Preferences and Prejudice: Does Empathy Affect Preferences for Microaggression Training?

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Abstract

The present study examines the relationships between a participants' empathy levels and training preferences. It is hypothesized that participants with higher empathy levels will prefer video and group discussion activity, while those lower in empathy will prefer a lecture format. Also, it is hypothesized that the video will be most favored, followed by the group discussion and lecture. The sample ($N = 183$) consists of individuals from a large southwestern university. Participants attended a training workshop on microaggressions in which they were tasked to watch a video, listen to a lecture, and engage in group discussions. After completing these tasks, participants completed a packet that assessed their preferred training modality, how much they learned from certain aspects of the training, and how relatable they found the scenarios presented in the training. Results revealed that empathy was not related to training preference, but that participants overall favored the video (64%), followed by the group discussions (26.1%), and the lecture (9.3%). Overall, while there were training preferences, the participant's preference did not affect how much they learned about the subject. This study suggests that it is not the modality of training that makes the difference. What is important is that more training should be conducted.

Keywords: microaggressions training, training modalities, learning preferences, empathy

There is little published research about microaggression training. However, articles which have covered the topic have discussed what steps to take in conducting a microaggression training (Berk, 2017). Microaggression training workshops do not have to be solely lecture-based. A workshop coordinator could include more captivating training methods like videos and group discussions (Alpert & Hodkinson, 2019; Douglas et al., 2018)[1]. The current study contemporary teaching method are videos. Alpert and Hodkinson (2019) found that 95% of students want video included in their learning. Now, while contemporary teaching methods are preferred, some people may still prefer a lecture. For instance, Zinski and fellows (2017) found that first-year medical students preferred lecture over other methods. Therefore, removing a lecture portion from a workshop is absurd as some may prefer that part of the workshop over the video and group discussion.

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[1] Berk's (2017) article is an example of microaggression training literature as the researcher discusses what steps to take when conducting a microaggression workshop. His steps range from instructing about the topic of microaggressions to having participants take an IAT. Douglas and colleagues (2018) state in their article that lecture does not seem to captivate students as much. Therefore, more contemporary teaching methods are being utilized such as group discussions. Another example of a

investigates which of the utilized training modalities is most preferred. Additionally, the present research examines whether those higher in empathy prefer training modalities which have a more personal feel to them, such as video and group discussion, and whether those lower in empathy prefer more traditional learning methods such as lectures. Findings from this study may contribute to microaggression training literature by assisting future workshop coordinators with what training modalities they may want to use in their training.

Prejudice can manifest itself in many ways, some which can be so brief that they may not always be obvious. Microaggressions are an example of such a form. Microaggressions are casual statements or actions which communicate hostile, unwelcoming messages that are often offensive to people.[2] Also, a microaggression can be either intentional or unintentional, but it does vary by the situation. There are three types of microaggressions: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (Sue, 2010).

A microassault is an attack that can verbal or nonverbal. Microassaults, in particular, are typically intentional and overt in prejudice (Nadal et al., 2014). An example of a microassault would be the use of a racial epithet. Moreover, microassaults are most reflective of "old-fashioned" racism (Shelton & Delgado-Romero, 2011).

Another form of microaggressions are microinsults which are considered insensitive messages as they are insulting to one's identity (Nadal et al., 2014). An example of a microinsult is telling a woman that it is surprising to see her get a high score on a math test. This is a microinsult as it perpetuates the stereotype that women are not successful in math-related subjects.

Microinsults may be unintentional, with most people being unaware that their comments may convey an insulting message (Sue, 2010). Unlike microassaults, microinsults are typically not mean-spirited. However, that does not undermine the damage. For instance, therapists who commit microinsults against their LGBQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer) clients are likely trying to be attentive and affirmative to their clients, but instead cause distress to those very same clients (Shelton and Delgado-Romero, 2011).

The last type of microaggression are microinvalidations. A microinvalidation is undermining the struggles that members of traditionally marginalized groups may experience (Nadal et al., 2014). For instance, a prominent example of a microinvalidation is color-blindness. Color-blindness is the idea that one does not see race (Mekawi et al., 2017). While this may seem like a progressive mentality, it does more harm than good as denying the presence of race leads to the denial of privileges and differences (Sue, 2010). Therefore, as much as it seems like a wonderful idea, ignoring race leads to ignorance of racism, and such an act would be considered a microinvalidation as it blinds individuals to the struggles of racially marginalized groups.

While they are subtle, microaggressions' damage is not necessarily minimal. Experiencing microaggressions can cause individuals to experience symptoms of anxiety and depression (Nadal et al., 2014), have higher levels of negative affect (Ong et al., 2013), and develop suicidal ideation (O'Keefe et al., 2014). Experiencing microaggressions can lead to far more than just "hurt feelings." Moreover, this further highlights the importance of

helping people understand the effects of microaggressions in everyday life.

Microaggression Research History

The term "microaggression" was first introduced by a psychiatrist named Chester Pierce. Pierce stated that microaggressions are mild comments that are detrimental to African-Americans (Pierce, 1970). The definition of microaggressions has broadened since that time to include other historically underrepresented groups. Such groups include other people of color (e.g. Hispanic or Latino individuals, Asian-Americans) and sexual minorities (e.g. gay men, lesbians) (Lilienfeld, 2017). While microaggression research began in 1970, the concept did not gain its current popularity until 2007, when Derald Wing Sue began to study the topic. In his 2007 article, Sue and colleagues specified the three categories of microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007). Today, there is much research that builds upon the foundation set by Sue's conceptualizations of microaggressions. Research on microaggressions has increased throughout the years. However, criticism of the concept has also increased.

Criticisms of Microaggression Research

In a 2017 article, Scott O. Lilienfeld went into great detail criticizing the way research for microaggressions has been conducted. Lilienfeld's (2017) criticism revolved around the conceptual bases of microaggressions and the methodologies used in microaggression research.

One of the conceptual criticisms that Lilienfeld (2017) made is that microaggressions are an open-concept— a concept that is difficult to define since it can be interpreted differently. Additionally, not only are microaggressions an open concept, but microaggressions, particularly microinsults and microinvalidations, are quite ambiguous. The very act of microaggressions requires the complex process of identifying whether a microaggression actually occurred or not (Lilienfeld, 2017). In sum, the author is saying that the gray nature present in microaggression research has detrimental effects.

One methodological criticism that Lilienfeld (2017) mentioned is the lack of knowledge of event base rates. Within the literature of microaggression, many types of situations can be considered microaggressions. An example would be a taxi driver picking up a white individual over a Person of Color. Some people may view that as a casual situation, but some may interpret that as the taxi driver favoring a white client over a client of color. By and large, Lilienfeld made the case for why microaggression research is flawed, but such a stance has allowed for rebuttals.

Lilienfeld's paper has received criticism as much as it has praise. Monnica T. Williams explained that his labeling of microaggressions as an open concept is not correct. There are particular concepts that diversity researchers have thought to have vague boundaries yet hold high interrater reliability (Williams, 2020). To Lilienfeld's criticism about event based rates, microaggressions do not depend on whether the victim perceives a microaggression since microaggressions are so subtle that victims may be unaware of it. Also, if a target believes him or herself to have experienced a microaggression, offenders should apologize. Therefore, it is best to give the target the benefit of the doubt. In case a victim is mistaken, Williams advised having a conversation about what happened (Williams, 2020).

Lilienfeld's (2017) work may be used to fuel the stance against

microaggression education. However, holding off microaggression training because of the research flaws and criticism is like telling marginalized groups to continue living their pain in silence (Sue, 2017). As sinister as that may sound, it only highlights the importance of microaggression training.

Microaggression training

The literature on microaggression training is scarce. Much of the literature focuses on diversity training as a whole, with microaggression training being a subcategory of such programs. Ronald A. Berk's (2017) series titled "The Microaggression Trilogy" broadly discussed microaggressions as a whole, microaggressions in the academic workplace, and in the classroom. Berk's steps for professional include: hold a Microaggressions 101 class, making students take the Student Microaggression Inventory (SMI), participate in an Implicit Association Test (IAT), teach implicit bias recognition, educate faculty and staff about how to talk about race, and train teachers of traditionally marginalized populations to mentor students of traditionally marginalized groups (Berk, 2017). Berk suggested that these steps are to be followed as guidelines for training workshops and professional development. Of all the steps, the one that most resonates with traditional microaggression training is step one, Microaggressions 101.

Berk (2017) stated that the content in microaggressions workshops should teach about the 10 outcomes, definitions, taxonomy, and other topics (Berk, 2017). The 10 outcomes refer to the consequences that can arise from experiencing microaggressions, especially in the academic workplace where, for example, microaggressions can weaken a worker's

productivity (Dovidio, 2001; Salvatore & Shelton, 2007). Berk (2017) encourages the use of technology rather than just lecture.

While there is little microaggression training literature, the same cannot be said about diversity training. Bezrukova and co. (2016) conducted a metanalysis of over 40 years' worth of diversity training literature. A focus of the metanalysis was to investigate the outcomes from the methods used in these diversity trainings. Some of their findings included that mandatory training was more effective to a participant's behavioral learning (i.e. the development of one's skills), and that multi-method training was more effective (Bezrukova et al., 2016). Other studies have also examined what training methods are more effective than others. For instance, a study by Smith and Percy (2019) observed whether perspective-taking training was more beneficial than perspective training. In the perspective-taking session, the participants were tasked to imagine themselves as an individual of a racially marginalized group and write a story about challenges they may face. Meanwhile, participants in other training are taught about what is appropriate to say in racial conversations (Smith & Percy, 2019). Smith and Percy (2019) also examined whether political correctness can have an influence in the effectiveness of diversity training. They found that political correctness did not affect microaggression perspectives and that perspective training is more effective (Smith & Percy, 2019). They also found that it will be more impactful for training to have an instructive approach similar to the perspective conditions over an activity where participants are occupied with an independent task.

Sue and colleagues (2019) write about intervention strategies for microaggressions, labeling their strategies under four main categories: 1) "make the 'invisible' visible;" 2) "disarm the

microaggression/macroaggression;" 3) "educate the offender;" and 4) "seek external intervention" (Sue et al., 2019, p.135). There are also articles outside the discipline of psychology that teach about microaggression defenses. Overland and other researchers (2019) discussed microaggressions in a clinical setting, touching on how to handle a microaggression when it happens. They provide a list of steps that are helpful when handling the situation which goes as follow: making sure the patient is fine, addressing the problem, refocusing on the individual, sharing opinions on the problem, reminding the patient of roles, and removing the learners from the situation (Overland et al., 2019). Although the article is not focused on microaggression training specifically, the researchers outline how to handle a situation that would likely happen during such training. Though it may not be a microaggression training, advice such as the information these articles impart can be beneficial to future educators and workshop coordinators.

Microaggressions research has been extended into not only teaching about what is a microaggression, but to how identify and combat them. The current study adds to microaggression training research by utilizing a multimethod workshop to access which training modality was preferred by the participants.

Considerations for Learning in Training

It could also benefit training instructors to consider factors that could affect participants' learning in a microaggression training. Observing learning preferences are useful to training by making instructors aware of how to make training content more captivating and impactful. It could also be useful to observe how personal factors such as a participant's

empathy levels can influence their preferences and how impactful a participant finds a training to be (Overland et al., 2019).

Learning Preferences

There is much pedagogical literature focused on comparing contemporary teaching methods versus that of traditional lecture. One reason why contemporary teaching methods are researched is that lecture typically does not engage students (Douglas et al., 2018). Some of these contemporary teaching methods include videos and discussions (Alpert & Hodkinson, 2019; Douglas et al., 2018).

A 2018 study by Douglas and fellows examined the impacts different teaching methods had on dental students' learning about behavior guidance techniques. They had two conditions: one that focused on traditional lectures and the other which incorporated group discussions (a contemporary teaching method). They found that both conditions were helpful to the students, and the condition which contained the group discussion was as impactful as the traditional lecture counterpart as indicated by the students' exam scores (Douglas et al., 2018). There is also research observing which type of discussions are most useful. Hamann, Pollock, and Wilson (2012) investigated 3 different discussion techniques: small-group, large-class, and online discussion (Hamann et al., 2012). They found that small-group discussions provided the most satisfaction. However, they found benefits in the other two methods as well. Over half of the participants said that full-class discussions helped them understand the material better, and participants felt the most comfortable expressing ideas in the online discussions (Hamann et al., 2012). Overall, it is evident that group discussions are an adequate

teaching method that offers an engaging alternative to traditional lecture.

Another prominent example of a contemporary teaching method is that of the use of videos. Videos are helpful with teaching as they can make the class more engaging (Alpert & Hodkinson, 2019). However, just because a video is included does not mean the class will be automatically engaged. Alpert and Hodkinson (2019) found that students prefer videos that have more a "personal feel" over professionally produced videos (Alpert & Hodkinson, 2019). They also found that 95% of participants reported wanting videos in lectures. What these findings demonstrate is that using videos is helpful in educational settings.

All of this information does not indicate that lecture should be avoided or minimally used. Zinski and colleagues (2017) investigated perspectives on lectures and alternative instructional methods in a sample of medical students. They found that first-year students preferred lectures over alternative teaching methods. Meanwhile, medical students in upper years preferred alternative instructional methods. The researchers speculate that this is because the first-years are accustomed to lecture as they were during their undergraduate years (Zinski et al., 2017). This suggests that students' lecture preferences may be more influenced by familiarity than educational style.

Microaggression training that is lecture based is not insufficient by default. Training could, however, be best delivered using multiple methods in order to cater to the variety of learning preferences. More specifically, training methodology should utilize options that can be most beneficial to participants of said training. From this literature, it would seem that incorporating small-groups and videos would make training more engaging, and including a lecture portion in a microaggression training could boost the learning.

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to comprehend the feelings of other individuals (Forgiarini et al., 2011). What is the link between microaggressions— a harmful practice — and empathy? Because empathy is negatively correlated with subtle prejudice (Forgiarini et al., 2011), those who commit microaggressions may not be high in empathy.

Some research examined these links between empathy and prejudice (Gair, 2017; Mekawi et al., 2017). For instance, some social work students do not advocate for aboriginal Australians due to the lack of empathy for them (Gair, 2017). Likewise, unawareness of blatant racism, unawareness of racial privilege, and color-blindness were negatively associated with empathetic abilities (Mekawi and colleagues, 2017).

Lindsey and colleagues (2015) state that those lower in empathy may need more diversity training since those high in it understand the benefits of diverse populations. The researchers add that people low in empathy may benefit from training focused on perspective-taking since a major part of empathy consists of understanding the other individual. Thus, empathy can impact perceptions during diversity training as well as preference for methods.

Lindsey and fellows (2015) also acknowledged that empathy levels can impact diversity training's usefulness. For instance, Oliver and other researchers found that narrative news formats evoke high levels of empathy (Oliver et al., 2012). Therefore, microaggression training that is perspective-focused may be more capable of inducing empathy. Furthermore, because people high in empathy presumably take perspectives more easily, there is a chance

that they may appreciate training that allows them to hear people's personal experiences.

Current Study

The current study examines how learning preferences and empathy are related in the context of a multi-modal microaggression training workshop. This study's training workshop utilizes a video, group discussions, and a lecture. Based on previous research (Lindsey et al., 2015; Smith & Percy, 2019), it is hypothesized that participants who experience more empathy during the training will prefer the video and group discussion portions of the training. Participants who experience less empathy may prefer the lecture. Unlike to the video and group discussion, the lecture's content may not feel as personal as the other parts of the training. Our hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 1a: Participants high in empathy will prefer the video and group discussions more than the lecture

Hypothesis 1b: Participants lower in empathy will prefer the lecture over the video and group discussions.

This study also observes which training modality is most preferred by the participants. Previous research has found that contemporary learning methods may be preferred over traditional lectures (Douglas et al., 2018; Zinski et al., 2017). Therefore, the researchers predict:

Hypothesis 2: Participants will prefer the video most, followed by the group discussion activity, and lastly the lecture.

Methods

Participants

Participants consisted of 183 individuals from a large southwestern university. The sample consisted of 28.4% cisgender males, and 71.6% cisgender females. The average age of the participants was 21 ($SD =3.01$), 45.9% of the participants identified as white, 28.4% as Hispanic or Latino, and 25.7% as Black/African American. Regarding sexual orientation, 80.9% identified as heterosexual, 4.9% as gay or lesbian, and 14.2% as bisexual. Lastly, 4.4% identified as a freshman, 15.4% as a sophomore, 40.7% as a junior, 36.3% as a senior, and 3.3% as fifth-years or more (see Appendix A for demographic information).

Materials

Microaggressions in the Classroom Video

The participants watched a 17-minute informative video discussing microaggressions in classroom settings (Niemann & Carter, 2017). In particular, the video highlights experiences that students and professors have had with microaggressions.

After watching the video that included scenes of people describing their experiences with microaggressions, participants responded to a questionnaire that assessed how each scene impacted the participants' knowledge of microaggressions. Each question had 5 items, 4 of which were on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The questions asked about whether the video segments were helpful in learning about microaggressions, how helpful the information will be in future social interactions, relevancy to the participant's personal experiences, and whether the segment caused any strong feelings. The fifth and final item for each video segment was a free response question that asked for specific comments about the script.

The last questionnaire asked participants questions about experiences with microaggressions, how they dealt with microaggressions in the past, and how they felt about the microaggressions in the video. Also, they were asked about how confident they are about taking action against microaggressions in the future. Lastly, participants were tasked to rank order the training methods (i.e. lecture, video, group discussion) between 1 (best/most helpful), 2 (middle), or 3 (least helpful). Some participants ($n = 22$) did not complete this portion and were excluded from analyses regarding training preferences.

Procedures

The training took place in classrooms and lecture halls. However, the study procedures were all the same. Participants watched a 17-minute video produced by Yolanda Flores Niemann and Carla LynDale Carter about microaggressions in classroom settings (Niemann & Carter, 2017). Dr. Niemann then gave an approximately 15 to 20-minute lecture on the topic of microaggressions, highlighting definitions and interventions. Participants then engaged in small-group discussions followed by a large group discussion by the entire room. The microaggression training took approximately one hour. Participants also completed a packet with questionnaires regarding demographics, reactions to the video, and experiences with microaggressions. Packets were directly given to the researcher upon completion.

Results

We conducted one-way ANOVAs to see how participants responded to the

microaggression training on the basis of their demographics. We investigated how much the participants felt they learned about microaggressions, how helpful they felt the information was going to be in their social interactions, how relevant the presented information was to their personal experiences, and how emotionally stimulated they felt during the training. We also conducted a frequency analysis that revealed that the video modality was the overall preferred training method (64.6%), followed by the group discussion (26.1%) and the lecture (9.3%).

Gender

We conducted a one-way ANOVA to investigate the differences between cisgender males and cisgender females of the sample in relation to how impactful the training was to them. Significance was only found in how helpful participants felt the training was to their learning about microaggressions, $F(1, 178) = 4.10$, $p = .044$, $\eta^2 = .02$ (see Table 1). No significance was found for how helpful participants considered the training will be in their social interactions, $F(1, 178) = 2.74$, $p = .100$. We also found no significance in whether the participants found the training relevant to them based on gender, $F(1, 178) = 1.82$, $p = .179$. Lastly, no significance was found in how emotionally stimulated the participants felt during the training, $F(1, 178) = .13$, $p = .716$. A crosstabulation analysis revealed that both men and women preferred the video over group discussions and lecture. We also ran a chi-square test on preferred training methods but no significance between variables was found, $X^2 (2, N = 161) = 5.00$, $p = .082$.

Table 1

Group Means of How Impactful Participants Felt the Training Was to Their Learning About Microaggressions

		n	M	η	η^2
Cisgender Males	Learning About Microaggressions[a]	50	1.62	.044	.23
Cisgender Females	Learning About Microaggressions	130	1.42	.044	

[a] How helpful participants felt the training was to their learning about microaggressions.
*p < .05. M = mean, η^2 = Eta squared.

Race/Ethnicity.

We conducted another one-way ANOVA to observe how impactful the training is to participants on the basis of their race/ethnicity. Significance was found in how personally relevant the participants felt the training was to them on the basis of their racial/ethnic identity, $F(2, 177) = 6.06$, $p = .003$, $\eta^2 = .65$ (see Table 2). However, significance was not found for how impactful the training was on participants' learning about microaggressions, $F(2, 177) = 1.75$, $p = .177$, how helpful the training will be for social interactions, $F(2, 177) = 2.21$, $p = .112$, nor how emotionally stimulated participants felt during the training, $F(2, 177) = .49$, $p = .615$.

Table 2

Group Means of How Relevant to Themselves Participants Found the Training to be

		n	M	η	η^2
White	Relevant to Me [a]	83	2.46	.003	.65
Black/American American	Relevant to Me	45	2.02	.003	
Hispanic or Latino	Relevant to Me	52	2.24	.003	

[a] How relevant the participant felt the training was to themselves
*p < .05. M = mean, η^2 = Eta squared.

A chi-square test on preferred training was conducted, but no relation between the variables was found, $X^2 (4, N = 162) = 4.25$, $p = .373$. We also conducted a crosstabulation which revealed that all the races (i.e. White, Black/African American, and Hispanic or Latino) preferred the video. A post hoc analysis revealed that more Hispanic or Latino participants believed the training is going to be helpful in social interactions, $p = .044$. Black/African American and Latinx participants equally felt that the training was relevant to them, $p = .002$; $p = .009$. Lastly, we found no differences among the races in how well they reported they learned the information.

Sexual Orientation

Our results from the ANOVA revealed that there was significance among sexual orientation groups in how helpful the training will be in social interactions, $F(2, 177) = 4.37$, $p = .014$, $\eta^2 = .05$ and in emotional stimulation, $F(2, 177) = 3.84$, $p = .023$, $\eta^2 = .04$ (see Table 3). No significant differences were found in how much participants learned about microaggressions, $F(2, 177) = 1.79$, $p = .169$, nor for how relevant the participants felt the training was to them on the basis of sexual orientation, $F(2, 177) = 2.62$, $p = .076$.

Table 3

Group Means of How Helpful the Participants Think the Training Will Be in Social Interactions and Emotional Stimulation

		n	*M*	η	η^2
Heterosexual	Helpful in Social Interactions [a]	145	1.62	.014	.05
	Emotional Stimulation [b]	145	1.88	.023	.04
Gay or Lesbian	Helpful in Social Interactions	9	2.07	.014	
	Emotional Stimulation	9	2.15	.023	
Bisexual	Helpful in Social Interactions	26	1.31	.014	
	Emotional Stimulation	26	1.51	.023	

[a] How helpful participants think the training will be in their future social interactions.
[b] How emotionally stimulated participants felt during the training.
*p < .05. *M* = mean, η^2 = Eta squared.

A chi-square test on preferred training was conducted, but no relation between the variables was found, X^2 (6, *N* = 162) = 8.26, *p* = .220. We also conducted a crosstabulation which revealed almost all straight, gay/lesbian, and bisexual participants preferred the video. We also conducted post hoc analyses which revealed that gay or lesbian participants claimed the training would be more useful in social interactions, *p* = .015. It was also revealed that gay or lesbian and bisexual participants experienced more emotional stimulation than their heterosexual counterparts, *p* = .63, *p* = .050. Furthermore, regardless of sexual orientation, there was no difference in how helpful the participants thought the training was to their learning about microaggressions, nor in how relevant they found the information to be to themselves.

Learning about Microaggressions

We ran an ANOVA to examine if participants' training preference impacted learning about microaggressions. No significant results were found, *F*(2, 156) = 1.13, *p* = .325. However, individuals who preferred the group discussions felt that the video was the most emotionally stimulating.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate if empathy levels influenced microaggression training modality preferences. It was hypothesized that participants with higher empathy levels would prefer the video and group discussion, and those lower in empathy would prefer the lecture. It was also hypothesized that participants would prefer the video, followed by the group discussion, and followed by the lecture. While the researchers were not able to find significant results for the hypotheses 1a or 1b, hypothesis 2 was supported. Nonetheless, although only one hypothesis was supported, there were other notable findings in the study.

Gender

Results from this study revealed that there was a significant difference among participants based on gender regarding how impactful they thought the training was on their learning of microaggressions. No significant differences were found in how relevant participants found the training to be. There was also no difference among participants in how helpful they believe the training will be in future social interactions, or how emotionally stimulating they felt the training was. It was found that both genders preferred the video modality over the discussion group discussion and lecture.

Race/Ethnicity

There was only one significant difference among participants on the basis of their race/ethnicity. The one significant difference was that African American and Hispanic or Latino participants were more likely to find the training relevant to them. It can be inferred that the reason why they found the content more relevant to themselves was due to their status of being a part of a traditionally marginalized group. Perhaps some of the African American and Hispanic or Latino participants were able to relate to the content because they may have experience with microaggressions themselves. There is also the possibility that African American and Hispanic or Latino participants have had similar experiences to the people in the video of similar demographics. In sum, due to the lack of significant differences in other aspects, it can be inferred that all participants regardless of race equally found the training to be helpful and emotionally stimulating.

Sexual Orientation

There were significant differences in how the training could have been impactful to participants based on their sexual orientation. More specifically, the results suggest that there were significant differences among participants in how helpful they think the training will be for social interactions and how emotionally stimulating the training was. A post hoc analysis revealed that participants who identified as gay and lesbian and bisexual experienced more empathy than their heterosexual counterparts. This finding could explain the significance found in emotional stimulation among participants. It is speculated that the reason why non-heterosexual participants experienced the most empathy can be because of personal experiences with microaggressions they have had. Nonetheless, while gay and lesbian and bisexual participants felt the most empathy, all participants regardless of sexual orientation, found the training educational and relevant to themselves.

Differences in Training Modalities

An interesting finding is that participants who preferred the group discussion viewed the video as most emotionally stimulating. In addition, the video was overall the most preferred method. This finding supports previous research by Alpert and Hodkinson (2019) who found that students preferred a video that had a personal feel to it. Moreover, the participants in the present study were college-aged individuals who could relate to the video participants. Therefore, it is possible that the video did have a "personal-feel," which is why participants favored it.

The video may have also been the most empathy inducing for the same reason Oliver and fellows (2012) found narrative formatted news to be more emotionally stimulating than non-narrative news. The

video, like narrative news, exposed individuals to potentially sensitive content. Therefore, similar reactions and results are not surprising. Something else to consider about the video is that it could possibly qualify as perspective-focused training as mentioned by Lindsay et al. (2015). The researchers recommended perspective-taking diversity training for people lower in empathy to presumably help them better understand what targets of microaggressions may endure. By watching the video, there is a possibility that the participants were able to take the perspective of what some of the students and professors have endured in the process of watching it. This could possibly help explain why the video induced as much empathy as it did. Lastly, regarding the other two modalities, there were no significant differences in how much empathy they induced.

It is clear that, regardless of preferences, participants overall found the microaggression training to be helpful toward their education of the subject. Moreover, while there were differences, there was no overall difference in how much the participants reported that they learned.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was the homogeneity present among some demographic categories. This particularly applies to the gender category. The gender demographics were a majority of cisgender females (71.6%). Having an equalized sample could lead to more representative data. Also, homogeneity can also be found among our sample in regards to age. This study was conducted using a sample that consisted of college students who were relatively similar in age ($N= 21$; SD= 3.32). Therefore, the data from this study is more representative of a young-adult population rather than a sample diverse in age. Future

studies may want to strive to have a diverse sample, as it will be more representative of a general population.

Another limitation found in this study is that a specific scale to measure empathy was not used due to time constraints. This study measured participants' empathy by measuring the emotional stimulation they could have been felt during a specific portion of the training. Future studies may want to utilize an empathy scale and observe the correlations between empathy scores and training preferences.

Implications for Microaggression Training

The goal of this study was to see if any correlations existed between modality preferences of microaggression training and empathy levels. While hypotheses 1a and 1b was not supported by the data, there are other findings that can be beneficial to future microaggression training workshops.

It was found that the video used in the training was the most emotionally stimulating in comparison to other the training methods. Therefore, other microaggression workshops should strive to include a video. Particularly, a video that includes more relatable content since those are preferred (Alpert and Hodkinson, 2019).

One last thing that should be noted is that these findings support previous research that has found multi-method training to be more beneficial than single-method training (Berzukova et al., 2016; Berk, 2017). This study furthers those findings since this study's training was multimethod, and no differences were found in how much participants learned based on their training preference. Lastly, these findings should imply that excluding a particular training method because it may not be preferable is unnecessary since it will not affect how much a participant learns.

Future training sessions should consider that, regardless of participants' preferences, there may not be many differences in how much participants learn. This means that a heavy focus on how information is distributed is not as crucial as one would think. Whether they preferred the perspective-focused video, the engaging discussion, or an informative lecture, the participants were able to benefit and grow from having participated in this training. Considering these results, the take-away message is that how we train is not what matters most. What is truly important is that we train more.

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Appendices

Appendix A1: Demographics

The following questions ask about basic demographic information, please read each question carefully and answer honestly. If you are unsure, please select the option unsure for multiple choice questions or type 'unsure' in the text boxes

1. **Age**: _____

2. **Sex**:
   _ Male
   _ Female
   _ Intersex

3. **Gender**:
   _ Cisgender Man
   _ Cisgender Woman
   _ Transgender Man (M to F)
   _ Transgender Woman (F to M)
   _ Gender Queer/Gender Non-conforming

_ Different Gender Identity (Other):

_____

4. **Sexual Orientation (if you care comfortable confidentially answering this question)**:
    _ Straight
    _ Gay or Lesbian
    _ Bisexual
    _ Asexual
    _ Queer
    _ Pansexual
    _ Questioning
    _ Different Sexual Orientation (Other):

    _____

5. **Race/Ethnicity**:
   _ White
   _ Asian/Asian American
   _ Black/African American
   _ Hispanic or Latino
   _ Native American/Alaskan Native
   _ Middle Eastern/ Arab
   _ Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
   _ Other: _____

6. I consider myself to be an international student

   ___ agree

   ___ disagree

7. **Your Highest Level of Education**:
   _ High School Diploma/GED
   _ Some College No Degree
   _ Associates Degree
   _ Bachelor's Degree

8. **Major**: _____

9. **Classification**:
   _ Freshman/First Year
   _ Sophomore
   _ Junior
   _ Senior
   _ Fifth Year +

10. **Religious Affiliation**:
    _ Agnostic
    _ Atheist
    _ Buddhist
    _ Christian
    _ Hindu
    _ Jewish
    _ Muslim
    _ Pagan/Wiccan
    _ Catholic
    _ Evangelical Protestant
    _ Mainland Protestant
    _ Jehovah's Witness

   _   Mormon
   _   Not Sure/Don't Know
   _   None
   _   Other (Please Specify):

11. **Marital Status**:
   _   Single
   _   Married
   _   Widowed
   _   Separated
   _   Divorced

12. Political Affiliation:

Democrat   Republican   Independent   Not listed here (Please Specify)_____

13. **Growing up, my family's general socioeconomic (financial) status was:**
   _   Lower social class
   _   Middle social class
   _   Upper social class

14. **Highest formal attainment of parent with the highest formal education:**

(1)   6th grade or earlier   (4)   High-School Diploma School (7)   Bachelor's Degree
(2)   9th grade or earlier   (5)   GED   (8)   Some college
(3) Less than 12th Grade   (6)   Associates/Technical Degree (9)   Master's   (10)   PhD

Appendix A2: Script Reactions

0:19
A microaggression is something that someone says to someone else without knowing that it may be offensive.
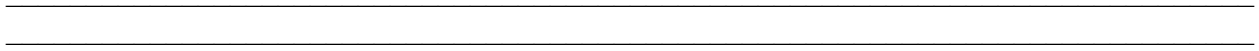
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This script helped me learn about microaggressions	1	2	3	4	5
This script will be helpful in my social interactions	1	2	3	4	5
The topics covered in this script were relevant to me	1	2	3	4	5
This script evoked strong feelings in me	1	2	3	4	5

What other specific comments do you have about this script?

_____
_____
_____
_____

0:25
It hurts. So, that is how I know that it is a microaggression, because it feels disrespectful.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This script helped me learn about microaggressions	1	2	3	4	5
This script will be helpful in my social interactions	1	2	3	4	5
The topics covered in this script were relevant to me	1	2	3	4	5
This script evoked strong feelings in me	1	2	3	4	5

What other specific comments do you have about this script?

_____
_____

Appendix A3: General Questionnaire

1. How often have you experienced microaggressions?

   Daily___   Weekly___   Monthly___   A Few Times Per Year___

   Once a Year___   Never___

2. From whom have you experienced microaggressions?

   students___ faculty___   friends___   coworkers___

   bosses___ family___   other_____

3. Briefly describe one or two microaggressions committed against you.

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

4. Briefly describe how you generally respond to microaggressions committed against you:

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

5. Briefly describe how you generally respond to microaggressions you witness being committed against others:

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

6. Briefly describe how the microaggressions in the video made you feel?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

7. The training empowered me to take action when I see or experience microaggressions:
   ___Strongly Agree ___Agree ___Neither agree nor disagree ___Disagree ___Strongly Disagree

8. Please rank order the parts of the training that were most helpful (from 1 – 3, with 1 being the best)
   ___ lecture   ___ video   ___ group discussion

Tables

Table 1

Group Means of How Impactful Participants Felt the Training Was to Their Learning About Microaggressions

		n	M	η	η²
Cisgender Males	Learning About Microaggressions[a]	50	1.62	.044	.23
Cisgender Females	Learning About Microaggressions	130	1.42	.044	

[a] How helpful participants felt the training was to their learning about microaggressions.
*$p < .05$. M = mean, η^2 = Eta squared.

Table 2

Group Means of How Relevant to Themselves Participants Found the Training to be

		n	M	η	η²
White	Relevant to Me [a]	83	2.46	.003	.65
Black/American American	Relevant to Me	45	2.02	.003	
Hispanic or Latino	Relevant to Me	52	2.24	.003	

[a] How relevant the participants felt the training was to themselves
*$p < .05$. M = mean, η^2 = Eta squared.

Table 3

Group Means of How Helpful the Participants Think the Training Will Be in Social Interactions and Emotional Stimulation

		n	M	η	η²
Heterosexual	Helpful in Social Interactions [a]	145	1.62	.014	.05
	Emotional Stimulation [b]	145	1.88	.023	.04
Gay or Lesbian	Helpful in Social Interactions	9	2.07	.014	
	Emotional Stimulation	9	2.15	.023	
Bisexual	Helpful in Social Interactions	26	1.31	.014	
	Emotional Stimulation	26	1.51	.023	

[a] How helpful participants think the training will be in their future social interactions.
[b] How emotionally stimulated participants felt during the training.
*$p < .05$. M = mean, η^2 = Eta squared.