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Abstract

It appears that most of Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) literature is written for white therapists and their experiences with clients. This impacts the MFT educational experiences of students of color. When students of color are engaged in classrooms, internship experiences, and supervision groups not crafted for their unique experiences with clients as it pertains to race, power dynamics, and other differences highlighted in the therapy room, students are left to decide for themselves how to address these issues in therapy. Furthermore, the lack of literature and discussion in training programs, and the microaggressions that are left unattended and unprocessed may lead to alienation in education and fatigue among persons of color in the field. Surveys were sent to students in MFT graduate programs across the United States and Canada to discern whether and with whom they experienced racial microaggressions in their training programs. The results indicate that many MFT students of color and whites are aware of microaggressions and are impacted by them. Students have opinions about ways to make MFT training programs more inclusive by decreasing microaggression experiences for student therapists.

DISPARITIES IN STUDENT OF COLOR EDUCATION AND RESULTING RACIAL
MICROAGGRESSIONS: CAN MFT TRAINING PROGRAMS DO MORE?

By

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B.A., Villanova University, 2010

Syracuse University
August 2016

Master's Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy

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This work is dedicated to my husband Roderick, the second greatest love I have ever known. When things or people fail me you show me that marriage and family remain. I will forever love and cherish you. Thank you for encouraging me to write.

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Introduction

In Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) education it seems that the majority of clinicians have the opportunity to read literature, and experience educational environments that support their chosen career path. It also appears that clinicians of color and diverse cultural backgrounds are not afforded the same opportunity. Clinicians of color have written about the lack of specific training concerning the management of negative cross-cultural encounters; discussed in further detail in the literature review. Some clinicians of color, like Sue (2010), have also written about the lack of education material that support effective training when therapists of color are working with white clients and clients of color. MFT is a systems oriented field, many of its theories drawing from dynamic encounters that influence the thoughts and behaviors of people. The purpose of this study is to better understand the system dynamics present when MFT trainees are not trained on best practices during negative cross-cultural encounters or microaggression(s), and when professors and supervisors are unable or unwilling to explore ways to challenge or change the system dynamics for the better. This educational system dynamic creates a chasm between students and professors or supervisors in Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) accredited programs. Microaggression as defined by Sue (2010) as: “the 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” (Sue, 2010). Microaggressions will be further explored in the literature review of this paper.

Literature Review

It appears that most of the theoretical and research literature in the field of Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT), even literature pertaining to minority clients and diversity issues, is written for white therapists. Wyatt (2008) interviewed Marriage and Family Therapist Hardy who reported, “Usually most of the books on multiculturalism and psychotherapy are written to the white therapist and say how we can be more informed about ethnic minorities” (para 5). Wyatt proposes that the result of this action may lead to a disconnection between clinicians of color and the MFT field through experienced microaggressions. Nichols (2013) also wrote about this recently stating, “[F]or many years it seemed like the field, like the rest of the country, tried to ignore people of color and the racism they live with everyday” (p. 217). Furthermore, when there is little content covered in MFT graduate programs pertaining to diverse therapists' experiences, this may lead to disaffection, dissatisfaction, violation, and other disempowering experiences for minority students in MFT training programs.

When people of color or varied cultural backgrounds, are not exposed to education experiences crafted for their unique experiences with clients as it pertains to race, power dynamics, and other differences that are highlighted in the therapy room, people of color are left to decide for themselves how to address these issues. If this occurs, education is incomplete and inadequate. Therapists in training from all walks of life may benefit from cross cultural competence. Nichols (2013) writes about the sentiments of Boyd –Franklin (2003) and restates Hardy’s (1993) statements from *War of the Worlds* in the following quote:

African American family therapists such as Nancy Boyd-Franklin and Ken Hardy brought race out of the shadows and forced it into the field’s consciousness. White therapists still, of course, have the option to walk away from these issues. People of color don’t have that luxury (Nichols, 2013, p. 217).

Although Nichols accurately depicts disparities in student of color experiences, one could challenge Nichols' comments by daring to wonder if white therapists can walk away from issues of race in the therapy room. Can we as a collective body of therapists ask for more?

The act of separatism in student of color education isolates American and Canadian student therapists of African descent and other students of color. The separateness promoted by a disparity in education that encourages students to suppress a vital part of themselves for their career has a negative impact. Boyd-Franklin (2003) shares this experience:

To avoid being seen by whites as troublemakers, we suppress the part of ourselves that feels hurt and outraged by the racism around us, instead developing an 'institutional self' – an accommodating facade of calm professionalism calculated to be nonthreatening to whites" (p. 52).

By omitting the experiences of clinicians of color in our research, scholarship, and educational training programs, the field neglects this population. The neglect can be experienced as a microaggression by omission. MFTs' of color presence and experiences appear not to be valued. Additionally, MFT students who become professionals in the field are left to determine how to address microaggression issues with supervisors, colleagues, and clients if they choose to remain MFT's at all. To date very few have written about the effects of these experiences as it relates to client contact. Stone and ChenFeng (2015) are two of the few MFT writers who have written specifically about microaggressions, stating:

While most MARRIAGE AND FAMILY therapy (MFT) training programs work to promote multicultural-awareness and sensitive therapists, the discussions related to the student therapist experience of microaggressions and discrimination in the classroom, supervision, internship and/or the therapy room are not often facilitated. This topic is also not widely discussed in the literature (p. 14).

The conscious efforts of Boyd-Franklin (2003), Wyatt (2008) and later by Stone and ChenFeng (2015) are effective in highlighting ways MFT student of color experiences are avoided in training programs and how the lack of representation leads to unsafe educational experiences.

Additionally, Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, and Esquilin (2007) write, “racial microaggressions are potentially present whenever human interactions involve participants who differ in race and culture (teaching, supervising, training, administering, evaluating, etc.)” (p. 284). Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, et al. mention racial microaggressions are potentially present during cross cultural interactions. In the quote below Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, et al. (2007) outline ways negative cross cultural encounters can occur in MFT education:

In the area of counseling and therapy, for example, research may also prove beneficial in understanding cross-racial dyads in which the therapist is a person of color and the client is White or in which both therapist and client are persons of color. Investigating these combinations of cross-racial dyads would be useful, because it is clear that no racial/ethnic group is immune from inheriting the racial biases of the society (p. 284).

Though “no racial/ethnic group is immune from inheriting the racial biases of the society” therapy programs are erected specifically to address the social dynamics that create chaos, unpleasant experiences, and undesirable behaviors within a society (p. 284).

Other therapy training programs acknowledge macroaggressions experienced by people of color through textbooks and work experiences. Social Work writers Hunn, Harley, Elliot & Canfield (2015) write, “While experienced by our clients, microaggressions are experienced by African American social work faculty, shaping, steering, and otherwise affecting our personal lives and professional practice. Last, students of color attending predominately White institutions (PWIs) often experience microaggressions” (p. 42). In light of this recent research that highlights students of color who attend PWIs recurrent experience with microaggressions, why has the MFT field neglected to facilitate more research and discussion on microaggressions? Berry and Asamen (1989) write, “These subtle, minor stunning, automatic assaults are a major offense mechanism by which Whites stress Blacks unremittingly and keep them on the defensive, as well

as in a psychologically reduced condition”. They continue stating, “Microaggressions simultaneously sustained defensive-deferential thinking and eroded self-confidence in Blacks” (p. 309). Their research indicated, “it seemed of paramount importance that Blacks in any situation become aware of how to anticipate, assess, and counter microaggressions” (p. 309). It seems this rarely happens in MFT programs. Solorzano (1992) speaks about how minority students at predominantly white schools feel out of place:

Since the scholars were raised in predominantly working-class backgrounds and they self-identified with a racial/ ethnic group that is marginalized in U.S. society, it should come as no surprise that some felt out of place in higher education institutions, many of which have an elite status and were predominantly white (p. 128).

MFT training programs are also considered by Northey (2009) to be “predominantly white” (p. 309). Northey (2009) restates the work of Duffy (2004) stating, MFT is “predominantly White” with whites making up “91%” of the field in 2004 (p. 309). When white faculty members who are members of elite institutions that are predominantly white neglect to discuss race and/or do not react when a racial microaggression is witnessed, it has the potential to alienate all students and in particular, students of color. Solorzano (1992) restates a student explanation:

[H]aving equal access is not only sitting in the same classroom with Whites, hearing the same lectures as Whites, reading the same books as Whites, or performing the same experiments as Whites. This is not equal opportunity because the content of these varied experiences validates the experiences of White men and ignores or invalidates the experiences of women and men of color and to a lesser extent White women (p. 128).

Although the aforementioned groups do experience a great deal of microaggressions, many other marginalized groups also adhere to similar circumstances.

Intersectionality

Within society and in training programs there are areas where cross-racial dyads are no longer dyads and are instead triads, quads, or hexagons with interconnected inequalities or injustice. These compounded inequalities have come to be known as intersectionality. Butler (2015) writes, “While intersectionality has become an established and much used theory in feminist and critical race studies, the concept remains relatively underused by systemic family therapists and on family therapy training courses” (p. 583). According to Smith (2013), “The concept of intersectionality is not an abstract notion but a description of the way multiple oppressions are experienced” (para. 1). Seedall, Holtrop, and Parra-Cardona (2014) mention the work of Weber (2000) writing:

[A]n intersectional approach takes into account the following five dimensions: (a) the historical and global context of groups; (b) how the meanings attached to social inequalities may have changed over time; (c) the existence of power and privilege differentials in interpersonal relationships; (d) the role of society and institutions in marginalizing groups; and (e) the effects of multiple social inequalities operating simultaneously in every situation, with some occupying the foreground and others being less visible (p. 140).

This research focuses mainly on Weber’s (2000) part c, “the existence of power and privilege differentials in interpersonal relationships” and part d “the role of society and institutions in marginalizing groups” (p. 140). These two parts are discussed throughout this paper.

While there is a general understanding that humans are complex and at times live in multifarious relationships with one another that have an impact on behavior based in intersectionality, this researcher focuses exclusively on race, and power dynamics inherent in relationships in which one race is privileged through institutional racism.

The oppressions a person who is black and a woman can face are better examined in the context of racism and sexism. These two societal oppressions are not exclusive of one another

but accompany each other. During the journey of life this person can be oppressed as a black person, woman or a black woman. Additionally, during a cross racial encounter with perhaps a professor, this person who is black and woman can be introduced into a system where she is structurally disempowered as a student, as a black person, as a woman, or as a black female student. Similarly, women who are Middle Eastern and/or Muslim can struggle with oppression rooted in status as a woman, her racial/ethnic background, and her faith in a post 9/11 world.

Professor Daneshpour (2009) writes, “For Muslim women living in the United States, negotiating identities across different cultural terrains became decidedly more challenging after the events of 9/11” (p. 347). Daneshpour discusses her work with clients’ who had negative perceptions of her post 9/11, “Changing such perspectives, opening minds, and developing empathy and understanding toward Muslim women—all were the products of engaging my clients with such skewed imagery of Muslim women and the culture as a whole” (p. 348). Daneshpour used her experiences with microaggressions to learn how to educate clients about the plights of Muslim women post 9/11. During MFT training students may benefit from training programs that address varied experiences in the training room as it pertains to marginalized groups and clinical work. The intersections of multiple experienced microaggressions and power dynamics appear to have room for further exploration in multiple combinations.

Understanding the complexities of the supervisory relationship when an intersectionality of power and relational safety meet cross cultural interactions may improve MFT training program relations between students and supervisors. Hernandez and McDowell (2010) write, “We have found that supervision approaches that focus on personal growth without understanding integrating the dynamics of social location and structural power attempt to flatten the supervisory relationship as if supervisor and supervisee are equals”(p. 32). An

acknowledgement, awareness, and effort to address the system dynamics of supervisor-supervisee with respect to the training environments may also improve MFT training.

Researching ways to improve cross cultural interactions, microaggression experiences, and the intersection of other differences in training programs may improve educational standards.

Thesis Statement

It is the commitment of this author to shed light on the potential challenges for Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) students of color if and when their experiences are not represented, discussed, and valued in training programs. The purpose of this thesis is to discern if diverse students are receiving educational experiences that engage their unique gifts and challenges as MFTs. This survey of MFT's in graduate programs hopefully sheds light on their experiences.

The intent of this study is to survey MFT graduate students to determine if they are experiencing microaggressions in accredited masters programs and if so how prevalent. This author hypothesized that graduate students of color experience microaggressions from teachers, supervisors, classmates, and clients, which go unaddressed in their training programs. Family Therapy Magazine articles such as Stone and ChenFeng's 2015 publication provide evidence that MFT students are affected by the current academic conditions and the lack of academic materials necessary to create systemic inclusion and decrease microaggression experiences for MFT students of color. This continued climate of exclusion alienates communities of color and their allies and leads to incomplete education, which has the potential to create hostile educational environments.

Approach / Methods

Approach

Information for this research was solicited from COAMFTE accredited Master's Program students via survey. Students in accredited MFT graduate programs were asked to complete the Cort Survey of Microaggression Experiences with permission from their respective universities. Neither the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy nor COAMFTE required special permission to recruit student participants and distribute surveys to program chairs in the various programs and institutions. All students enrolled in accredited programs were eligible to participate in the 10 question survey distributed to programs in the United States and Canada using the internet platform Qualtrics (See Appendix A). The Cort Survey of Microaggression Experiences includes closed ended, contingency questions, and one open ended question. The last question in the survey is an open ended question which asked students what they wished they were receiving from their graduate program. This question was employed for exploratory study due to the lack of theoretical development in this subject area.

After Syracuse University's (SU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted approval, the author contacted department chairs from accredited programs and asked for student distribution lists or for the department leaders to distribute the survey to their students. Each student was informed of the voluntary nature of the study and that they were able to drop out of the study at any time without consequence.

Materials

The ten question survey was developed by the researcher and then face validated by the advisor and reader during a proposal meeting. Changes were made to the survey questions and

the survey was approved to be distributed. The material is comprised of seven close ended questions, two matrix questions and one open ended question. Participants were instructed that the survey would take them less than ten minutes to complete.

Method

This research data was analyzed for statistical significance using, Fisher's Exact Test. Fisher's Exact Test was used as opposed to the Chi-Square Test due to more than 20% of the expected frequency table containing frequencies less than 5. Fisher's Exact test is used to determine if microaggressions are occurring amongst students and how prevalent they are. Content analysis is used to understand themes in response to question 10.

Collection of Data

Each person listed as the "program" or "department chair" on the COAMFTE website was contacted and asked to participate in the survey. Persons matching these qualifiers were provided a sample Letter of Cooperation and asked to sign the letter indicating their intent to participate in the survey, and return the letter. All who were contacted were asked to sign and return the Letter of Cooperation before distributing the survey to their students. Students at Syracuse University were the only students who were contacted directly after obtaining a signed Letter of Cooperation from the Syracuse University Department Chair.

COAMFTE

To conduct this study within the parameters of the COAMFTE, the senior leadership of COAMFTE was contacted to determine if researchers were permitted to distribute surveys via

department or program chairs and to recruit students via their program administration. COAMFTE deemed that it was up to each department chair to determine if they wanted to participate in the survey and that no special permission was necessary from COAMFTE. The SU IRB indicated that each participating university or program needed to agree to participate in the survey by submitting a Letter of Cooperation. In this letter directors or chairs agreed to cooperate in the study by allowing their students to participate in the survey or not. Students were also informed that they were not required to complete the survey.

Results

One hundred and four COMFTE accredited MFT department chairs or program chairs were contacted and asked to participate in the survey. All universities contacted were COMFTE accredited schools. Four Chairs wrote back indicating that their institutions required that they abstain from sending surveys to their students. Three Chairs inquired about the research and sought information regarding the researcher's institution review board approval. Two Chairs agreed to participate in the survey however never returned letters of cooperation indicating it was acceptable for their students to participate in the study. Eleven Chairs officially agreed to participate in the study by signing and returning letters of cooperation and forwarding the survey to their graduate student body. During data gathering one chair indicated that some of his or her PhD students participated in the study. Of the students recruited to participate, 51 students completed the survey. All the results are aggregated and analyzed from this population sample. This population sample is reflective of many regions within the United States. The only region with no Chairs agreeing to participate in this research study was the Southeastern portion of the United States. This region is colloquially known as The South. Though Texas is at times

considered to be a part of The South, for the purpose of this research Texas is classified by its geographic location in the Southwestern part of the United States. Participants in Texas did participate in the study and are considered in the Southwestern United States data.

Student Responses by Region

Of the eleven Program Chairs who agreed to and participated in this research, 51 students responded to the research questions. The student participant geographic location breakdown was:

Chart 1

Respondent Self-Reported Geographic Location

Question 1 Region	Number of Responses	%
NR	1	2%
Canada	3	6%
Midwest	16	31%
Northeast	18	35%
Northwest	2	4%
Other	2	4%
Southeast	2	4%
Southwest	7	14%
Grand Total	51	100%

There were students in each region who reported experiencing or learning of inflicted microaggressions. Again, microaggressions were defined as “the 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” (Sue, 2010). The majority of the students reported experiencing or learning of inflicted microaggressions in their MFT training programs.

Chart 2

Learned of or Experienced Microaggression(s)

Q7_Aggression	N	%
NO	18	35%
YES	33	65%
Grand Total	51	100%

When these numbers are cross tabulated to account for students’ race the following numbers are revealed.

Respondent Microaggression Experiences Cross Tabulated By Race

Question 7				
Microaggression	Question 3	N	%	
NO	Black or African American	1	2%	
	Other	1	2%	
	White or European American	16	31%	
	Total	18	35%	
YES	African	1	2%	
	Asian	5	10%	
	Black or African American	7	14%	
	Hispanic or Latino	1	2%	
	Other	3	6%	
	Person with two or more races	2	4%	
	White or European American	14	27%	
	Total	33	65%	
	Grand Total		51	100%

According to chart three, nineteen students of color indicated experiences with learned of or experienced microaggressions. Fourteen white students indicated that they did not have learned of or experienced microaggressions. One students of color, and one student who self-identified as other indicated that they did not experience or learn of microaggressions in their training

environment. In contrast 14 students of white or European American descent reported that they did not experience or learn of microaggressions in their training environment. The Fisher's test reveals a relationship between race and microaggressions. A person of color stands a greater chance of experiencing a microaggression than a white student and there is a disparity in experienced and learned of microaggression experiences between students of color and whites in this data sample.

Survey Omissions

Though students had the opportunity to answer each question some respondents elected not to answer all of the questions. Question 10 was the only open ended question and it was also the most omitted question in the survey. Twenty students out of 51 total survey respondents answered question 10. Each of the questions was a valuable source of information gathering.

Race

Survey takers represented people of African, Asian, Asian-Americans, Black or African-American, Native American, White or European American decent. The largest demographic of survey takers represented the U.S. majority population and self-identified themselves as White. Chart 4 redistributes the racial breakout of the survey.

Respondent Racial Breakout

Question 3	N	%
African	1	1.96%
Black or African American	8	15.69%
Asian	5	9.80%
Hispanic or Latino	1	1.96%
Person with Two or more Races	2	3.92%
White or European American	30	58.82%
Other	4	7.84%
Grand Total	51	100.00%

Respondents were permitted to select more than one group with whom to identify. Four student respondents chose not to identify themselves with a specific racial group.

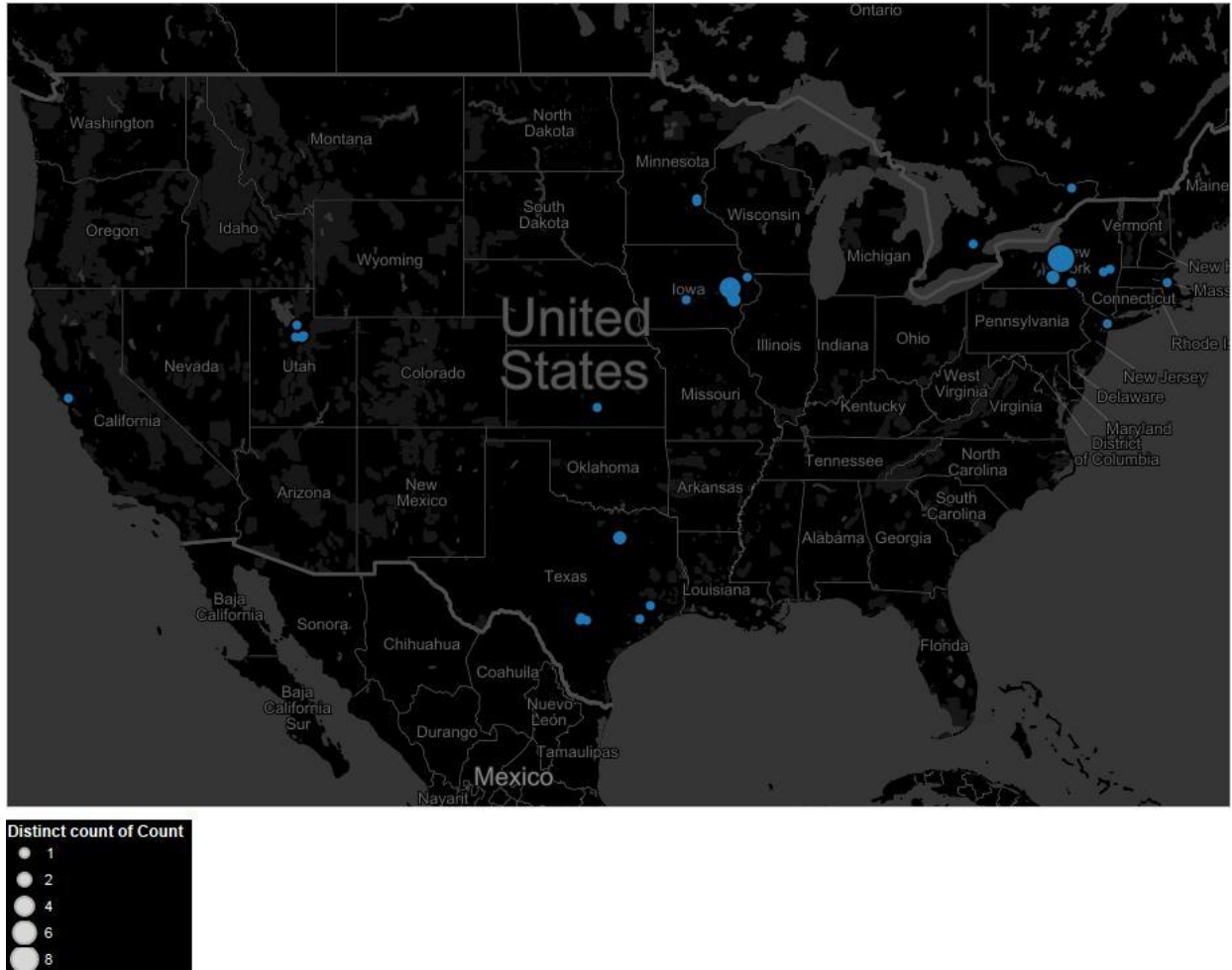
Students responses to questions 2 and 3 varied at times (please refer to parts A and B of the appendix). Some students, who chose to identify themselves, for example as Native American, indicated that others usually identified them as White. For the purpose of this study, the way in which others usually identified the student was used as their race. Since race is socially constructed by mostly U.S. majority populations the implications of one's race is usually

determined by ways the majority chooses to identify a person and unfortunately not how one chooses to identify oneself.

Regional Location

Respondents came from various American and Canadian regional locations. Figure 1 displays in dots the American states and Canadian provinces where people completed the Cort Survey of Microaggression Experiences. These locations were generated by qualtrics using IP addresses and were not self-reported regions. The regions with the most highlighted survey takers were New York State, Texas, and Iowa respectively. Due to an online distanced based University participating in the survey it is plausible to fathom that distanced based students could be in any state or country with computer access. As a result, this graph identifies U.S. and Canadian locations where the survey was taken and not necessarily the university associated with student survey takers.

Figure 1



Statistical Significance

A Fisher Exact Test¹ was conducted to determine if there is a relationship between race and experienced microaggression. The hypothesis is as follows:

H_0 : Race and experienced microaggression are independent.

H_1 : Race and experienced microaggressions are not independent

¹ Fisher Exact Test is used in this case since, more than 20% of the expected frequency table contains frequencies less than 5, therefore a chi-square test would be inappropriate and a Fischer test is conducted.

A significant interaction was found between race and experienced microaggressions ($p = .004$, FET). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that race and experienced microaggressions are not independent.

Contingency Table

Row Labels	Other	PoC	White	Grand Total
No	1	1	16	18
Yes	5	14	14	33
Grand Total	6	15	30	51

Expected Values

Q7	Other	PoC	White	Total
No	2.117647	5.294118	10.58824	18
Yes	3.882353	9.705882	19.41176	33
Total	6	15	30	51

Fisher Exact Test

p-value 0.003571

Fisher's Exact Test Results

Fisher test reveals a relationship between race and microaggressions. A person of color stands a greater chance of experiencing a microaggression in MFT training programs. Fisher's test also indicates that people of color stand a greater chance of experiencing microaggressions in the classroom, and amongst classmates, and clients.

Chart – 6

In The Classroom

Q7 – 3	Other	PoC	White	Grand Total
No	2	2	26	30
Yes	4	13	4	21
Grand Total	6	15	30	51

Expected Values

Q7 - 3	Other	PoC	White	Total
No	3.529412	8.823529412	17.64706	30
Yes	2.470588	6.176470588	12.35294	21
Total	6	15	30	51

Fisher Exact Test

p-value 0.0000015

Amongst Classmates

Sum of count Row Labels	Column Labels			Grand Total
	Other	PoC	White	
No	4	9	27	40
Yes	2	6	3	11
Grand Total	6	15	30	51

Expected Values

Row Labels	Other	PoC	White	Total
No	4.705882353	11.76470588	23.53	40
Yes	1.294117647	3.235294118	6.471	11
Total	6	15	30	51

Fisher Exact
Test

p-value

0.0486647

Amongst Clients

Sum of count Row Labels	Column Labels Other	PoC	White	Grand Total
No	4	3	20	27
Yes	2	11	10	23
(blank)		1		1
Grand Total	6	15	30	51

Expected Values

Row Labels	Other	PoC	White	Total
No	3.24	7.56	16.2	27
Yes	2.76	6.44	13.8	23
Total	6	14	30	50

Fisher Exact Test

p-value

0.0161850

Prevalence of Microaggression

Sixty- five percent of respondents indicated that racial macroaggressions either happened to them or that they learned about microaggressions against other students in classrooms, internship sites, with professors, administrators, classmates, or with clients. It appears that the intersectionality between power dynamics and collective microaggression revealed in this survey exposes a larger trauma occurring across the nation and in Canada. Student of Color and allied White student therapists who indicated experiences with microaggressions reported that 76 % of

the time microaggressions were not addressed by administrators and 64% of the time microaggressions were not addressed by professors at COAMFTE-Accredited MFT Programs.

Chart - 9

Students who reported experienced microaggressions. Question 7 = Q7; Have you experienced or learned of racial micro-aggressions in your graduate program?

Question 7		
Microaggression?	N	%
NO	18	35%
YES	33	65%
Grand Total	51	100%

Chart - 10

Microaggression Addressed by Administration?

Question 7			
Microaggression?	Q8 1	N	%
YES		3	9.09%
	No	25	75.76%
	Yes	5	15.15%
	Total	33	100.00%

Of the students that reported having experienced microaggression, 76% reported that it was not addressed by an administrator. Q7 = yes + Question 8(1). Were these micro-aggressions addressed? With graduate program administration?

Microaggression Reported and Not Addressed By Professors

Q7_Microaggression	Q8 6	N	%
YES		1	3.03%
	No	21	63.64%
	Yes	11	33.33%
	Total	33	100.00%

Students reported experienced microaggressions that were not addressed by professors totaling 64%. Question seven combined with question 8 (6) asked students if experienced microaggression were addressed? With a professor? The perception of the majority of survey respondents are that racial microaggressions happen.

Students Indicating No Microaggressions in Training Programs

One student of color and one white student reported that their MFT training program had no microaggressions to their knowledge. These students reported that their University addressed microaggression when responding to the survey. One African- American / Black, MFT trainee reported that she/ he did not experience any microaggressions in her or his graduate program, though all other Black/ African- American students and students of all other racial groups all reported that they did.

Books Written from the Perspective of MFTs of Color

Question four, ‘How many books or articles about therapists of color experiences with clients were required reading in your Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) education?’ garnered mixed responses. Six respondents indicated that they read more than ten articles or books about this unique experience however the majority of respondents indicated that in the course of their master’s program, they read either no articles or books about therapist of color experiences with clients or 1-3 books or articles about this experience.

Chart 5

Books Read by Region

									Grand
	NR	Canada	Midwest	Northeast	Northwest	Other	Southeast	Southwest	Total
			1						1
0	1		4	5	1	1			12
1-3		1	4	7			2	4	18
4-6		2	5		1			2	10
7-10			1	1		1		1	4
10 or more			1	5					6
Grand Total	1	3	16	18	2	2	2	7	51

Many students reported the lack of reading material was a disservice to them in question ten.

One respondent wrote:

I wish I was able to see/experience more diverse circumstances such as reading books by an array of authors or speakers from different backgrounds. Although I have learned and grown a lot from this program, in retrospect it does seem to be tailored to a "non-minority" experience. Moreover, it seemed to neglect [...] the black community. [...] This is a program run and taught by majority of Caucasian

individuals and this to me can create a lot of [incongruence] in some of the teachings. Another respondent wrote that his/her University focused a great deal on therapist interactions with Latin Americans however did not explore those interactions with Blacks/ African-Americans or Middle Eastern clients at all.

Please see appendix for full comments by respondents answering question 10.

Analysis

Non-Participatory Regions / Universities

As mentioned earlier no schools in the Southeastern United States agreed to participate in the survey. Within that region one Program Chair in the Southeast United States indicated that the survey was soliciting “illegal” information by asking for student distribution lists and declined to distribute the survey to his students stating “our institutions does not take part in surveys of this nature”. The Chair also contacted the SU Institution Review Board to express his grievance about the method of recruiting students. Though this was the most memorable response from a university in the Southeast. Other schools indicated “Our college does not allow us to participate in and pass on these kinds of studies” or, “we do not take part in any surveys at all”. This affected sampling distribution by exclusion of a major portion of the U.S. MFT population.

Additionally, there is participant data from two separate students in two separate states in the Southeast. This data may have come from students who attend online universities that agreed to participate in the survey, or, from southern schools that informally recruited students to complete the survey without formally indicating with a letter of cooperation that they would be

participating in the survey. Either way, there is no formal record that might indicate where these students attend university or which school they are associated with. The South is still considered a non-participatory region.

Microaggressions with Clients

An area where further MFT training in the area of microaggression might benefit and support students is in addressing microaggressions which clients inflict on beginner student therapists'. According to students, the majority of these experiences are not being addressed by administrators and professors. Seventy-three percent of students reported experiencing or learning of between 1 and 10 or more microaggressions inflicted on student therapist by clients.

Chart - 11

Microaggressions with Clients Divided by White students and Students of Color

Question 5							
Other/PoC/White	0	1-3	4-6	7-10	10 or more	Grand Total	%
Other	2	1	2		1	6	12%
PoC	2	6	6		1	15	29%
Wht	10	11	3	3	3	30	59%
Grand Total	14	18	11	3	5	51	100%

Further, as stated earlier, the Fisher Exact Test indicated that the microaggressions students experienced or learned of with clients were found to be statistically significant.

How are these students managing to practice therapy with clients in training environments that do not address a major stressor for a neophyte therapist? If our field does not address microaggression within training rooms, how can clients learn to surmount racism? Or,

how can they learn of ways to address these issues in their social, economic, and family environments? Chart 11 displays student reports of microaggression experiences inflicted by clients.

Chart 12

Student Reported Microaggression Experiences with Clients.

Question 5	N	%
0	14	27%
1-3	18	35%
4-6	11	22%
7-10	3	6%
10 or more	5	10%
Grand Total	51	1

Self-Selection/Bias

Some may challenge the research findings by questioning if only students with negative experiences participated in the survey causing response bias in the results. Although this is a concern for any research, variation in student responses diminishes this concept. Some students did not experience microaggressions in their MFT program. One African American / Black respondent reported that s/he did not experience any microaggressions in her/his graduate program. Some may reflect to the previously quoted statement by Boyd-Franklin (2003) and restated by Nichols, (2013) that some students may seek to appease by stating that everything is all right and there are no microaggressions occurring at their university. However, this does not

seem to be the case here. Student responses appeared to be genuine though they are not reflective of majority opinion.

Discussion

This was initial research concerning MFT and microaggression experiences. Many of the findings in this research can be used for analysis if MFT is ready to acknowledge and implement steps to address microaggressions experienced by students of color.

Support for Students

Fifty one graduate students in COAMFTE accredited Masters Programs responded to the Cort Survey of Microaggression Experiences. A majority of the responses indicate lack of support for a successful training environment that reduces or expels microaggressions from learning environments for students. The findings also indicate that many MFT Program faculty are not supporting students of color who may be affected most substantially by microaggressions. Congruently students also responded that microaggression experiences are not addressed by people in positions of power such as administrators and professors even when traumas occurred in front of professors.

Many student therapist of color, are forced to find their way with professors of color – who are sparse, peers in the same predicament, or if the sole minority in a graduate program, alone. If therapists of color are unable to explore how their background impacts their work as therapists because training programs do not facilitate the exploration in a safe way, therapist of color may not proficiently matriculate in training programs. This is potentially hazardous for therapists of color, clients, and the MFT field.

A Safe Space

Students reported that graduate programs did not prepare a safe space for students who identified with religious groups. One student wrote, “There were incredibly blatant racist comments made as well as many regarding religious groups. They were never addressed even though they were said in front of faculty in a classroom context” (Q10 respondent). While no students reported text that addressed cross cultural experiences with religious clients or tolerance for religious groups, at least one student identified a climate that is against COAMFTE program principles and professional standards. Text that supported effective therapy with religious groups or supported religious student therapist may have reduced the macroaggressions experienced by minorities and folks from different religious groups. We know there is some scholarly work surrounding support for religious therapists from Daneshpour’s (2009) work however, it may not be administered to students for review.

Some white students wrote that they wished training programs did more to support students of color. Students of color shared the same sentiments, many desiring for administrators and professors to assist in this area. White students wrote in wishing they knew how to address microaggressions or ways they could ensure they aren’t inflicting microaggressions on others. People in this population also reported wishing they had the opportunity to learn more about the experiences of various groups of color during their training. Perhaps it is worth it to develop a greater understanding of macroaggression trauma and how systems are affected when the MFT field does not collectively acknowledge and systematically train therapists to manage these stressful encounters.

A subgroup of MFT's of color reported their university "neglected" their experience. Students of Color reported that when microaggressions occurred they were not addressed with graduate program administration or professors, in supervision, in the classroom at their internship site, in teaming or shadowing, with classmates, professors, or with clients. The Fisher Exact Test statistics reinforced that many students experienced or learned of the most microaggressions occurring in the classroom, and with classmates and clients. Some students reported that supervisors or faculty of Color in MFT programs may have helped. Other students indicated that they wished supervisors or faculty of color were willing to engage in discourse surrounding microaggressions. Perhaps someone who has potentially experienced microaggressions during their career provides insight for students in the same predicament? Perhaps, if everyone in MFT training programs were trained and given positive skills to address microaggressions and traumatic experiences then perhaps cross cultural interactions would not be so difficult and all supervisors or administrative personnel would be more supportive of students in this experience or students wishing to learn more about it.

Ultimately, students in training programs are preparing to work with clients. Post graduate studies, students may work in a variety of settings where they themselves may find themselves in supervisory roles. Failure to address neglected or unaddressed microaggressions may cause further unintended consequences for students and clients.

Oppression

The student desires for inclusivity represents the intersectionality's of oppression. Oppression is multifaceted with the potential for many oppressions to affect one person or group. According to Hernandez and McDowell (2010), "Intersectionality, power, and relational safety provide a foundation for a critical postcolonial supervision framework. Structured dialogue, reflection, and action around similarities and differences relative to power, privilege, and oppression are the scaffoldings toward equity and justice in supervision and clinical work". The oppressions and experienced microaggressions a person who is a woman and Muslim face are critical in context of the system she is in and is relative to whom she is experiencing an oppression or microaggression from.

Bearing this, it is important to also be aware that there are other areas where power dynamics intersect with cross cultural encounters for example, this same female Muslim student might have interactions with clients of other races where she might experience microaggressions that might be explored from and intersected with regards to her race, religion, or power dynamics. Question ten provides exploratory study where this researcher and others can begin.

Question Ten

Eighteen students answered question 10 and commented on what they wish they were receiving from their graduate program. Of these responses, there were common words that students often used to describe what they wished they were receiving from their graduate program. The words were often congregated with each other. For example, 'more' and 'faculty' appeared together a few times. The words were tallied and are presented here: More = 15; Faculty/ supervisor(s) = 8; Diversity = 3; In the therapy room = 3. These frequent words

represent student petitions for the MFT field to do more. Students collectively seemed to want more inclusivity including faculty or Supervisors of Color as program representatives. Students also listed that they wanted more diversity by encompassing multiple socially oppressed groups and not just a few groups or one group.

The term social justice arose when one student's idea of inclusivity was to specifically have faculty and supervisors trained to be more comfortable discussing issues of race. Another student wanted microaggressions to be acknowledged by professors. And finally, students wanted educators to specifically address how elements of race affect student trainees in MFT graduate programs. Many students of color appeared to be discouraged when this did not occur. Allied white therapists also seemed to be discouraged and yearned for more education in this area. The largest interpretation of the data was that faculty members seemed to be uncomfortable discussing racial microaggressions and ways those microaggressions impact their students and the clients.

Limitations of the Research

This was a preliminary research with limitations in regards to one question in the research material, sample size, access and, self-reported data. The material is introductory to this field and a limitation of the research is that the survey was not validated multiple times and by various researchers. Although the survey was reviewed and face validated by two separate readers, more in depth and predictive validity would have strengthened the questions in the survey. A point of contention surrounds question seven because it solicits two answers from participants. Survey analysis is unable to determine if student respondents are indicating their experienced or learned of microaggression experiences.

The sample size was small compared to the total population of graduate MFT students in the U.S. and Canada. Access was not granted to a significant portion of the U.S. population of student MFT's when many members of Southeastern universities declined to participate in the study. Additionally, all the data collected was self-reported. Self-reported data has the potential to have some "(1) selective memory, (2) telescoping, (3) attribution, and (4) exaggeration" University of Southern California Libraries (2016).

Another limitation of this research study was its inability to quantify the effects of experienced and learned of microaggressions. Though through this research it is safe to say that microaggressions are happening, are prevalent, they have a negative effect on many students, and effect students of color at a higher likelihood; it is difficult to measure the impact on MFT students.

Steps for Change

Based on this research it might be advantageous for the MFT field to formalize steps to mitigate macroaggression experiences. Some steps that may lead to more inclusivity and positive change may include the following:

- **Step 1: More Support for Students of Color**
 - a. Identifying and addressing microaggressions in classrooms, supervision, at internship sites and other training areas.
 - b. Better standardization and in depth study of various racial, cultural, and religious groups in the required diversity course. Multiple students are disappointed in the class as it stands.

c. Mentorship

Programs or people available to students who have experienced microaggressions and/or want to learn more in their classrooms, supervision, internship sites, amongst professors, colleagues, and other program leaders.

- **Step 2:** More Supervisors and Faculty of Color / and Better Training for Staff
 1. Training for all COMFTE Accredited Program staff concerning what microaggressions are and how to successfully address them, and/or, support students.
 2. Reprimands for staff and faculty who inflict microaggressions on students and fail to acknowledge and work to alleviate the stress students may experience as a result.

- **Step 3:** More Structured Research about Student Microaggression Experiences in all Regions of the US and Canada.
 - a. Pretest and posttest research on graduate student experiences with microaggressions across all COMFTE programs.

Areas for Future Study

Information concerning researched microaggression experiences is new to the MFT field. This preliminary research provides information MFT students, faculty, and administration can use for future research. The larger systemic effects and collective issues that sprout out of microaggression experiences warrant further exploration. Furthermore, future research may not

only reduce many of the negative experiences many students reported during the survey, it might provide better insight about the ramifications of this field of study.

Further Study of Microaggressions in the MFT Field

Additional research about students' of color experiences with microaggressions in MFT programs may benefit students of color, white students, and the MFT field. Additional research may also reduce microaggressions experienced by students of color and cultural groups.

Cultural Competence / Diversity Class

The COAMFTE develops and administers educational standards for all accredited training programs. The re-examination of the diversity class would be an area of future research. More studies about the class from student perspective may provide more depth about where the course can be improved.

Areas for Significant Consideration

Future research that reflects why this survey was not distributed to students attending schools in the Southeastern United States region would be beneficial. Considering the history of unfavorable and harsh treatment people of color endured in the region it is easy to speculate about why schools in the region were non-participatory. The lack of response also relates to student concerns about microaggression issues not being acknowledged or addressed by program administration. Indication about how students in The South fare would be valuable and welcomed.

International Student Microaggression Experiences

Another area of future study is a more in depth analysis of international student microaggression experiences. Many students indicated that they were from countries outside the U.S. and experienced microaggressions. Understanding ways international students experience microaggressions would be advantageous. Formal study about ways they can process their experience and be effective in handling microaggression experiences during their training would also be beneficial.

White Students Experiences with Microaggression

An explanation of ways white students are impacted by witnessing microaggressions in MFT programs is yet another area of future inquiry. Some white students seem sincerely interested in learning about microaggressions. Understanding the impact learned of or observed microaggressions have on these students is an area of further research. These students advocated for the acknowledgement that microaggressions occur in graduate programs and additionally advocated for their own further knowledge of ways to end microaggressions within themselves and the MFT field. A larger study that addresses what occurs when MFTs are not prepared to identify and address cross cultural microaggression encounters may advance the field in this subject area.

Conclusion

As therapists in the body of MFT it is vitally important for us to understand microaggression experiences that affect members of our community. We can be mindful of our impact on others through future research in this subject area. It is possible for the MFT field to

mitigate future racial microaggression experiences amongst our colleagues, students, professors, supervisors, and our clients.

Appendix A: Questions

Survey Questions	Column1
1	Which region do you reside in?
2	Of which group do you identify yourself as?
3	How do others identify you?
4	How many books or articles about therapists of color experiences with clients were required reading in your Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) education?
5	How many times have you experienced or learned from a classmate or colleague that a client made offensive racial remarks?
6	How many times have you spoken to a supervisor about ways race plays out in the therapy room?
7	Have you experienced or learned of racial micro-aggressions in your graduate program? (Micro-aggressions are described by Dr. Derald Sue as, “the 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” (Sue, 2010).
7a	With graduate program administration?

7b	In supervision?
7c	In the classroom?
7d	At your internship site?
7e	With a classmate?
7f	With a professor?
7g	In teaming or shadowing?
7h	With clients?
8	Were these micro-aggressions addressed?
8a	With graduate program administration?
8b	In supervision?
8c	In the classroom?
8d	At your internship site?
8e	With a classmate?
8f	With a professor?
8g	In teaming or shadowing?
8h	With clients?
9	Is there general discussion surrounding racial micro-aggressions and how to handle them?
9a	With graduate program administration?
9b	In supervision?
9c	In the classroom?

9d	At your internship site?
9e	With a classmate?
9f	With a professor?
9g	In teaming or shadowing?
9h	With clients?
10	What do you wish you were receiving in your graduate program? Please add additional comments and experiences you would like to share?

Appendix B: Questionnaire with Possible Answers



Cort Survey of Micro – Aggression Experiences

Thank you for deciding to complete this survey developed by Sarah Cort. I am a graduate student in Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) studying in the northeast. I am of African and Latino Caribbean decent though I was born in the United States. The intention of this study is to research micro-aggression experiences in MFT graduate schools. Participation is completely voluntary. No monetary compensation will be provided for this survey however an opportunity to voice your experiences in COAMFTE accredited programs will be provided. This survey includes 10 questions and takes approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. Please direct any questions you may have to me at srcort@syr.edu and any concerns you may have to the Institution Review Board or IRB at 315-443-3013.

Please indicate your response by selecting the appropriate box or by clicking your selection.

1. Which region do you reside in?

- Northeast
- Northwest
- Southeast
- Southwest
- Midwest
- Canada
- Alaska
- Other: _____

2. Of which groups do you identify yourself as?

- African
- Alaska Native
- Asian
- Asian American
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American
- Native Hawaiian
- Other Pacific Islander
- Person with two or more races
- White | European American
- Other: _____

3. How do others identify you?

- African
- Alaska Native
- Asian
- Asian American
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American
- Native Hawaiian
- Other Pacific Islander
- Person with two or more races
- White | European American
- Other: _____

4. How many books or articles about therapists of color experiences with clients were required reading in your Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) education?

- 0
- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-10
- 10 or more

5. How many times have you experienced or learned from a classmate or colleague that a client made offensive racial remarks?

- 0
- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-10
- 10 or more

6. How many times have you spoken to a supervisor about ways race plays out in the therapy room?

- 0
- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-10
- 10 or more

7. Have you experienced or learned of racial micro-aggressions in your graduate program?

(Micro-aggressions are described by Dr. Derald Sue as, “the 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” [\(Sue, 2010\)](#)).

- With graduate program administration?

- Yes
- No
- In supervision?
 - Yes
 - No
- In the classroom?
 - Yes
 - No
- At your internship site?
 - Yes
 - No
- With a classmate?
 - Yes
 - No
- With a professor?
 - Yes
 - No
- In teaming or shadowing?
 - Yes
 - No
- With clients?
 - Yes
 - No

Other (please specify): _____

8. Were these micro-aggressions addressed?

- With graduate program administration?

Yes

No

- In supervision?

Yes

No

- In the classroom?

Yes

No

- At your internship site?

Yes

No

- With a classmate?

Yes

No

- With a professor?

Yes

No

- In teaming or shadowing?

Yes

No

- With clients?

Yes

No

Other (please specify): _____

9. Is there general discussion surrounding racial micro-aggressions and how to handle them?

- With graduate program administration?

Yes

No

- In supervision?

Yes

No

- In the classroom?

Yes

No

- At your internship site?

- Yes
- No
- With a classmate?
 - Yes
 - No
- With a professor?
 - Yes
 - No
- In teaming or shadowing?
 - Yes
 - No
- With clients?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Other (please specify): _____

10. What do you wish you were receiving in your graduate program? Please add additional comments and experiences you would like to share?

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Appendix C: Letter of Cooperation

LETTER OF COOPERATION

May 2, 2016

Office of Research Integrity and Protections

Syracuse University

121 Bowne Hall

Syracuse, NY 13244

To Whom It May Concern:

Sarah Cort has requested permission to collect research data from students through a project entitled Disparities in Student of Color Education and Resulting Racial Micro-Aggressions: Can MFT Training Programs Do More? I have been informed of the purposes of the study and the

nature of the research procedures. I have also been given an opportunity to ask questions of the researcher.

As a representative of a COAMFTE-Accredited Master's Program, I am authorized to grant permission to Sarah Cort to recruit and collect data via survey.

If you have any questions, please contact me at **Your phone number**.

Sincerely,

Your title

Your school

Your department

Your department address

Your department Phone number

Appendix D: Statistical Testing

Fisher Exact Test² was conducted to determine if there is a relationship between race and experienced microaggression. The hypothesis is as follows:

H₀: Race and experienced microaggression are independent.

H₁: Race and experienced microaggressions are not independent

A significant interaction was found between race and experienced microaggressions ($p = .004$, FET). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that race and experienced microaggressions are not independent.

Contingency Table

Row Labels	Other	PoC	White	Grand Total
No	1	1	16	18
Yes	5	14	14	33
Grand Total	6	15	30	51

Expected Values

Q7	Other	PoC	White	Total
No	2.117647	5.294118	10.58824	18
Yes	3.882353	9.705882	19.41176	33
Total	6	15	30	51

Fisher Exact Test

p-value 0.003571

² Fisher Exact Test is used in this case since, more than 20% of the expected frequency table contains frequencies less than 5, therefore a chi-square test would be inappropriate and a Fischer test is conducted.

Appendix E: Respondent answers to Question 10 of Survey

Question 3	Question 10
African	I wish my professors would make it a violation to be micro-aggressive to another student therapist. And that cursing and using [swearing] words in the computer room is unacceptable.
Asian	<p>A topic in Social Justice Issues class in the MFT Curriculum</p> <p>I wish professors who teach the cultural competency course would encourage students to speak with individuals of the particular racial/cultural background on a one-on-one conversation instead of having to present in front of the entire class.</p>
Black or African American	Cultural diversity class did not address particular issues presented by people of color nor did it address how a therapist of color will be [perceived] in the therapy room
	<p>It would be nice to have a broadened academic experience that integrates more communal aspects. We often touch on a lot of things involving "diversity" in the classroom, however, it frequently ends up just being talk.</p> <p>I wish I was able to see/experience more diverse circumstances such as reading books by an array of authors or speakers from different backgrounds. Although I have learned and grown a lot from this program, in retrospect it does seem to be tailored to a "non-minority" experience.</p> <p>Moreover, it seemed to neglect the differences in the emotional</p>

experiencing of members of the black community and the stigma of mental health in the community. This is a program run and taught by majority of Caucasian individuals and this to me can create a lot of incongruence in some of the teachings.

Hispanic or Latino I think there is too much "general discussion" while not enough personal processing when these issues come up, especially with the people in power (administrators and professors). Just recently I started a doctoral program and at the orientation dinner I was seated with a few professors. In making small talk one of the professors asked me if "I grew up speaking Spanish". I was pretty offended by that and I guess she made that assumption by the way I look as we didn't have any previous interactions. Another time on my first day of class, a professor made an example by using my name and another student's and said "if we just polled them we would think this class is full of [minorities], but really it's mostly white people". That also put me in a really uncomfortable spot because I didn't feel comfortable telling them that what they said was offensive because they are in positions of power over me and determine my grade. It's also hard with peers to say something, usually I find myself venting to the few other [minorities] students because that is most comfortable. I would like to move away from general discussions and find a way to tell these people when they say something offensive but I don't know how to do that. I've been more successful in doing that with clients, probably because I am in the position of power in that setting. It also doesn't help that of a faculty of about 10

professors in the program they are all white with no persons of color, that in itself is an issue. Thanks for doing this research, it is needed.

Other

[I am south Asian but was not sure if this fell under the 'Asian' category above (just fyi). I have had one experience in which a racial micro aggression from a classmate was addressed and handled well by a racialized instructor. Not so with microaggressions made by white professors, or from white students towards racialized instructors. What graduate programs can do re: racial [microaggressions] -- Have tenured faculty and supervisors of color who demonstrate some 'race consciousness' or understanding of the politics of race. Have more than one racialized faculty member or supervisor at a time, and provide them with a professional environment in which challenging and educating colleagues is safe. Assign more readings re: racialized therapists working with white clients or clients of a different race/ethnicity, or more readings by racialized therapists in general. Have professional networks and mentorship opportunities that connect racialized therapist interns with racialized graduates of the program.

More racially diverse themes. [My school] has a lot of emphasis on Latino communities. I wish there was more focus on African American and Middle East clients

	There is always room for more conversations and action to happen around addressing racial micro-aggressions.
Person with Two or More Races	I believe this is a topic that is rarely (if ever) [discussed] in this program and as a therapist of color I am disappointed that these experiences were not taken into consideration. My supervisor never even commented on how my race impacts my work, and I wish he had.
	More cultural competency training
White or European American	I think even a general acceptance that microaggressions exist. As a white student, I would like to know more about how I can continue to recognize and stop any microaggressions I engage in. In my Master's program we talked about this but in my doctorate program this subject is not discussed and even discouraged.
	I think the program sufficiently addressed experiences of micro aggressions, how to approach bias and how to make space for open dialogue
	More readings by people of color.
	My program did an excellent job of incorporating multiple aspects of diversity into our program. Micro-aggressions with race, sexual orientation, and gender identity were a large focus of study and conversation.
	Supervisors who are more comfortable discussing race and how to talk about race.

There were incredibly blatant racist comments made as well as many regarding religious groups. They were never addressed even though they were said in front of faculty in a classroom context.

We had a multicultural competency or awareness class but I felt as though it went pretty quickly and was mostly superficial. I wish we'd had time to get in a more in depth conversation about how race affects people in the therapy room.

Glossary

Microaggression

Micro-aggressions are described by Dr. Derald Sue as, “the 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” ([Sue, 2010](#)).

Person of Color

The term person of color is primarily used in the United States. In the United States the term Person of color is used to describe all who are not white.

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Vita

My name is Sarah Cort. I am a graduate student studying Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) in the northeast. I was born in the United States in Harlem, NY and am of Caribbean, Latino, and West African descent. I have been interested in cross-cultural interactions since visiting various countries growing up. I have been afraid to speak or write about cultural experiences and observations in the past and understand how difficult those interactions can be. I pursued this research in hopes that others may have a smoother training experience than I did. If you would like additional information please feel free to contact me at srcort@syr.edu or sarahrcort@gmail.com.