



Cairnmillar
INSTITUTE

THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

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RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Understand the types of acculturative stressors experienced by migrants during post-migration

3 related studies

- Study 1: Qualitative interviews **
- Study 2: Quantitative survey
 - *Relationship between mindfulness, integration, wellbeing and experiences of microaggressions*
- Study 3: Pilot intervention
 - *Pilot mindfulness skills training program adapted for migrants and refugees*





Australia's ethnic landscape continues to change as significant numbers of permanent migration visas are granted each year.



At June 2016, Australia's overseas born population equalled 6.9 million, which accounted for 28.5% of Australia's resident population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017)



Nearly half (49 per cent) of Australians had either been born overseas (first generation Australian) or one or both parents had been born overseas (second generation Australian).

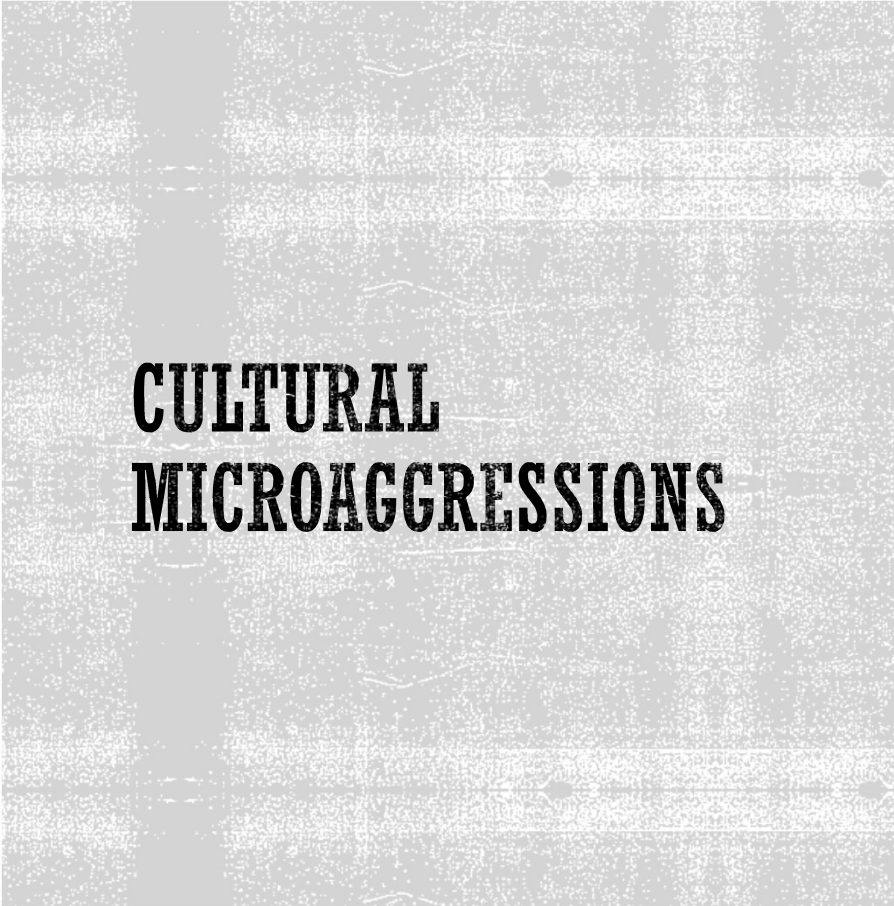


THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT



POST-MIGRATION ACCULTURATIVE STRESS





CULTURAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

- 'Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group' (Sue et al., 2007b: 273)

FORMS OF MICROAGGRESSIONS (SUE ET AL., 2007B)

Microassaults

“Old fashioned” racism comprising of both verbal and non-verbal racially motivated derogative attacks, intended to hurt the victim

Microinsults

Rude or insensitive communication which demean a person's ethnicity or racial heritage

Second Class
Citizenship

Inferior treatment
of an individual or
a group

Microinvalidations

Verbal and non-verbal communications which negate or exclude thoughts and feelings of those from a different racial background

Alien in Own Land

Minorities are
perpetual
foreigners



CURRENT STUDY . . .

Methods

- Qualitative semi-structured interviews
- Population of interest - migrants from diverse ethnic groups
- Participant recruitment – medical clinic
- Data Analysis (Thematic analysis)

Participants

- 25 participants (8 female, 17 male)
- Age range: 23-50 years
- Length of residency in Australia: 1-19 years
- Migrant type: skilled migrants, student, spousal visa.
- 9 different countries of origin. Top 2 countries: India & Afghanistan



RESULTS - OVERVIEW

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MICROASSAULTS

MICROINSULTS

MICROINVALIDATIONS

Second class citizenship

Assumption of incompetence

Pathologizing cultural values & practices

Preferential treatment of dominant group



RESULTS:

EXPERIENCES OF MICROASSAULTS IN THE WORKPLACE

“All the 10 Africans were fired within a space of a year and what do you say to that? What do you think that is? Do you think that is incompetence? Each one has got a different reason, it's technical but then we know it's not that and that's when you can't stand up [to it]...they've got always something written to prove what has happened.... Everyone makes a mistake but then African mistakes are never taken and forgiven they need to be sacked.” (Petina, 50, Zimbabwe, 9 years in Australia)



RESULTS:

EXPERIENCES OF MICROINSULTS IN THE WORKPLACE

- ❖ Often left participants feeling like they did not belong and were not accepted as part of the Australian people, or were seen as subordinate due to the interactions

SECOND CLASS CITIZENSHIP

“Living in a country where like you are always looked down upon” (Dev, 39, India, 11 years in Australia)

“[There] are three, four immigrants working in my company and we always found that we face different work culture compared to Australians. It’s not like harsh racism, but it is [there] definitely [...] Something between bullying and work pressure they [the employers] know that this guy won’t leave job because immigrants always have limited opportunities” (Raj, 31, India, 7.5 years in Australia)



ASSUMPTIONS OF INCOMPETENCE

- ❖ Some experienced as a direct barrier to promotion
- ❖ Felt had to work harder than others to prove themselves

“Promotions were stopped, other people you can see they move up and you are still there [in the same position] even [though] you are working as hard as what they are working.... [I felt] overlooked. They weren’t telling why they weren’t promoting me I did ask for it and they said “look your time will come”.... But I can see the person coming after me all moved up.” (Rakesh, 44, India, 19 years in Australia)

PATHOLOGIZING CULTURAL VALUES AND PRACTICES

- ❖ Indirect derogatory remarks related to the cultural backgrounds of migrants can also give rise to perceptions of inacceptance



RESULTS

EXPERIENCES OF MICROINVALIDATIONS

- ❖ Experiences that invalidated person's sense of being part of the group because of differential treatment
- ❖ Participants reported feeling unacknowledged or ignored
- ❖ Some felt colleagues deliberately and consciously avoided interacting with them, making them feel 'invisible'

"When I walk in [to the room], the eyes trying to shun you ... they don't want to see you" (Fang, 45, China, 14 years in Australia, schoolteacher)

- ❖ Felt 'Australian' workers were valued over migrants, who seemed to be denied access to similar opportunities

PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF DOMINANT GROUP

"In jobs ...we see Australian people mostly get more preferences than other communities.... I think it's in their system, I think...they prefer their own people first.... [But] they can't speak openly cause that's the Australian rules." (Karan, 34, India, 10 years in Australia)



OVERARCHING THEMES

AMBIGUITY

DISEMPOWERMENT



Old fashioned racism that emphasised a biological hierarchy between groups has been replaced by beliefs of cultural hierarchy, in which social norms, values and practices of majority group members are depicted as superior to those of minority groups (Augoustinos, 2013).

Microaggressions gives insight into how modern racism is expressed and perceived in the workplace – which can help us understand how situations are created for minorities in which they are left confused and / or feeling disrespected due to the ambivalent nature of their experiences (Sue et al., 2007b).

‘Clear negative relationship between perceived ethnic discrimination and well-being of immigrants’ (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2006: 268).



Several implications for self-regulation, cognitive functioning, task performance and self-esteem are particularly concerning (Salvatore and Shelton, 2007; Jones et al., 2013).

Understanding the subjective experiences of microaggressions of migrants can inform and contribute to developing individual as well as organisational level strategies and training to recognise, educate and ultimately reduce incidences of microaggressions.

IMPLICATIONS OF CULTURAL MICROAGGRESSIONS ON THE WORKPLACE



LIMITATIONS / FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- ❖ Role of negative emotionality
- ❖ Race-based rejection sensitivity (RBRS): defined as inclination to 'anxiously expect, readily perceive and intensely react to status-based reaction to one's racial group (Mendoza-Denton et al, 2002)
- ❖ Development of measurement tools (context-specific)
- ❖ Further need for construct to be defined and understood in specific contexts
- ❖ Experiences of microaggressions in subsequent generations



Need for acknowledgement of incidences of cultural microaggressions occurring in the workplace, not to place blame on any particular group or individual, but to open communication channels regarding the reality of these experiences and to address misunderstandings

Greater understanding of experiences of cultural microaggressions in its various forms is not only important for individual within their workplace context, but broadly in terms of implications for social cohesion

CONCLUSION

