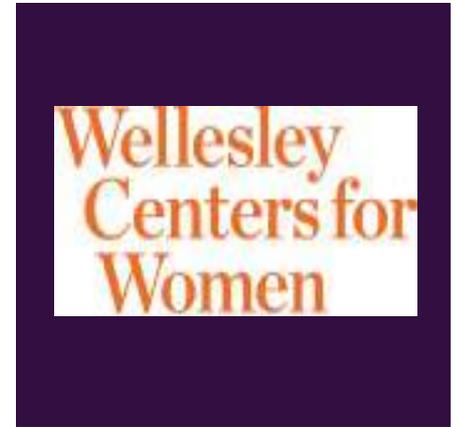# *Making Online and Offline Microaggressions More Visible*

Hosted by World of Wellesley

Linda Charmaraman, Ph.D., senior research scientist
Director, Youth, Media, & Wellbeing Research Lab
www.youthmediawellbeing.org

youth, media & wellbeing
RESEARCH LAB
@ Wellesley Centers for Women

Goal: Making microaggressions more visible

- Definition of Microaggression
  - Verbal, behavioral, or environmental slights that are the result of implicit bias → usually hostile or derogatory
  - Often automatic and unintentional

- Discuss 4 common microaggressions in AAPI community and beyond using examples from…
  - Model Minority Myth
  - Vicarious and secondary victimization
  - Discrimination and wellbeing
  - Online harassment
  - Media stereotypes
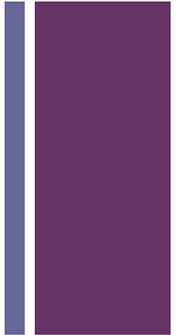
+ Common microaggressions

- #1 Not recognizing that all Asians are not alike
  - e.g., "I thought your people were…"

- #2 Dismissing a problem that you don't (or refuse) to see
  - E.g., not enough evidence to label a "hate crime"

- #3 Dismissing a problem because you think others have it worse
  - E.g., oppression olympics

- #4 Dismissing a stereotyped portrayal since it was meant to be funny, (not because it was meant to be racist)
  - E.g., "greasy Chinese food"

+ Microaggression example 1

- Not recognizing that all Asians are not alike
  - e.g., "I thought your people were…"

- "Model minority myth" – monolithic group experiencing increasing wealth, upward social mobility, freedom from crime and mental health problems, academically successful

- *Why is it a myth?*
  - AAPIs are comprised of over 30 subgroups with differences in customs, language, and religious beliefs.
  - AAPIs range in levels of acculturation and enculturation
  - AAPIs range in levels of social capital and privilege

+ Microaggression example 2

- Dismissing a problem that you don't (or refuse) to see

    - E.g., not enough evidence to label a "hate crime"

    - Vicarious traumatization effect → fear, anger, despair

    - Victimization (and *vicarious* victimization) can lead to a de-stabilization of the following assumptions: a) personal invulnerability, b) perceiving that the world is a meaningful place, and c) viewing oneself in a positive light

    - Race/ethnicity-based hate victimization can be an assault on a fundamental, salient, core identity that is VISIBLE and EASILY IDENTIFIABLE

        - Leads to sense of powerlessness

    Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983

+ Secondary victimization

Secondary victimization can occur when the criminal justice system seeks to balance the rights of the victim against the rights of the accused

- Not naming it – Secondary victimization occurs when there is a failure to take seriously a victim's claim that their assailant was targeted due to their racial/ethnic background which could be immediate obvious (e.g., shouting repeated racial slurs) or not obvious (e.g., history of backlash against a group that they believe are inferior/undeserving/trespassing, etc.)

Example:

- Prior research has observed that when racist incidents involving Asian Americans occur on college campuses, students and administration are far less likely to condemn the acts as racist or even publicize it at all, compared to incidents against other minority groups.

+ Secondary victimization

- 6.8% of nearly 3800 reports of anti-Asian harassment complaints were for online harassment from March 2020 to February 2021.

- AAPIs have had largest uptick in severe online harassment compared to all other groups, including online stalking, physical threats, swatting, doxing, or sustained harassment/cyberbullying.

- Twitter, Facebook, Tiktok, Google all have community rules against hateful behavior, violent threats, and harassment, however anti-Asian tweets aren't always deemed by the sites as "crossing the line"
    - Balance between protecting free speech and victims' rights to not be harassed

Microaggression example 3

- Dismissing a problem because you think others have it worse
  - E.g., oppression olympics

- Whereas African American and Latinx youth are more likely to be targeted for discriminatory treatment by adults, including police, educators, and workers in stores and restaurants, Asian American adolescents are more likely to be be victimized by their peers in and out of school.

- Adolescents experiencing discrimination report greater anxiety, stress, loneliness, and are less likely to view themselves positively.

- Discrimination by peers more detrimental for social and emotional wellbeing; Discrimination by educators affects academic standing
  - Even in academically resilient Asian-American youth, discriminatory treatment influences their academic well-being.
  - Asian Americans are the ethnic group least likely to seek mental health support (online and offline) due to fear of stigma

Cyberbullying

- **AAPI reported significantly higher rates of cyberrumors being spread about them than all other races** (Charmaraman et al., 2018)

- **Researchers (Goebert et al., 2011) have found that in AAPI samples, cyberbullying victimization increases likelihood of**

    - **A) substance use, such as binge drinking and marijuana use (2.5X),**

    - **B) depression (almost 2X), and**

    - **C) suicide attempts (3.2X)**

Cyber rumor spreading
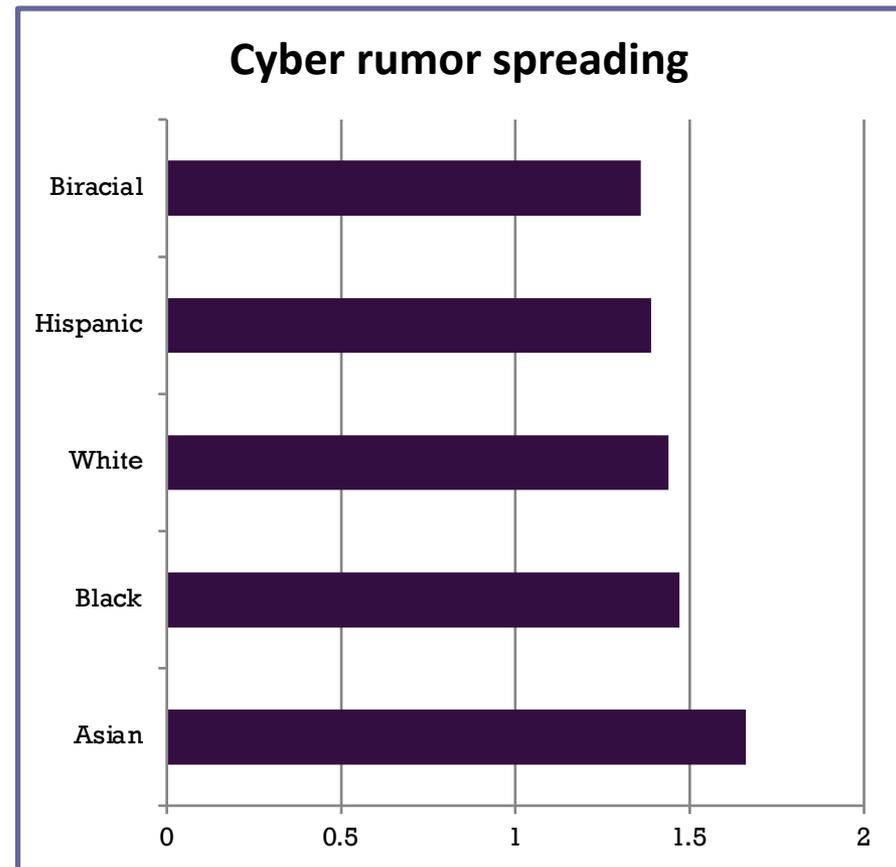
Microaggression example 4

- Dismissing a stereotyped portrayal since it was meant to be funny, not because it was meant to be racist
  - E.g., "greasy Chinese food"

The Colbert Report @ ⚙∨ ⬤ Follow
@ColbertReport

I am willing to show #Asian community I care by introducing the Ching-Chong Ding-Dong Foundation for Sensitivity to Orientals or Whatever.

- YouTuber posted video in March 2021 joking about killing Chinese people ("give me a tommy gun and line 'em up against the wall")
  - Video view about 60,000 times before removed by YouTube which violated its hate speech policy
  - YouTuber defends himself that the video was "facetious sarcasm" and "taken out of context."

Asian Americans and mass media
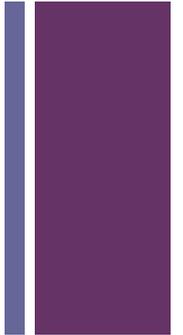
- Past research about the potential impact of media images on Asian Americans (AA) have focused on

  - depictions that do not reflect the diversity within Asian America

  - most common negative stereotypes about AA influences on body image due to White American beauty ideals

  - US Commission on Civil Rights report (Feb, 1992)--"insensitive or unidimensional portrayals of Asian Americans by the media might foster prejudice and promote anti-Asian bias" (p. 180)

Asian American media images

■ **A lot of Korean dramas that I watched when I was younger portrays women as very docile, submissive, passive, and they weren't as aggressive—someone that usually does more domesticated tasks. So I think that really did affect the way that I sort of interacted with people, just because it just basically forced me to think that I had to fit into these ideals of like being very docile, pretty. (Female Korean participant, 21)**

Asian American media images

■ "It's how Asians are portrayed in the media, you're either some— diminutive Geisha that falls in love with some white dude and has her heart-broken or you're some Kung-Fu master or you speak English with like a weird accent....It's like I turn on the TV or I go to the movies and you don't see any minorities, you don't see any serious issues being addressed almost. They show you the ideal American life with a nice upper-middle-class white family living this picturesque life and—it's almost like an implicit racism that they have going on there. I can't really explain it, it's just the lack of it really bothers me." – Chinese, 19

+ Countering negative effects of discrimination/anti-Asian hate

- Complementary Resilience Theory argues that the following can lessen (or compensate for) damaging effects of discrimination on adolescent wellbeing:

- Supportive family relationships
  - Warm and nurturing parenting
  - Low levels of family conflict
  - Parents' positive cultural messages and preparation for bias
  - More prosocial peers (online and offline)

- Individual coping mechanisms
  - Positive views about own race can reduce likelihood of depression

World of Wellesley, thank you for inviting me!
Like us on
www.youthmediawellbeing.org
Join our Insta @youthmediawellbeing
Graphics by freepik.com

+