- Between 2008-2014 no Black candidates exited our program

Problem

- **Kentucky State University produces 12-15 teachers per year.**
- **Constitutes 48% of African American teachers each year in state of Kentucky.**
 - **Courier-Journal, 2014**

Problem

Completion rates for black students in TPPs are lower than that of their white classmates.

- 2016 report by the Department of Education, “The State of Race in the Educator Workforce”

Problem

Completion rate of undergraduate students majoring in education (within six years after starting)

- 73% of white
- 42% of black students
 - (U.S. Department of Education, 2016)

Problem

There is a lack of parity in our nation's classrooms and teacher preparation programs for African Americans.

- Blacks = 12% of the overall population (NCES, 2015)
- Black teachers = 6.8% of classroom teachers (Goldring, Gray & Bitterman, 2013)
- 16% of K-12 students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015)

Question

**Why is our TPP not enrolling,
retaining and exiting African
American candidates?**

Problem

Microaggressions

- “brief, exchanges that convey denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273)

Problem

Microaggression are

- **everyday,**
- **commonplace,**
- **and often ambiguous form of racism faced by people of color.**

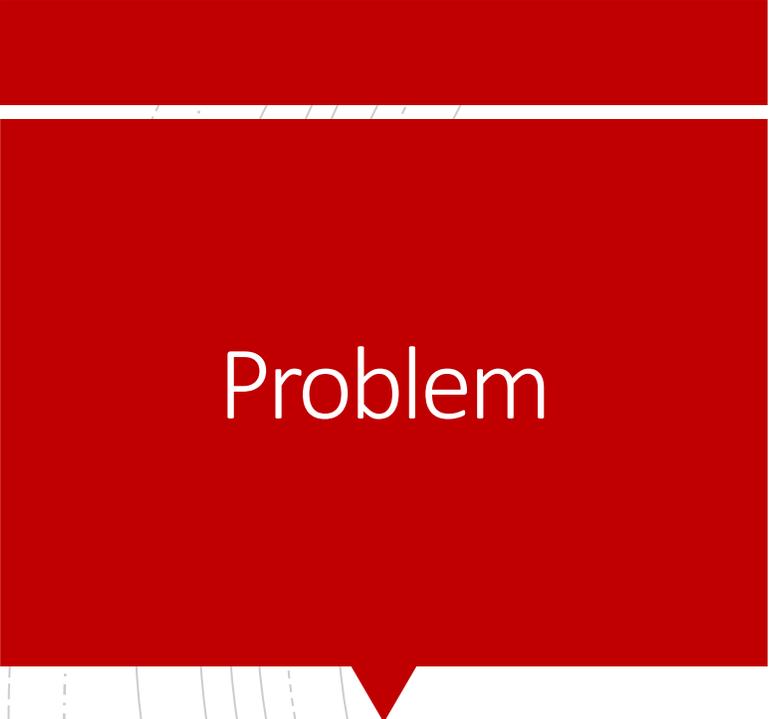
- Grier-Read (2010)

Problem

40% of professors

**50% of students report
microaggressions in the classroom.**

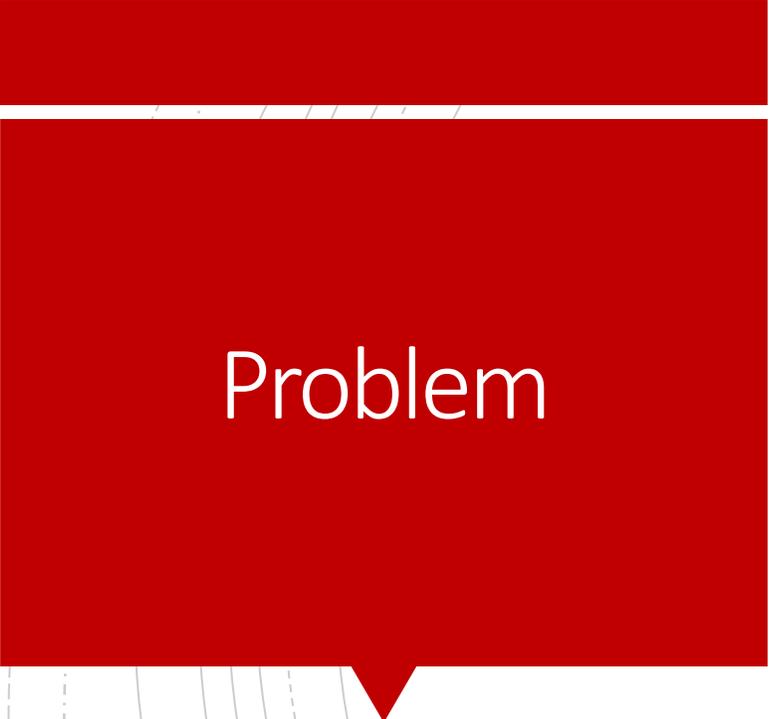
- **Boysen and Vogel (2009)**

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Problem

There are three types of microaggression:

- **Microinsult**
- **Microassault**
- **Microinvalidation**

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Problem

Microinsult

- Communications that subtly convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity" (DeAngelis, 2009)
- Example: A teacher complimenting a Black student for being articulate

Problem

Microassault

- **Conscious and intentional verbal or nonverbal attack...name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions (Sue, et al., 2007, p. 274)**
- **Example: Serving white person before a person of color in a restaurant.**

Problem

Microinvalidation

- **Communications that subtly exclude, negate, or nullify the thoughts, feelings, or experiential realities of a person of color (Sue, et al., 2007, p. 274).**
- **Example: When a teacher states “I don’t see color in my classroom”.**

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Impact

Microaggressions

- Create a negative racial climate
- Create frustration
- Leave recipients isolated and full of self-doubt (Solorzano et al., 2000)
- Create psychological stress in students (Mercer et al., 2011)
- Negatively impact academic performance (Bair and Steele, 2010)

Theoretical Framework

Critical race theory consist of five tenets:

- (1) recognizes that race and racism are enmeshed in every aspect of our daily lives,
- (2) challenges the dominant ideology of equal opportunity and recognizes that someone benefits from it,
- (3) committed to social justice,
- (4) recognizes that people of color have a unique experience and voice that white people do not,
- (5) embraces an interdisciplinary perspective (Evans-Winters and Twyman Hoff, 2011; Solorzano, Ceja and Yosso, 2000; Nieto and Bode, 2012)

Participants

- African American undergraduate students enrolled between 2005 and 2015
- Purposeful sampling yielded 20 possible participants.
- Out of the 20, ten agreed to participate
- Data consisted of one on one interviews with each participant

Data Collection

- Qualitative approach to understand how African American candidates in a TPP at a private PWI experienced and responded to acts of microaggressions
- Data consisted of one-on-one interviews with each participant

Findings

- All of the participants reported experiencing microaggressions.
- Perpetrators of these microaggressions included
 - professors
 - classmates

Findings

Perpetrator of Microaggression: Classmates

- Jayden

“I’m sitting next to a girl and she looked over at me and told me that she’d never been to school with a black before. After that, I felt like I was under a microscope.”

Findings

Perpetrator of Microaggression: Classmate

- Fenton

“Every day he asked, tell me what you are because you’re not really black. You can’t be fully black. There’s no way.”

Findings

Perpetrator of Microaggression: Professor

- Lucie

“I had a professor say there has not been a lot of African Americans that have graduated from the school of education. Which kind of like, I don’t know if they were trying to be motivating or discouraging, but it was like ‘why would you say that?’”

Findings

Impact of Microaggressions

- Participants reported that the negative impact of these incidents delayed or deemed less important their completion of the program.

Findings

Response to Microaggression

- Students responded to microaggressions by seeking out support from the campus community—peers, support systems or “safe spaces”.

Findings

Response to Microaggression

- Steven

“I feel like I was more heard when I got here [the institution] because I joined the black student union and became vice president of that junior year.”

Findings

Response to Microaggression

- **Mentorship was the preferred method.**
- **Mentors included parents, teachers (K-12 and cooperating teachers), and university faculty.**

Findings

Response to Microaggression

- Patricia

“I still talk to my mentor now. That was an awesome friendship to make. It definitely helped me freshman year and having her share her experience helped me to mentally prepare for what was to come. After she left, I would reach out to her to hear how she would handle things.”

Findings

Positive Response to Microaggressions

- Three participants found that their responses to acts of microaggressions could be teachable moments that led to positive experiences for all who were involved.

Findings

Positive Response to Microaggressions

- Jayden

“When you’re of color and you’re surrounded by white people, one thing you want to do is educate them. I feel like that would have just naturally happened. Not in a bad, I’m going to force this on you kind of way, but just like you guys should probably know this [referring to peers in the education program who will soon be teaching a diverse group of students].”

Implications for Practice

Creation of Safe-Spaces/Sanctuaries

- Can take on a number of forms including
 - Black student organizations,
 - Black Greek organizations,
 - Other organizations that serve Black students (Solorzano and Yosso, 2000)

Implications for Practice

Creation of Safe-Spaces/Sanctuaries

Provide a place for Black students to

- “make sense of their experiences on campus
- determine whether a racial microaggression has even occurred,
- find support and validation for their experiential reality, and
- identify alternative ways for responding to such incidents” (Grier-Reed, 2010, p. 183).

Implications for Practice

Providing Mentors

- Assist Black candidates in successfully managing microaggressions
- and assist them in learning from them (McCabe, 2009).

Implications for Practice

Providing Mentors

- Additional benefits include:
 - successful attainment of goals,
 - giving students an advocate to connect with,
 - empowerment, and
 - increasing retention and graduation rates (Lee, 1999; Hunn, Harley, Elliott, and Canfield, 2015).

Implications for Practice

Other Suggested Responses

- Students and faculty believed that it is imperative that faculty respond to these incidents.
 - Boysen (2012)

Implications for Practice

Other Suggested Responses

- Students felt the most effective way to address microaggressions was speaking to students outside of class.
 - Boysen (2012)

Implications for Practice

Other Suggested Responses

- Both students and faculty indicated that faculty led discussions were an effective response.
 - Boysen (2012)

Implications for Practice

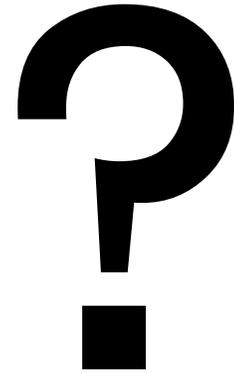
Other Suggested Responses

Discussion allows

- the ambiguous nature of the microaggression to be exposed,
- all parties to be heard and to share their perceptions of the incident,
- legitimized the discussion on race,
- Validate feelings,
- and legitimized a different racial reality (Sue et al. 2009, p. 188).



Questions



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