

# Microaggressions, Harassment, and Workplace Stress

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# Microaggressions:

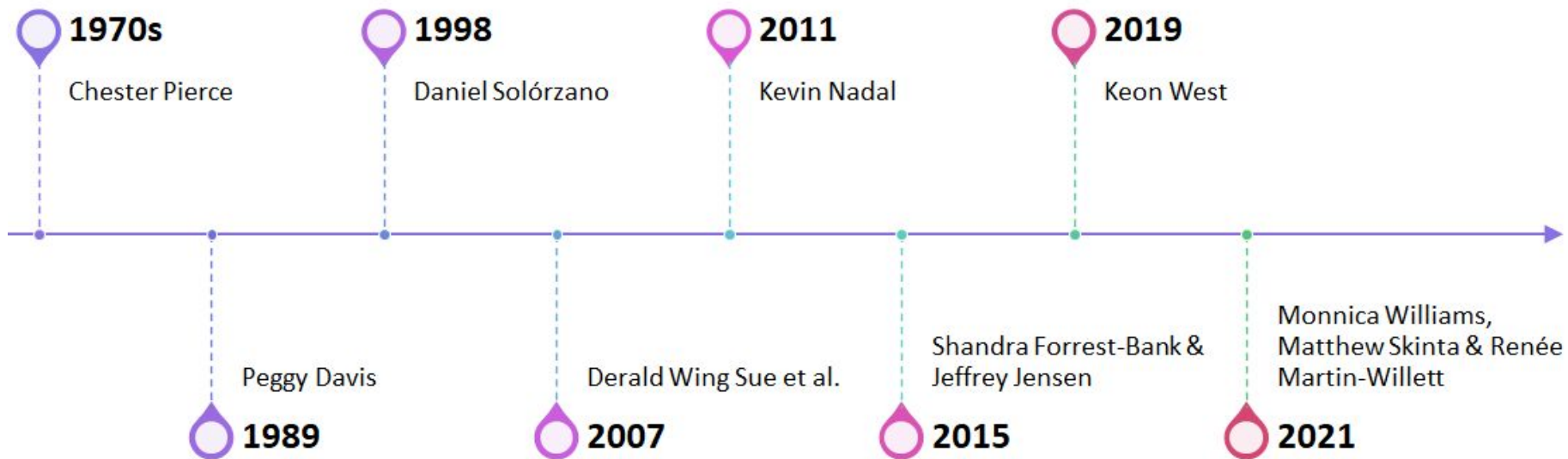
## Definition

“Simply stated, microaggressions are **brief, everyday exchanges** that send **denigrating messages** to certain individuals because of their **group membership**”

(Sue, 2010, p. xvi)

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# Racial Microaggressions: A Select Timeline/Brief History



# Racial Microaggressions: Expansion of Common Themes

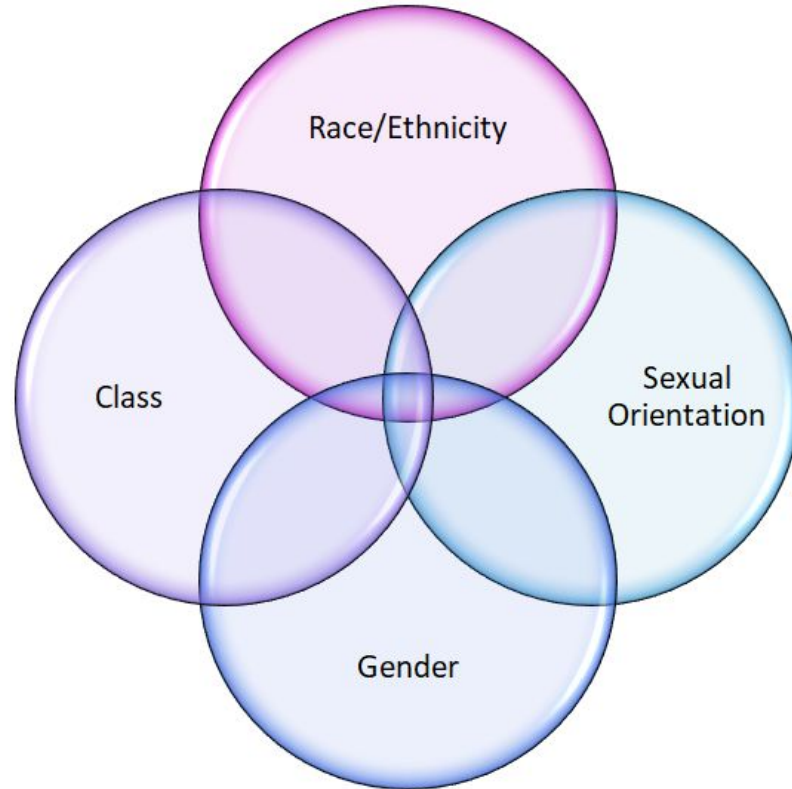
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Not a true citizen	Reverse-racism hostility	Tokenism	Environmental exclusion
Racial categorization and sameness	Denial of individual racism	Criminality or dangerousness	Avoidance and distancing
Assumptions about intelligence, competence, or status	Myth of meritocracy/race is irrelevant for success	Second-class citizen/ignored and invisible	False color blindness/invalidating racial or ethnic identity
Exoticization and eroticization	Pathologizing minority culture or appearance	Connecting via stereotypes	Environmental attacks

(Williams, Skinta, & Martin-Willett, 2021)

# Microaggressions & Intersectionality

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# Microaggressions:

Effects & Consequences

Self-doubt



Anger

Frustration



Exhaustion

Isolation



# Harassment & Workplace Stress

# Harassment: Definitions & Examples

## 7 Most Common Types of Workplace Harassment

- Physical harassment is one of the most common types of harassment at work
- Personal harassment can also be called bullying
- Discriminatory Harassment
- Psychological Harassment
- Cyberbullying
- Sexual Harassment
- 3rd Party Harassment
  - Mobbing - a type of workplace pathology in which employees target a co-worker and engage in an ongoing campaign of disrespectful, and even hostile, behavior.

## Levels of Effects of Workplace Harassment

- Individual Employee
  - a. Psychological/Mental (including, sleep disorders, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and symptom, psychological distress -- burnout)
- Organizational/Institutional
  - a. Morale deterioration
  - b. Environmental toxicity
  - c. Process inefficiencies
- Financial
  - a. Time (staff engagement and productivity)
  - b. High employee turnover
  - c. Losses in human capital (talent/resources)
  - d. Revenues or patron engagement/partnerships



# Workplace Stress

Stress is simply the body's response to changes that create taxing demands.

Work-related stress is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope.

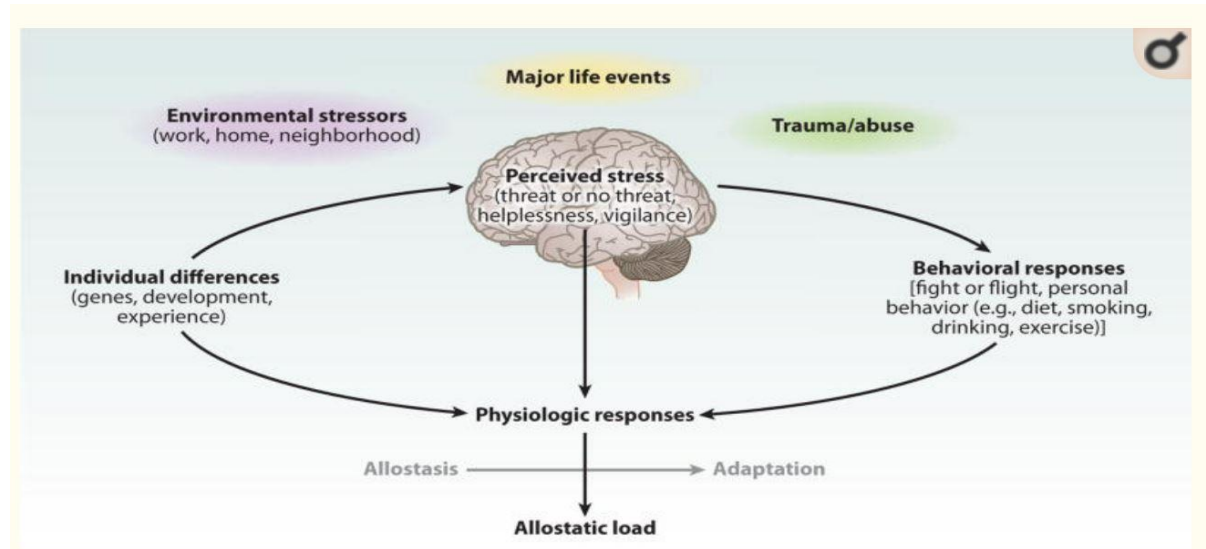


Figure 1

Central role of the brain in allostasis and the behavioral and physiological response to stressors. Redrawn from Reference 5 with permission.

## **POSITIVE** Stress is **EUSTRESS**

- Motivates, focuses energy
- Is short-term
- Is perceived as within our coping abilities
- Feels exciting
- Improves performance

### External examples

Receiving a promotion  
Receiving a raise at work  
Starting a new job  
Taking a vacation  
Retiring

## **NEGATIVE** Stress is **DISTRESS**

- causes anxiety or concern
- Can be short- or long-term
- Is perceived as outside of our coping abilities
- Feels unpleasant
- Decreases performance, can lead to disengagement
- Can lead to mental and physical problems

### External examples

Excessive job demands  
Job insecurity  
Conflicts with teammates and supervisors  
Unproductive and time-consuming meetings  
Incivility and bullying, harassment

# Types of Workplace Stress

# Workplace Stress

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**HYPOSTRESS** is the type of stress experienced by a person who is constantly bored. Someone in an unchallenging job, such as a factory worker performing the same task over and over again, this can be experienced often. The effect of hypostress is feelings of restlessness and a lack of inspiration.

**HYPERSTRESS** is when a person is pushed beyond what she/he/they can handle, this is experienced. Hyperstress results from being overloaded or overworked. It's like being stressed out. When someone is hyperstressed, even little things can trigger a strong emotional response.

(Smith, Balazar, & Wheeler, 2020)

**“Librarians experience a significant amount of job-related stress, which can lead to ... burnout,” as well as low morale.**

(Smith, Balazar, & Wheeler, 2020; Kendrick & Damasco, 2019)

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# Workplace Stressors

## Hindrance stressors

- Career setbacks
- A lack of job security
- Workplace bureaucracy
- How policies impact organizational decisions
- A lack of clear job expectations
- Harassment

## Challenge stressors

- The number of projects that need to be completed
- Time spent working
- The amount of work and the time that is given to complete it
- Deadlines
- The amount of responsibility related to a job

## Stressors in more than one category

- Time at meetings
- Phone calls and office visits
- Career development opportunities

(Smith, Balazar, & Wheeler, 2020)



# Response Strategies

- ❑ Our ultimate goal should be creating organizations where everyone in the organization is able to speak, often the burden of responding falls on people that are marginalized
- ❑ Acknowledge the extreme emotional labor that is associated with responding
- ❑ If a colleague is in immediate danger, please focus on their safety



# Interventions for microaggressions

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## Make the invisible visible

- Make the underlying communication explicit
- Ask for clarification
- Challenge the stereotype
- Document inequitable practices as you see them

## Disarm the microaggression

- Describe what is happening
- Use non-verbal communication
- Interrupt and redirect
- Express disagreement
- Request meetings with senior leadership



# Interventions for microaggressions, cont'd

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## Educate the offender

- Point out commonalities
- Appeal to the offenders values and principles
- Challenge the culture of silence
- Increase the community's exposure to positive examples of diverse cultures

## Seek external reinforcement or support

- Report the act
- Seek support through therapy/ counseling/ community
- Call on consultants to conduct external assessments/ cultural audits

# Ways Women Can Empower Each Other

- Signal boosting
- Looking out for opportunities for each other
- Nominating each other for awards
- Creating space for vulnerability
- Developing “fabulations”

## Things to Avoid

- Invalidating another’s experience(s)
- Blaming the victim
- The Superwoman Myth
- Martyring one’s self (or encouraging another to do this) for a toxic org



# Questions

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**Thank you!**