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Age-Related Microaggressions: a Follow Up Descriptive Study

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How do you define ageism?

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Ageism

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“Ageism is defined as negative or positive stereotypes, prejudice and/or discrimination *against (or to the advantage of)* elderly people on the basis of their chronological age or on the basis of a perception of them as being ‘old’ or ‘elderly.’ Ageism can be *implicit* or *explicit* and can be expressed on a *micro-* or *macro-level*” (Iverson et al., 2009, p. 15).

Poll

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Current State of Ageism

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- Most socially acceptable form of prejudice
- Generational shift towards the belief that older adults are burdens to society
- The pandemic created narrative for hostile agism
 - Due to the belief that older adults were the reason for lockdown
- Younger adults view older adults as warm and incompetent

(Levy et al., 2022)

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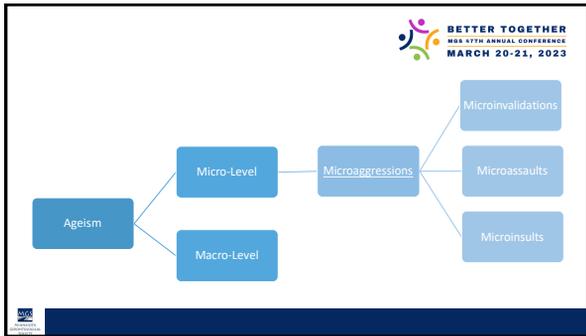
What areas of older adult’s lives have you seen ageism impact?

Ageism

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- Ageism can occur in various aspects and settings of the lives of older adults (APA, 2020)
 - At a *micro* level (day-to-day interactions)
 - At a macro level (society at large)
- A stressor that may lead to adverse health (Chang et al., 2009), behavioral, psychological, or cognitive effects (Levy, 2000; Levy, 2003; Levy et al., 2011; Chang et al., 2020)
 - i.e., poor quality of life, reduced work opportunities, physical or mental illness, etc.
- Older adults of other marginalized groups are at risk of experiencing intersectional discrimination (APA, 2020)

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What is a microaggression?

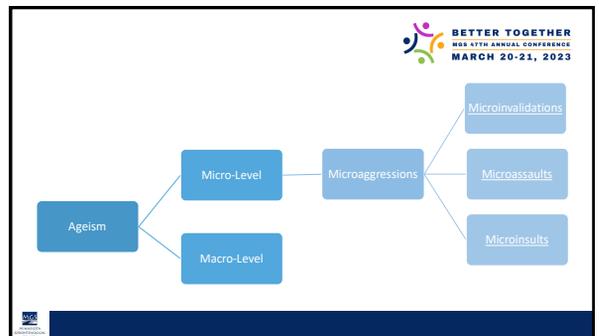
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Microaggressions

Covert and subtle manifestations of racism that occur in everyday life (Pierce, 1970).

The everyday forms of discrimination that carry negative messages to people who belong to a *marginalized group of society* (Sue et al., 2007)

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Microassaults

- Conscious forms of discrimination intended to hurt the individual
- Verbal or nonverbal
- Examples:
 - Name-calling
 - Avoidant behavior

(Sue et al., 2007)



Microinsults

- Expressions of rudeness or insensitivity
- Implicit, often unconscious
- Verbal or nonverbal
- Examples:
 - Elderspeak
 - Ascription of intelligence

(Sue et al., 2007)

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Microinvalidations



- Invalidations of a person's thoughts, feelings, or experiences
- Unconscious, verbal or nonverbal
- Example:
 - Color Blindness
 - Age-related compliments

(Sue et al., 2007)

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Current State of Microaggressions



- Expansion of microaggression literature:
 - Women in STEM (Kim & Meister, 2022)
 - LGBTQ+ community (Tran et al., 2022)
 - Disabilities (Heung et al., 2022)
 - HIV/AIDS (Wright et al., 2022)
 - Age (Gietzen et al., 2022)

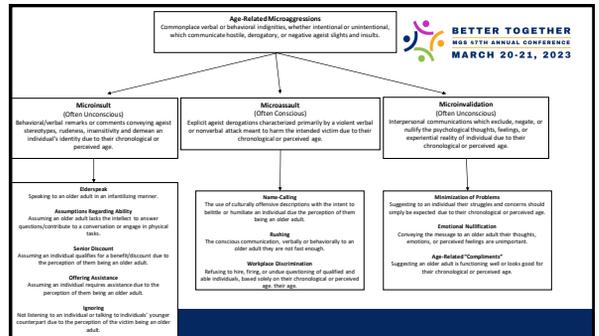
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Age-Related Microaggressions



- The intersection of ageism and microaggressions
- "Commonplace verbal or behavioral indignities, whether intentional or unintentional which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative ageist slights or insults" (Gietzen et al., 2022, p. 5)

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Age-Related Microaggressions



- Can be broken down in a similar fashion to racial microaggressions as identified by Sue et al. (2007)
 - Older adults...
 - Experience these interactions fairly often (1-2 times per month)
 - Feel angry following these interactions
 - Respond by passively coping
- (Gietzen et al., 2022)



Critique on the Microaggression Literature



- "Examine the behaviors and *personality characteristics* of microaggression deliverers as well as *microaggression recipients*."
- "Ascertain the approximate *base rates* of events that are referenced in many microaggression items."
- "Include *measures of negative emotionality*, especially assess the perception of oneself as victim and hostile attribution bias in studies of microaggressions."

(Lillienfeld, 2017, p. 161)

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Purpose of Study



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To validate the responses of a preliminary descriptive study.

To determine the types of age-related microaggressions that individuals over the age of 65 most often experience.

To understand the emotional responses connected to the examples given.



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Hypotheses



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1st Older adults will report that they are familiar with a variety of different microaggressions identified in the Gietzen et al., study.

2nd Individuals who report higher levels of negative affect will report more negative emotional responses to age-related microaggressions.

3rd Individuals who report having concerns regarding their memory or physical health will report more negative emotional response to age-related microaggressions.



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Methodology



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- Participants recruited using Prolific
- Asked about perceived physical health, concerns about memory, and completed the PANAS
- Completed a 20-item questionnaire about their experiences of commonly reported age-related microaggressions from previous research (Gietzen et al., 2022)
 - frequency
 - perceived cause
 - relationship to deliverer
 - setting the interaction occurred
 - emotional response
 - behavioral reaction



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Examples of Items



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1. Being told "you look good for your age."
2. Being patted on the back by someone while saying something similar to "aren't you precious," or "aren't you cute."
3. Being rushed for not being fast enough (for example, being bumped or pushed).
4. Someone suggesting that perhaps you are not well versed in technology (for example, saying "well, you wouldn't understand" when speaking about technical matters.)



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Participants



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- Participants were 65 years or older (n = 200)
- Ages ranged from 65-93 years old (M = 69.9)
- Females (n = 113), males (n = 87)
 - no discrepancy between gender identity and biological sex
- Primarily white (n = 185)
- 2 participants had been diagnosed with a memory impairment and were disqualified from the survey



Frequency

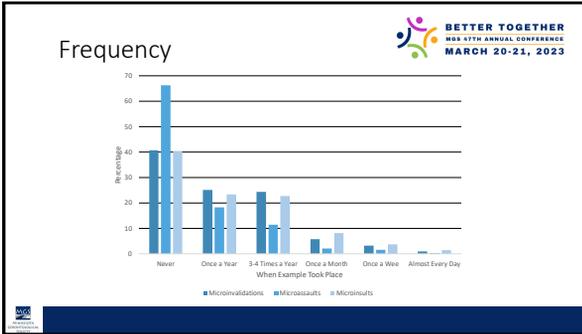


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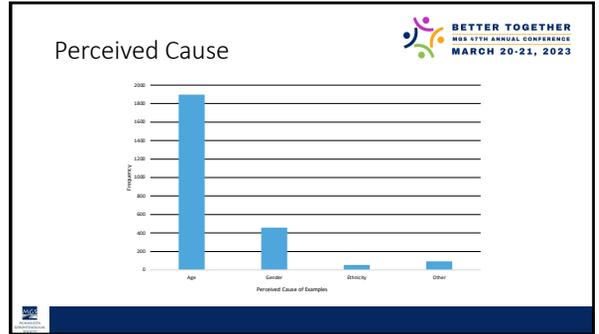
When Examples Took Place	Frequency
Never	1800
Once a Year	1000
3-4 Times a Year	800
Once a Month	200
Once a Week	100
Almost Every Day	50



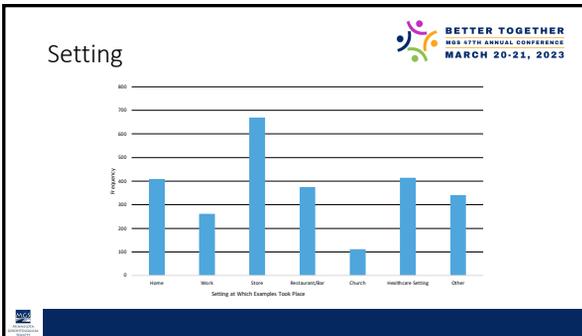
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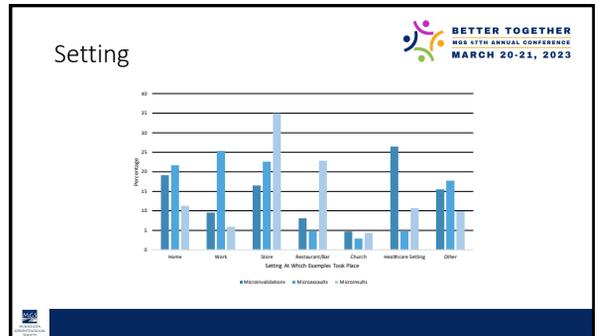
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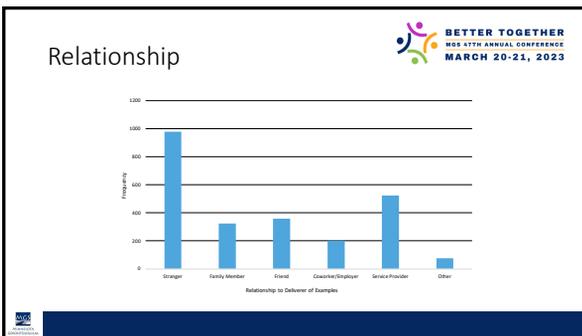
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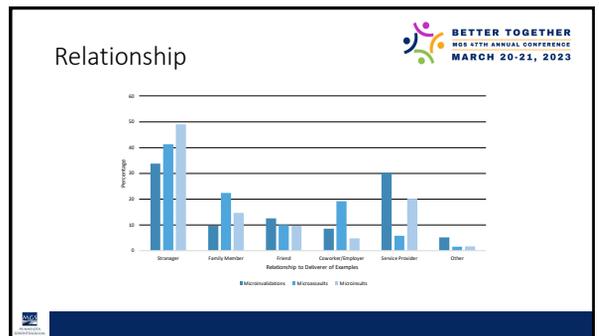
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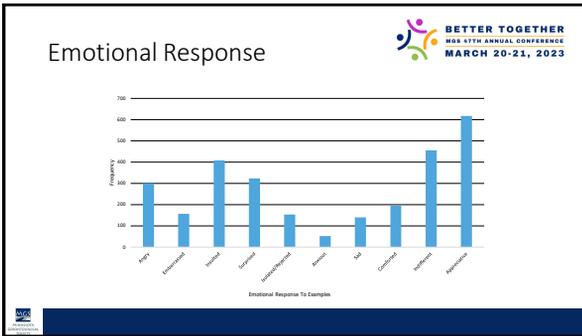
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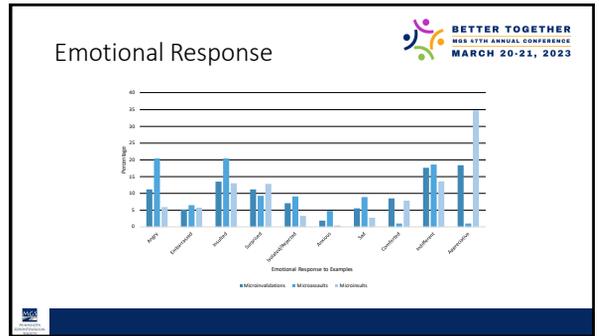
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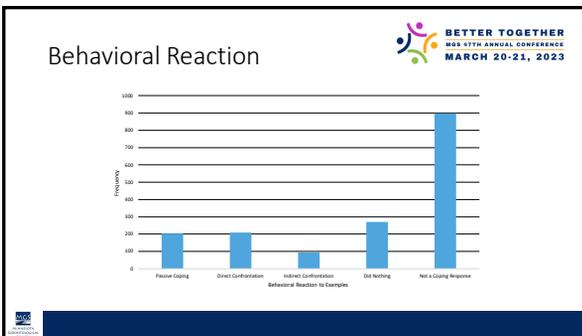
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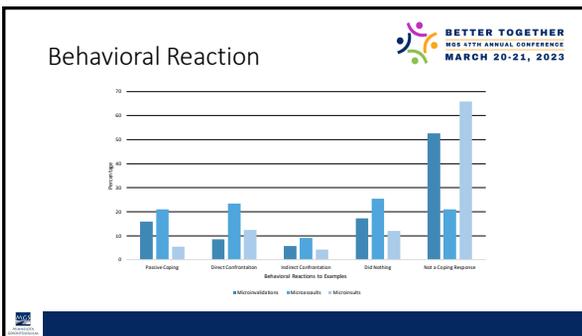
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- ### Behavioral Reaction
- Not a coping response
 - Positive emotional reaction + positive behavioral reaction
 - Example: "thank you I try to do good for myself"
 - Did nothing
 - Negative or neutral emotional reaction + explicit statement of doing nothing
 - Example: "I did nothing"
 - Direct confrontation
 - Negative or neutral emotional reaction + confronted the deliverer
 - Example: "I said 'hey, hey, I am right here. What do you want me to know?'"
 - Passive Coping
 - Negative or neutral emotional reaction + avoided confrontation
 - Example: "I responded by moving aside so they could go around."
 - Indirect confrontation
 - Negative or neutral emotional reaction + acting passive aggressively or went to superior/authorities
 - Examples: "I slowed down even more," and "called the manager to complain."
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- ### Survey Item Analysis
- Criteria:
 - The survey item was endorsed by at least half of the participants (n = 99)
 - More than one third of participants reported experiencing negative emotional reactions associated with the item
 - Two of twenty items met criteria; both microinvalidations
 - Item 12: "Being told your medical issues (for example, arthritis, diabetes) or physical issues (for example, poor eyesight/hearing) are not bad because they are expected at your age".
 - Item 14: "Being told that you do not qualify for a survey after entering your age".
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Correlates of Negative Emotional Responses

Negative Affect Significant correlation between scores on the NA subscale of the PANAS and the frequency of negative emotional responses following an age-related microaggression ($r = .34$, $p < .001$)	Perceived Physical Health Significant negative correlation between ratings of physical health and the frequency of negative emotional response following an age-related microaggression ($r = -.32$, $p = .002$)
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Conclusion

- Participants were familiar with examples a little over half the time
 - Most having reported experiencing these examples at least once a year
 - Differs from findings of (Gietzen et al., 2022)
- Participants primarily had negative emotional reactions following an age-related microaggression
 - More participants reported having negative emotional reactions following a microassault
 - Frequency of negative emotional reactions was related to perceived physical health and NA score on the PANAS
- Participants were more likely to directly confront the deliverer following a microassault

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Future Directions

- Replication of parent study (in progress)
- Examination of gender differences (in progress)
- Focus groups
- Creation of age-related microaggression scale
- Nationally representative sample
 - Age groups (youngest-old, middle-old, oldest-old)
 - Gender
 - Race/ethnicity
- Examine intersectional discrimination
- Further examining factors which predict negative emotional reactions
 - i.e. subjective cognitive decline

[Poll](#)

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Questions?

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References - Available Upon Request