

MICROAGGRESSIONS in Health Care Settings

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Disclosures

No conflicts of interest or relationships to disclose.

Thank you

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Keith Bailey

Robyn Gobin, PhD

Monnica Williams, PhD

Ellen Ostrow, PhD

Sandra Yamate, JD

My graduate students

Mariah Corey

Adam Kuczynski

Katherine Manbeck

My lab

Elliot Wallace

Pelumi Ajibade

and many students

A few preliminaries

- My lab is not neutral.
- We view microaggressions as a public health hazard, and a significant threat to health justice for URM patients and to emotional well-being, life satisfaction, and physical health for URM staff and providers.
- Stigma, discrimination, and microaggressions contribute to worse health outcomes for people with HIV.
- Persons with HIV may experience an intersection of multiple factors that contribute to stigma and microaggressions, including their HIV diagnosis as well as gender, race, sexual orientation, which may create significant barriers to seeking care and treatment.
- The focus on understanding microaggressors is in the service of developing effective interventions.



Backlash

Quick uptake into workshops, trainings, public discourse

1970
Chester Pierce, MD,
Harvard Psychiatrist

2007
Derald Wing Sue
Columbia Psychologist

~ 200 studies documenting microaggressions, their impacts and significance



Please read each story.

If you were in that situation, how likely would you be to actually SAY or DO the following (or something similar)...

1	2	3	4	5
Very unlikely	Unlikely	Neither likely or unlikely	Likely	Very Likely

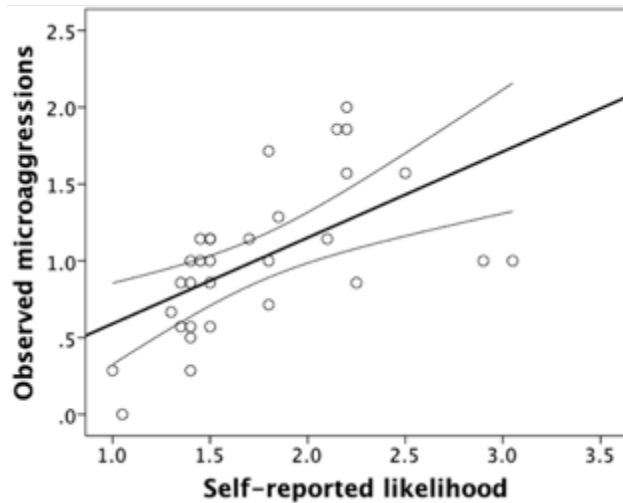


You are having a conversation with an acquaintance at work...

- “Can I touch your hair?”
- “How long has your family been in the U.S.?”
- “Your hair looks beautiful.”

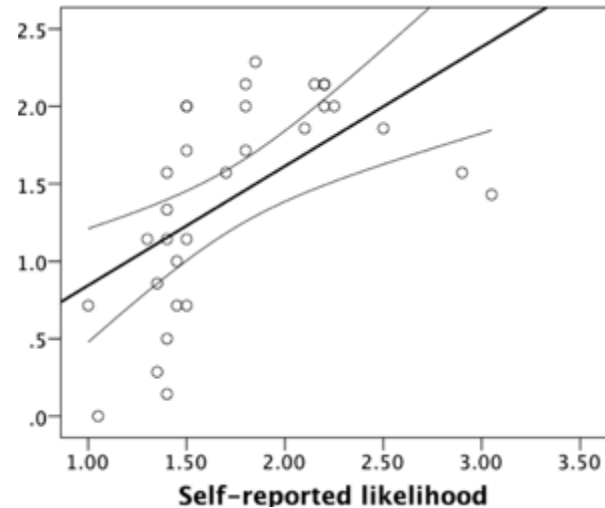
Does self-reported microaggression likelihood predict independently observed microaggressions?

Discussion of police shooting of unarmed Black college football player



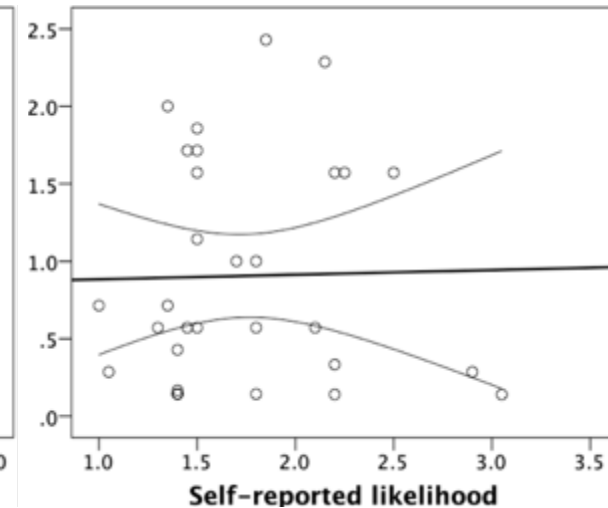
$r = .581$ [.28, .78]
 $p < .001$

Discussion of debate around confederate monument in Louisville, KY



$r = .578$ [.28, .78]
 $p < .001$

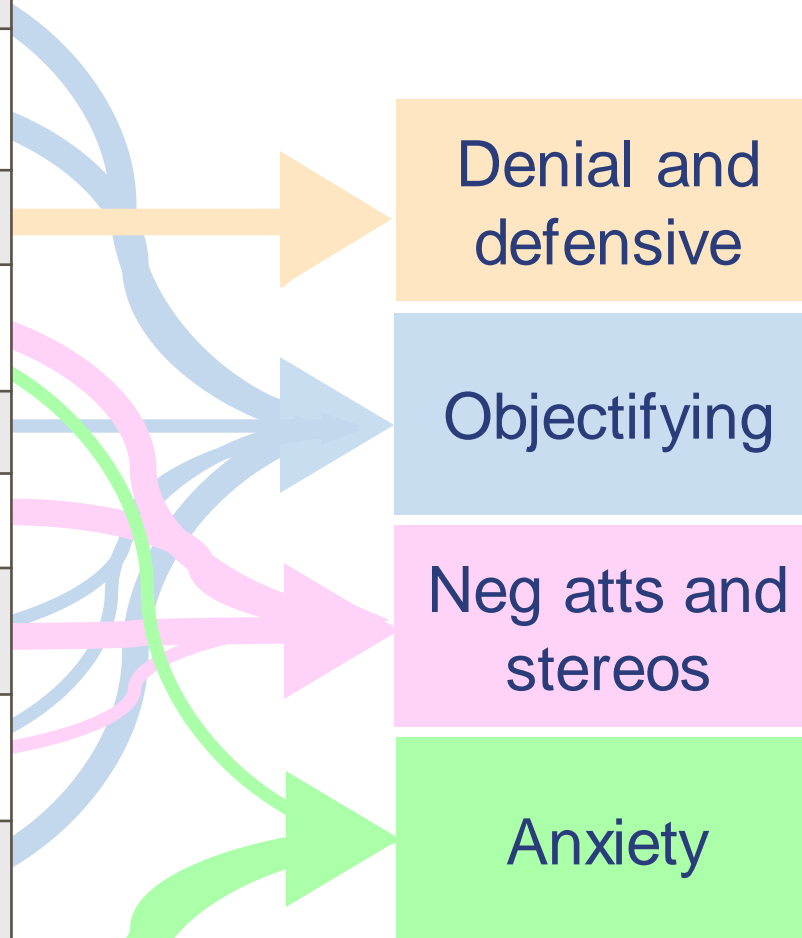
Discussion of punishment for racist fraternity party (blackface, racist chants)



$r = .021$ [-.34, .37]
 $p = .91$

Theme	Description
Forced racial categorization	Compelling a person of color to disclose their racial group to others.
Counter-stereotypical surprise	Making stereotyped assumptions about intelligence, competence, education, income, social status.
Colorblindness	Suggesting that an individual's racial or ethnic identity should not be acknowledged or does not matter.
Assumption of dangerousness	Assuming that people of color are dangerous, untrustworthy, likely to commit crimes.
Denial of personal racism	Arguing that one has no racial bias.
Denial of structural racism	Suggesting that success is rooted in personal efforts and denial of existence of structural racism/privilege.
Pathologizing cultural differences/Expert in culture	Judging and criticizing based on cultural differences in appearance, traditions, behaviors, or preferences.
Connecting via stereotypes	Communicating through stereotypes, including using racist jokes and epitaphs as terms of endearment.
Exoticization and eroticization	Treating a person according to sexualized stereotypes or attention to differences that are seen as exotic.
Physical distancing	Avoiding people of color or taking measures to prevent physical contact or close proximity.
Fragile race avoiding	Appearing unwilling or unable to tolerate discussions of race and racism

Theme
Forced racial categorization
Counter-stereotypical surprise
Colorblindness
Assumption of dangerousness
Denial of personal racism
Denial of structural racism
Pathologizing cultural differences/Expert in culture
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Fragile race avoiding



Confirmatory fit indices:

CFI = .925, TLI = .913, RMSEA = .043, SRMR = .053.

**Are microaggressions different
from other forms of racial bias?**

“Objectifying”

Getting hooked by “category activation”



Category Activation

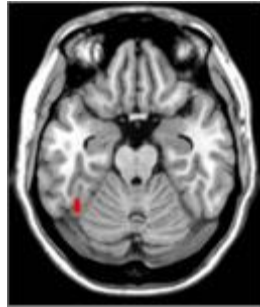
Categorizing



Early attentional processing encodes racial category information in about 100 ms

-Ito & Urland, 2003

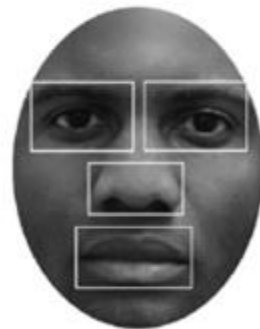
Face processing



Research on fusiform face area suggests we do less individuation of out-group faces

-Feng et al., 2011

Eye contact



White people are less likely to make immediate eye contact with Black people, producing worse emotion recognition

-Friesen, Kawakami et al., 2019

Are microaggressions aggressive?

Is likelihood of microaggressing associated with being more ...

Aggressive? Conservative?

TOTAL	.22 [.07, .36] <i>p</i> = .004	.48 [.36, .59] <i>p</i> < .001
Objectifying	.24 [.09, .38] <i>p</i> = .001	.06 [-.09, .21] <i>p</i> = .402
Neg attitudes and stereotypes	.21 [.06, .35] <i>p</i> = .006	.50 [.38, .60] <i>p</i> < .001
Denial and defensiveness	.10 [-.05, .25] <i>p</i> = .204	.51 [.39, .61] <i>p</i> < .001
Anxiety	.17 [.02, .31] <i>p</i> = .022	.24 [.09, .38] <i>p</i> = .001

**Are microaggressions associated
with racial bias?**

RACIAL BIAS?

I wasn't trying to offend you.

I was just trying to be friendly.

I wouldn't mind if someone asked to touch my hair.

Can I touch your hair?



RACIAL BIAS?

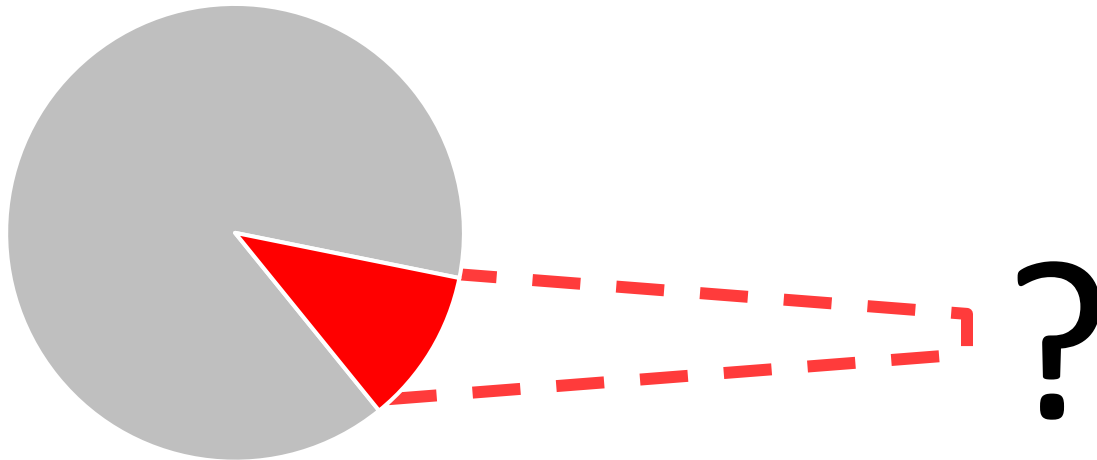
How many ingredients in a stew need to be rotten to make the whole stew toxic?



RACIAL BIAS?

Is racial prejudice an ingredient in this stew of influences?

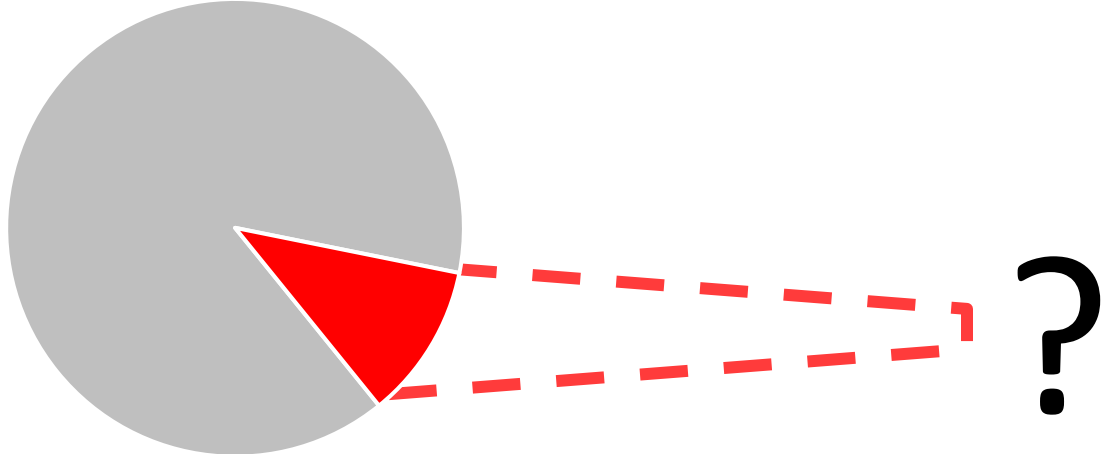
Can I touch your hair?



RACIAL BIAS?

Simple linear regression: Do measures of racial bias predict likelihood of microaggressing?

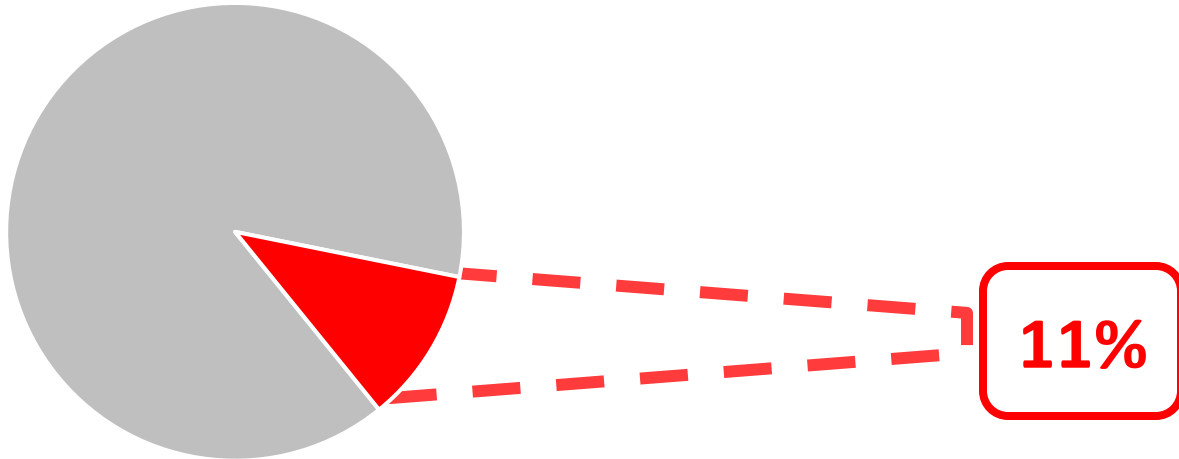
Can I touch your hair?



RACIAL BIAS?

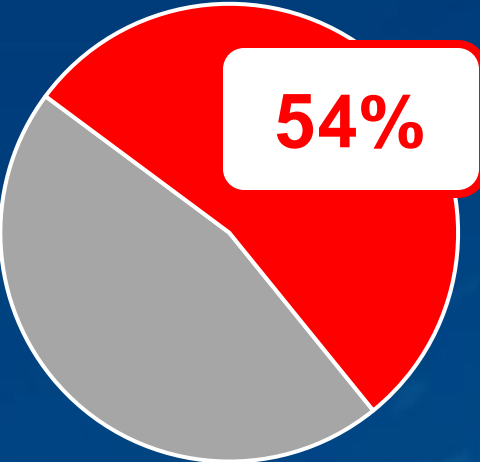
Yes: It is a small but real and toxic ingredient.

Can I touch your hair?

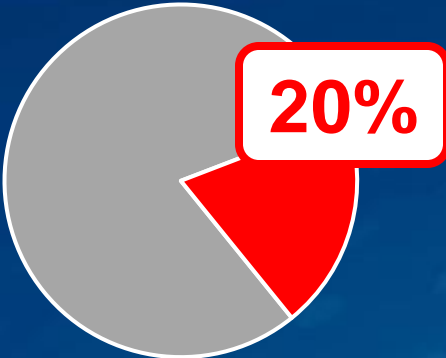


WHAT ABOUT REPEAT OFFENDERS?

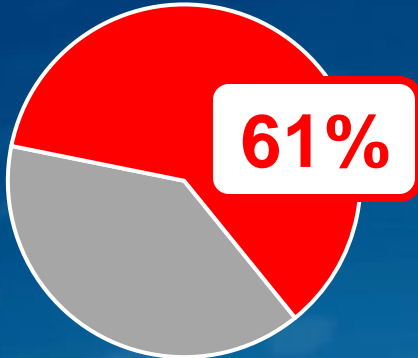
All
microaggressions



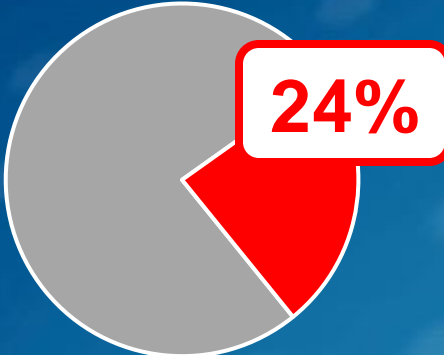
Objectifying



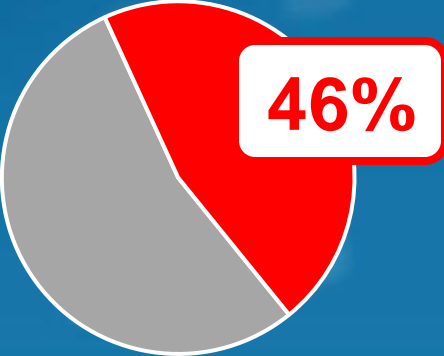
Stereotyping



Anxiety



Denial



**Can we reduce the frequency of
microaggressions and improve
inter-racial interactions?**

Theme
Forced racial categorization
Counter-stereotypical surprise
Colorblindness
Assumption of dangerousness
Denial of personal racism
Denial of structural racism
Pathologizing cultural differences/Expert in culture
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Exoticization and eroticization
Physical distancing
Fragile race avoiding

What to do?

FAST COMPANY

CO.DESIGN | TECH | WORK LIFE | CREATIVITY | IMPACT | AUDIO | VIDEO

03.07.17 | WORKPLACE EVOLUTION

How To Shut Down “Microaggressions” At Work

It doesn't matter if it's intentional or not, no one should have to deal with a daily stream of slights.

npr SIGN IN SHOP DONATE

NEWS ARTS & LIFE MUSIC SHOWS & PODCASTS SEARCH

NATIONAL

Microaggressions: Be Careful What You Say

8:26

April 3, 2014 · 11:51 AM ET
Heard on Tell Me More

QUEUE DOWNLOAD

Theme
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What to do?

Avoidance and suppression are not effective growth strategies.

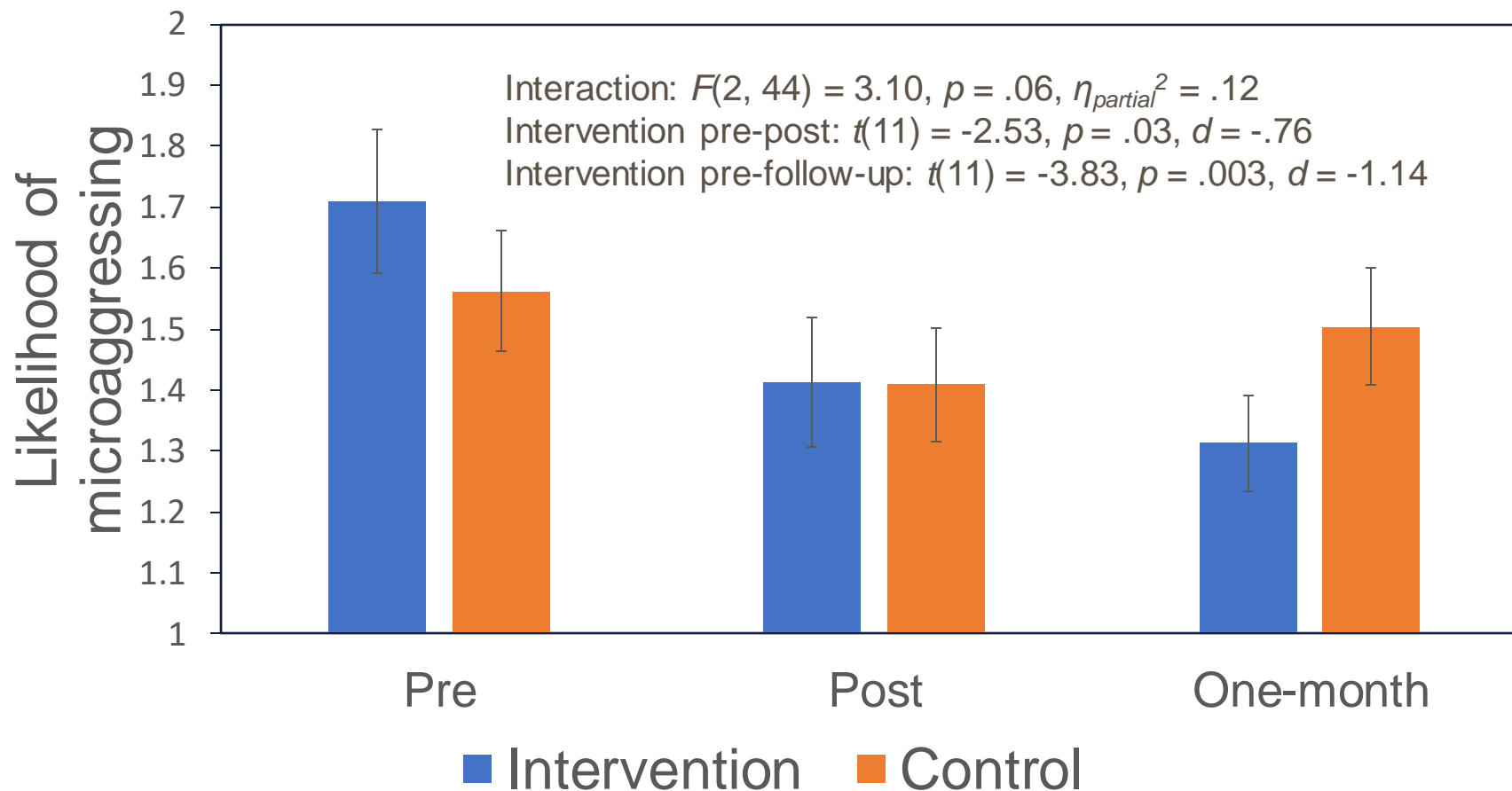
How to succeed in interactions across differences?

Authentic relating and empathy

- Category activation?
- Threat activation?
- Attitude/stereotype activation?
- Colorblindness?

Mindfulness
Exposure

Self-reported improvements in White undergraduate students



Racial challenges

My last doctor told me I was fat, Black, and lazy. I'm not going back there.

That sounds really unpleasant. We'll make sure that kind of stuff doesn't happen here. Let's get back to the interview...

Wow, that was a really racist thing for your last doctor to say...



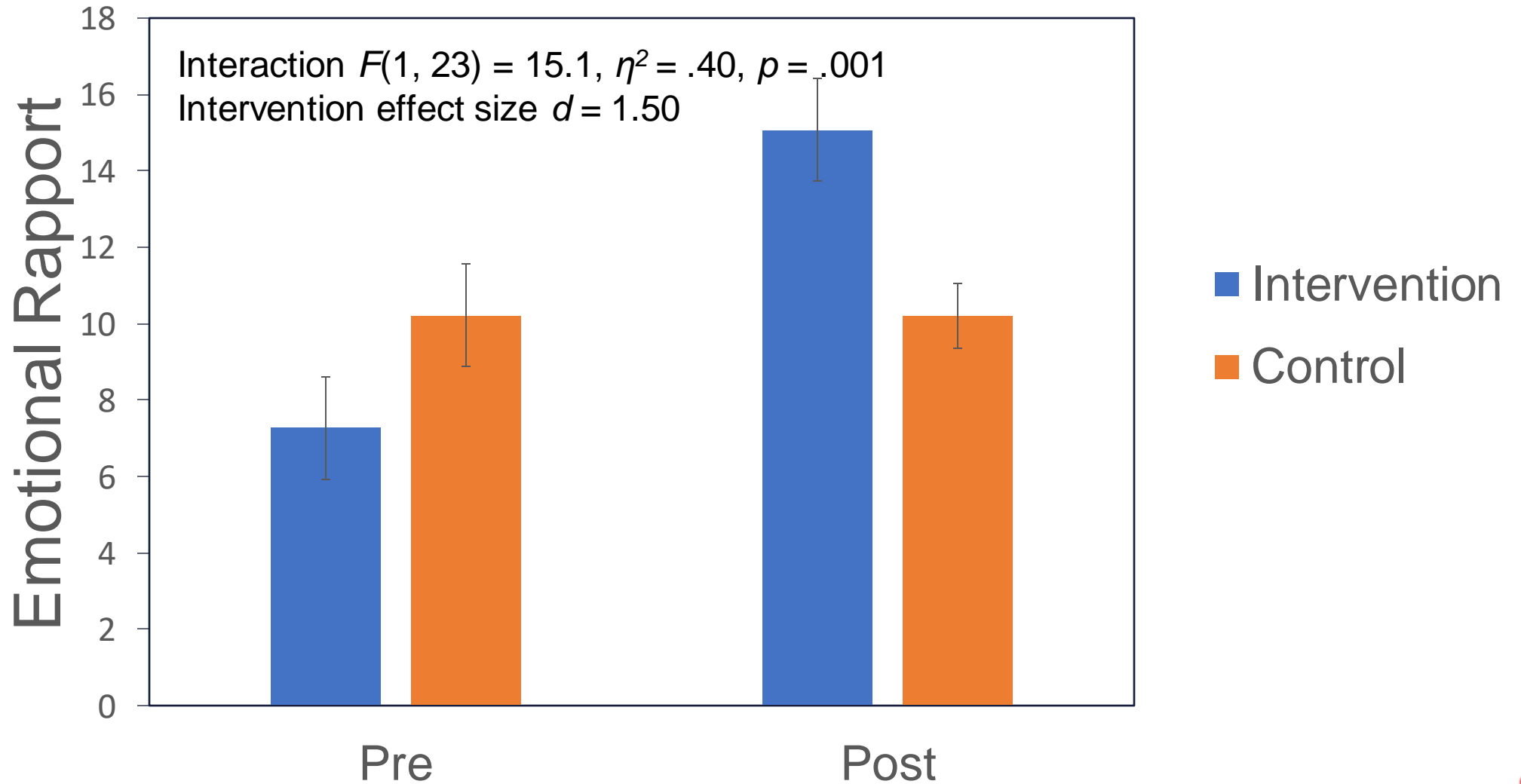
Intervention?



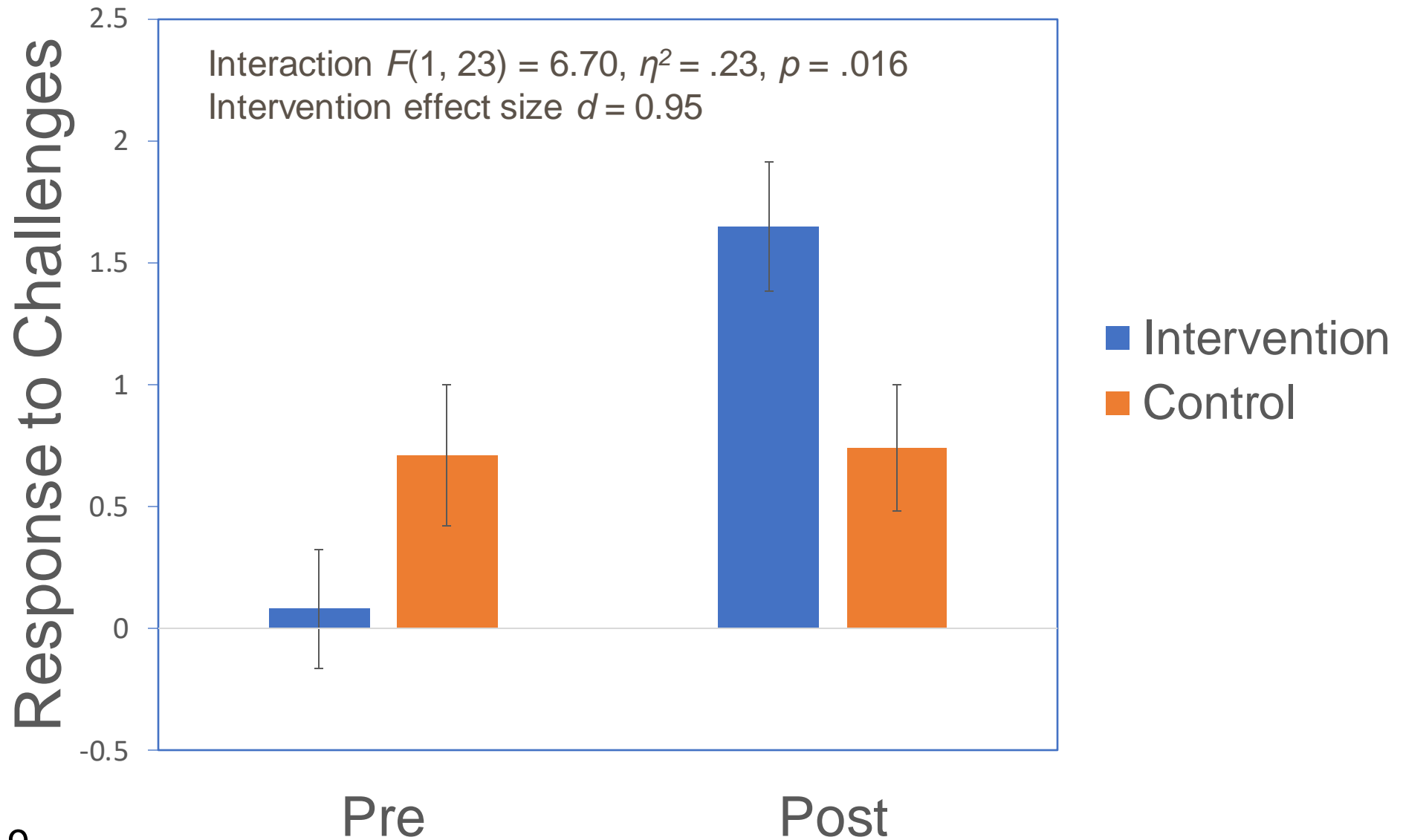
Workshop components (5 hours)

Component	Content
Introduction	
Didactics	Health disparities, inter-racial provider-patient interactions, microaggressions
Mindfulness	Exercises to practice mindful awareness of processes
Practice in interactions	Small groups and role-plays to practice mindful awareness and improved responding

Behavioral Improvements in Medical Students (N = 25)



Behavioral Improvements in Medical Students (n = 25)



COLLEGE STUDENTS

-- Williams, Kanter, Peña, Ching, & Oshin,
2020, *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science*

MEDICAL STUDENTS

-- Kanter, Rosen, Manbeck, Branstetter, Kuczynski, Corey,
Maitland, & Williams, 2020, *BMC Medical Education*

Theory of change

-- Kanter et al., 2020, *Recent Innovations in ACT*
-- Kanter et al., 2020, *Eliminating Race-Based Mental Health Disparities*
-- Rosen et al., 2020, *Eliminating Race-Based Mental Health Disparities*

MICROAGGRESSIONS

-- Kanter et al., 2017, *Race and Social Problems*
-- Kanter et al., 2020, *Race and Social Problems*

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