IN-PERSON VS. VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS: EXAMINING RESPONSES TO WORKPLACE MICROAGGRESSIONS

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ABSTRACT

As remote work remains a lasting feature of the modern workplace, it is critical to understand how this context influences employee responses to racial microaggressions. This study investigates whether the work environment (in-person versus virtual) shapes individuals' likelihood of confronting microaggressions, perceived responsibility to act, and expressions of allyship. A total of 295 employed adults were randomly assigned to view video-based workplace scenarios depicting subtle racial microaggressions in either an in-person or virtual setting. Participants were assessed on their intentions to engage in various allyship behaviors and rated their sense of personal responsibility to confront. Results provided partial support for the hypotheses. Participants in in-person contexts reported significantly higher overall allyship intentions and greater personal responsibility to confront compared to those in virtual settings, but this effect was observed only in one of two scenarios. Contrary to predictions, participants did not significantly prefer private over public support, and context did not moderate this preference. Exploratory analyses revealed Black participants and women reported higher levels of perceived responsibility to confront. Mediation analyses indicated that perceived similarity to the target explained racial differences in perceived responsibility, which in turn predicted stronger allyship intentions. The findings extend the Confronting Prejudiced Responses (CPR) model by showing how virtual contexts may disrupt key steps in the decision to confront, including harm recognition and urgency. They also highlight identity-based disparities in who feels obligated to act. Implications for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts are discussed.

This thesis is dedicated to my remarkable grandmothers, Dr. Gloria S. Malone and Lynell Holmes Evans. Both passed away during my first year in the program, only three months and nine days apart. Your strength, wisdom, and love have profoundly shaped the person I am today. This work is a tribute to your enduring legacy

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past five years, social justice movements ignited by the death of George Floyd have intensified the focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace (Fortune-Deloitte, 2020; Glazer & Francis, 2021; Roberson, 2020). These movements have sparked critical conversations about race relations, heightened scrutiny of systemic oppression, and brought to light the pervasive microaggressions that marginalized communities face daily. Within this evolving landscape, allyship has emerged as a cornerstone of effective DEI strategies, with allies playing a vital role in challenging microaggressions and advocating for underrepresented individuals. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic upended traditional work environments, forcing a rapid and widespread shift to remote work (Brynjolfsson et al., 2020; Leonardi et al., 2024). As these two transformative events unfolded simultaneously, organizations not only grappled with maintaining business continuity but also faced the urgent need to address DEI challenges in a radically transformed workplace. What began as a temporary solution to maintain business continuity quickly evolved into a new norm, with many organizations adopting hybrid or fully remote models as a lasting option. Although recent media narratives suggest a push toward returning to the office (e.g., Brower, 2025), empirical evidence indicates that remote and hybrid work arrangements remain widespread (Leonardi et al., 2024). Many employees not only value these models for their flexibility, autonomy, and alignment with work-life balance priorities, but also show a strong preference for them (Munnich et al., 2025; Sahut & Lissillour, 2023). Some are even willing to change jobs in order to maintain their preferred work arrangement (Waldrep et al., 2024). The expansion of remote and hybrid work environments has introduced new complexities to addressing microaggressions.

Microaggressions are subtle and often unintentional acts of bias or discrimination, that occur in everyday interactions (Sue et al., 2007). Despite their subtlety, these behaviors can have a profound negative impact on organizational culture, turnover, and the physical and mental well-being of the employee (King et al., 2023; Zurbrügg & Miner, 2016). Therefore, it is critical to not only intervene but prevent these experiences from happening to targets. In the evolving landscape of modern workplaces, remote work has become the norm for many. However, the limited face-to-face interaction associated with remote work has not eliminated the potential for microaggressions. While traditional research has primarily examined microaggressions within face-to-face contexts, the shift to digital communication channels raises critical questions about how microaggressions manifest in virtual spaces. This may influence not only how microaggressions are perceived but also how, and if, they are addressed by bystanders and allies. Although significant strides have been made in understanding workplace dynamics and DEI, a critical gap remains in how microaggressions unfold and are managed within remote work settings. Several questions remain unanswered about how virtual contexts can impact workplace interactions in this post-pandemic world (Nyberg et al., 2021). There is a notable lack of empirical research exploring whether the virtual nature of interactions dampens or enhances individuals' willingness to act as allies when microaggressions occur. Furthermore, it remains unclear how the absence of physical presence, limited non-verbal cues, and digital communication barriers influence bystanders' sense of responsibility to confront microaggressions.

In this rapidly changing landscape, understanding microaggressions in a virtual work environment is crucial. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining responses to workplace microaggressions in both in-person and virtual contexts. Utilizing both qualitative and

quantitative data, this paper seeks to uncover nuanced differences in how employees confront these subtle yet damaging behaviors. This study contributes to the literature by offering a deeper understanding of how environmental contexts influence the manifestation and confrontation of microaggressions. While traditional studies on microaggressions have primarily focused on face-to-face interactions, this study extends the discourse by examining how virtual environments influence the ability of bystanders and allies to address microaggressions effectively. By comparing responses in physical and remote settings, this research offers novel insights into the nuanced challenges of promoting allyship within increasingly virtual workplaces. Additionally, this study examines allyship behaviors from both individuals with privileged identities and those from underrepresented groups. While allyship literature has mainly focused on how privileged individuals can support marginalized communities, this study broadens the scope by exploring how individuals from underrepresented groups also engage in allyship, by confronting microaggressions. This approach provides a more holistic understanding of allyship dynamics and the varied motivations and strategies that individuals from different backgrounds employ when confronting bias. Ultimately, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of microaggressions, providing valuable guidance for organizations striving to create equitable cultures that transcend physical and virtual boundaries. As remote work models continue to shape the future of employment, these insights are crucial for developing DEI strategies that are not only adaptable but also proactive in addressing the evolving nature of workplace interactions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Microaggressions [1]in the Workplace

Elements of racial bias have been ingrained into systems and institutions within society, often leaving individuals with minoritized identities most vulnerable to frequent forms of discrimination (Deitch et al., 2003). Within the context of the workplace, Black employees face institutional barriers (e.g., hiring discrimination, and wage disparities) that can hinder their career progression (Hernandez et al., 2019; Quillian et al., 2017; Rosette et al., 2008). However, legal frameworks have been put in place to prohibit such mistreatment from taking place. As society has progressed, so too has the social and legal non-acceptance of such blatant and overt discriminatory acts. In contemporary times, discrimination has manifested itself in more subtle ways (Colella et al., 2017; DeVos & Banaji, 2005). People who hold prejudices may learn to suppress their explicit expressions of bias, yet these biases can manifest in subtle and often indirect ways.

Microaggressions are everyday verbal or nonverbal invalidations or insults, whether intentional or unintentional (Sue et al., 2007). Scholars have outlined ways in which racial microaggressions can be classified: (a) alien in own land (b) ascription of intelligence (c) color blindness (d) assumption of criminal status (e) denial of individual racial biases (f) myth of meritocracy (g) pathologizing cultural values/ communication styles (h) second-class citizen, (i) environmental, or macro-level messages (j) negative interpersonal ascription (k) prescribed physicality (l) socio-economic inferiority and (m) invisibility (King et al., 2023; Sue et al., 2007). These types of microaggressions communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to a target about their marginalized group. Unlike overt discrimination, which often occurs in

[1] Microaggressions can occur against many identity groups. This paper is focused specifically on racial microaggressions.

brief isolated encounters, subtle forms of discrimination occur more frequently in everyday interactions. Microaggressions represent a discord between the egalitarian ideals professed and the subtle prejudices that still pervade daily interactions.

A defining aspect of microaggressions is that they are often ambiguous in nature (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). Microaggressions can be disguised in the form of backhanded compliments or seemingly harmless jokes. These micro-level insults and invalidations can be reflective of larger systemic issues that remain ingrained in societal structures and cultural norms. The subtlety creates a sense of uncertainty regarding the perpetrator's intentions, allowing prejudices to be masked behind a façade of innocence. The ambiguity provides the perpetrators with a veil of deniability, which complicates efforts to directly link their actions to bias or prejudice (Jones et al., 2016; Sue et al., 2008). The targets are often left trying to determine if the mistreatment was a result of personal bias or some other factor, as well as if they should confront the perpetrator or not. The attribution process of ambiguous forms of discrimination can be cognitively burdensome, thus leading targets to dwell on their experience (Shelton et al., 2006; Sue et al., 2007). The pervasive nature of microaggression often leads them to go unaddressed, thereby posing significant and enduring challenges for targets.

Microaggressions occur in a variety of contexts. These acts can target people based on various aspects of their identity such as race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability status, among others. While they may seem harmless or trivial on the surface, they are rooted in underlying prejudices and stereotypes and can have a cumulative, harmful effect on the targets. The cumulative effects of microaggressions are just as damaging to individual outcomes as more overt forms of discrimination (Jones, et al., 2016; Lui & Quezada, 2019). Due to the recurrent, everyday nature of microaggressions, repeated exposure can become a chronic stressor (Essed,

1991; Williams et al., 1997), which can result in both physical and psychological damage (Newman et al., 2025). Psychologically, microaggressions can lead to mental health challenges such as anxiety (Banks et al., 2006; Blume et al., 2012), depression (Huynh, 2012; Nadal et al., 2014), and a general sense of alienation (Sue et al., 2008). The cumulative stress can erode an individual's self-esteem and self-worth, making daily tasks and social interactions more challenging. Physically, the stress caused by microaggressions can manifest in various ways, such as headaches, high blood pressure, immune deficiencies, and other stress-related conditions (Berger & Sarnyai, 2015; Clark et al., 1999). Over time, this can contribute to more severe health problems, underscoring the profound impact that microaggressions can have on one's overall well-being.

Within the context of the workplace, employees often find themselves in situations where they are subjected to repeated microaggressions, particularly from supervisors or colleagues, making it challenging to avoid or address these harmful experiences. Such subtle forms of discrimination frequently go unreported, especially when supervisors are the perpetrators (King et al., 2023). This pervasive issue contributes to a decline in job satisfaction, heightened job-related stress (Zurbrügg & Miner, 2016), and an increased inclination toward job turnover (Cortina et al., 2013; Jones, 2016). Moreover, it can lead to burnout (King et al., 2023) and a decrease in job identification (Zurbrügg & Miner, 2016). Ultimately, microaggressions cultivate an environment that can feel unwelcoming or even hostile for the individuals who are targeted, adversely affecting their overall work experience and professional trajectory.

Addressing microaggressions requires an awareness of their nature as manifestations of prejudice and a strategic approach to engage with them. Scholars have suggested that allyship can be a powerful tool in challenging and mitigating the effects of microaggressions (Jun et al.,

2023; Skinta & Torres-Harding, 2022). Sue et al. (2019) offer strategies that targets, bystanders, and allies can use to combat microaggressions: by bringing the microaggression to the perpetrator's attention, voicing disagreement with the behavior, educating the perpetrator about the impact of their words or actions, and seeking external reinforcement or support. Promoting open conversations about microaggressions contributes to building a culture of inclusivity, where speaking out is encouraged and supported.

Allyship

Allyship Defined

Allyship is a critical element that can be used to combat experiences of discrimination. One may identify as an ally or engage in allyship behaviors (Carlson et al., 2020). Allyship involves individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences actively supporting and advocating for marginalized communities and identities (Ji, 2007; Sabat et al., 2013). These allies are essential in amplifying the voices and concerns of those who face discrimination, prejudice, or underrepresentation. Allyship encompasses actions such as offering support, standing in solidarity, confronting discriminatory behaviors, and actively promoting egalitarian values (Becker & Barreto, 2019; Drury & Kaiser, 2014). Allyship behaviors extend to various historically underrepresented identity groups. Prior research has examined ally behaviors on behalf of various marginalized identity groups, such as gender minorities (Cheng et al., 2019; Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Estevan-Reina et al., 2021; Warren et al., 2021), LGBTQ+ individuals (Brooks & Edwards, 2009; Fletcher & Marvell, 2023; Martinez et al., 2017), racial and ethnic minorities (Brown & Ostrove, 2013; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2013; Chu & Ashburn-Nardo, 2022; Jun et al., 2023) and disability status (Ostrove et al., 2009a; Ostrove & Crawford, 2006; Ostrove et al., 2009b).

The development of allyship can vary significantly based on an individual's upbringing and exposure to diversity. Some individuals are fortunate to grow up in households where their parents actively foster exposure to diverse perspectives and engage in candid discussions about privilege, inequalities, and understanding (Duhigg et al. 2010; Stolzer, 2009). However, not everyone has such experiences. Allies can also emerge in response to learning about the discriminatory experiences endured by someone close to them who belongs to a marginalized group (Ragins & Ehrhardt, 2021) or witnessing an injustice firsthand (Collin & Chlup, 2014). This transformative experience can raise awareness within the individual and inspire them to seek knowledge and take meaningful action. Martinez et al. (2024) outline a five-stage ally development conceptualization that involves: apathy surrounding the experiences of marginalized people; dissonance that results from an event, that leads to the realization of privilege; learning to change one's behavior; stumbling which involves well-intention behaviors that may be perceived as harmful or ineffective; integration which is the consistent commitment to effective allyship. Allyship is a proactive, ongoing process by which individuals seek to understand the experiences and challenges of marginalized or underrepresented groups. It involves educating oneself about the systemic inequalities and injustices that affect these communities. Ally development requires self-reflection, humility, and a willingness to listen and learn. Allyship is not a label one can claim, but a practice demonstrated through consistent and meaningful action.

Allies can be either members of disadvantaged or advantaged groups. Allies from disadvantaged backgrounds have their unique perspective and experiences that can make them powerful allies to other marginalized individuals. Scaramuzzo et al. (2021) introduced the term bidirectional allyship to describe how individuals with different minoritized identities support

other marginalized communities. Intersectionality provides a framework for understanding how various social identities intersect and influence an individual's unique position within complex power structures, both in terms of privileges and disadvantages (Crenshaw, 1989). For example, a gay White man might possess privilege for being White in some circumstances, however, in other situations, be discriminated against for being gay. In instances of discrimination, bidirectional allies can utilize their privilege, or lack thereof, to support and advocate to advance justice, equity, and the rights of both their own and each other's interconnected communities. Allies belonging to underprivileged groups can exhibit deep empathy and a profound sense of solidarity with the individuals they seek to advocate for. Their shared membership in marginalized communities often nurtures a profound kinship or shared understanding, born from parallel experiences with discrimination and oppressive systems (Bueno & Brown, 2023). These allies, motivated by their personal experiences with inequality, are driven to proactively engage in dismantling those very systems that detrimentally affect their identity group.

Research on allyship has traditionally studied allies from advantaged groups (Broido, 2000; Reason et al., 2005). Allies from advantaged backgrounds can use their privilege to amplify marginalized voices and work to dismantle systemic inequalities. They have the unique capacity to leverage their privilege to challenge discriminatory practices, advocate for equitable policies, and foster more inclusive environments. Previous research has found that confrontation initiated by individuals from privileged backgrounds tends to be more effective in reducing prejudice and driving transformative change, in contrast to confrontations led by members of marginalized groups (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Gervais & Hillard, 2014; Gulker et al., 2013; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010; Schultz & Maddox, 2013). Privileged individuals often approach these types of situations with a lack of vested interest, leading to a distinct interpretation of the

confrontation compared to if a member of the marginalized group were to address the issue (Preston et al., 2024). Typically, members of marginalized communities advocating for their group's interests are met with different expectations and evaluations during confrontations, rendering them potentially less effective. For instance, when a person of color confronts someone over racist comments, they may be seen as representing their group's interests, potentially leading to the perception that they are merely complaining or being overly sensitive (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). This can, in turn, lessen the perceived severity of the incident for the target and reduce the likelihood of the behavior being altered in the future. Allies, in this context, serve as exemplars, inspiring fellow group members, influencing public opinion positively, and potentially mobilizing public support and action (Louis, 2009). Such confrontations communicate that problematic behavior will not be tolerated, making perpetrators of discrimination more likely to reform their ways and reduce their harmful actions when confronted by an ally from an advantaged group (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). Bystanders who witness an ally challenging prejudiced behavior may also be more inclined to confront similar actions in the future. Thus, allies can emerge as critical change agents, raising awareness and effectively reducing the potential for such behavior in the future.

When Do Allies Act?

Kutlaca et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of adopting a multi-perspective approach when considering the role, motivations, and effectiveness of allies. In situations in which discriminatory behavior occurs, people can assume multiple roles. There is often the perpetrator, a target from a marginalized group, and in some cases, witnessing bystanders. According to the Confronting Prejudice Responses Model (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008), there are a variety of reasons why some bystanders may choose not to confront discriminatory acts. Those observing

the behavior might fail to perceive it as problematic or significant enough to warrant a response. Individuals from privileged backgrounds may hold unconscious biases that lead them to endorse statements they believe are positive or complimentary, but that actually reinforce negative stereotypes about marginalized groups (Czopp & Monteith 2006). In some instances, the act might be perceived as unintentional and might not elicit a reaction. The number and composition of bystanders present can determine whether an individual assumes responsibility to confront discrimination, similar to the bystander effect, the more bystanders present, the less likely an individual is to intervene (Darley & Latane, 1968). There is a diffusion of responsibility, in which the bystander to the discriminatory behavior feels less personal responsibility if others are present.

In the context of the workplace, the presence of authority figures can alter these dynamics, with them often being seen as having the greatest responsibility to intervene (Ashburn-Nardo, 2020). Allies in positions of power, such as managers or organizational leaders, may be more adept at advocating and offering instrumental support, while those in lower roles, like coworkers, may excel at providing emotional support due to their frequent interactions with the individuals they support (Cheng et al., 2019). The effectiveness of a particular behavior can also shape its degree of public or private expression. If a behavior is anticipated to yield the desired results, making it public can serve as a model for desired conduct and help establish norms. However, when the authority figure is the one making a prejudiced remark, bystanders are less likely to intervene; if they do, it is more likely to be done in a private setting to minimize potential backlash (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2014; Cheng et al., 2019).

Moreover, individuals from non-target groups may not inherently feel it is their duty to address discrimination when a target individual is present (Crosby et al., 2008; Swim & Hyers,

1999), especially if the target does not protest or signal for help, or if the perpetrator and target have an established relationship (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008). The bystander may not feel a responsibility to confront the discriminatory acts they witness, they might hesitate due to uncertainty about how to effectively approach the situation or a lack of confidence in their ability to take action (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008). Some individuals may grapple with evaluation apprehension wherein the fear of judgment or scrutiny from others can paralyze them when engaging in public actions (Latane´ & Darley, 1970). When contemplating taking action, individuals often harbor concerns about potential conflict or social backlash (Good et al., 2012; Kaiser & Miller, 2004), especially when the perpetrator holds influence or authority over them (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2014). For example, one might refrain from confronting their bosses' prejudiced behavior, out of fear of potential career ramifications that might result. Given the often subtle and ambiguous nature of microaggressions, bystanders might be cautious of labeling the perpetrator as racist even if it is an applicable characterization in the situation. The more subtle the prejudice, the less likely people are to confront the behavior (Lindsey et al., 2015).

Radke et al. (2020) outline four distinct motivations that drive members of advantaged groups toward allyship behaviors: moral motivation, personal motivation, outgroup motivation, and ingroup motivation. Those driven by moral motivation act out of a deep sense of ethical responsibility, urging them to confront and act against various forms of inequality. Personal motivation, on the other hand, underscores individuals who engage in allyship to enhance their own image. This approach prioritizes self-interest over the needs of underrepresented groups, focusing on how their actions can personally benefit them. When individuals seek recognition for their allyship, the authenticity of their actions can be cast into doubt (Spanierman & Smith, 2017). Outgroup-focused motivation propels allies to advocate for disadvantaged groups, even if

doing so means challenging prevailing stereotypes, prejudiced beliefs, and power hierarchies favoring the advantaged group members. Conversely, ingroup-focused motivation centers on a commitment to elevate the social status of marginalized groups, albeit while avoiding actions detrimental to the power or privilege associated with being a part of the advantaged group. It is worth noting that individuals from privileged groups often engage in actions that reinforce their advantage rather than critically questioning the systems that benefit them while simultaneously oppressing minority groups (Jost et al., 2017; Osborne et al., 2019).

It is imperative to consider the perspective of the individuals targeted by discriminatory behavior. When ally behaviors are effectively implemented, they serve as a reassuring signal to these targets, not only enhancing their psychological well-being but also fostering a sense of trust, belonging, and support from the ally (Chu & Ashburn-Nardo, 2022). This, in turn, enables them to express their identity without fear of threat. Yet, after a biased remark, the target's perception of safety in their broader environment hinges on the endorsement of the ally's confrontation by a bystander (Hidlelbrand et al., 2020). When bystanders actively support the ally in denouncing the biased behavior, it conveys to the target that their identity holds value and that they can genuinely express it within a secure space. Furthermore, this collective affirmation sends a clear message to others that such behaviors will not be tolerated. The cumulative voices in the denunciation of prejudice play a pivotal role in establishing both descriptive and injunctive norms (Reno et al., 1993).

In some instances, individuals may think they are acting as an ally, with the purest intentions, yet their actions can lead to unintended consequences (Kutlaca et al., 2020). There is a tension that exists surrounding allyship (Carlson et al., 2020). While there is a need for allies to actively engage in dismantling oppressive systems, there is also a caution against inadvertently

centering allies' concerns and turning allyship into a self-serving endeavor. This inherent dichotomy is further exacerbated by the temporal and contextual nature of ally behaviors. Allies are called upon to both listen more and speak more, requiring a finely tuned sense of when to do which. Furthermore, the tensions in allyship also stem from the acknowledgment that even well-intentioned allies may, in their actions and ideologies, perpetuate or reproduce the very inequalities they seek to combat. Allies must steer clear of actions that shift blame onto the victim, derail constructive conversations, or place the ally in the spotlight rather than focus on the victim of discrimination, as seen in behaviors like whitewashing or mansplaining. When allies redirect attention to themselves, they not only jeopardize the objectives of social justice actions and initiatives but also risk creating conflict with members of marginalized groups (Droogendyk et al., 2016). Moreover, it is vital to recognize that actions appropriate in one situation, may not be suitable in a different context. Specific circumstances may necessitate an ally to speak out and advocate for others using their voice. While in other instances, it may be more effective for the ally to take on the role of an active listener, creating a platform for marginalized voices to be heard, instead of speaking for them. Considering intersectionality and the diverse social identities people hold, allies must remain attuned to the unique dynamics and power structures within each context, tailoring their actions accordingly (Carlson et al., 2020).

Privileged individuals who engage in actions primarily for personal gain or with an ingroup-focused motivation may inadvertently risk having their intentions perceived as performative. The term "performative allyship" is used to characterize individuals who outwardly express solidarity with marginalized communities but do so in a way that primarily aims to enhance their own image, rather than genuinely contributing to the betterment of that community and the advancement of social change (Kutlaca & Radke, 2023). In such instances,

their motivation does not center on addressing the immediate situation or driving actual change. For instance, someone might profess support for an underrepresented group or social movement, yet when presented with a specific opportunity to stand by that marginalized group, they remain passive or refrain from taking actions that would actively advocate for them. In the context of the workplace, following the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement, many organizations posted messages of solidarity and espoused a commitment to DEI. However, in some instances, their actions do not match the messaging and image that they were portraying (Spielman et al., 2023). Some organizations struggled to create concrete policies and initiatives to improve the experiences of employees with minoritized identities. In other cases, organizations may exaggerate the diversity within by utilizing stock images or highlighting "token" minority employees in advertisements. These types of allyship attempts run the risk of being perceived as inauthentic and performative.

Collier-Spruel and Ryan (2022) highlight the crucial importance of taking the target's perspective into account when evaluating the effectiveness and appreciation of allyship behaviors. From the perspective of the target, research suggests that ineffective allyship often manifests as dependency-oriented efforts that overlook marginalized identities or hesitate to take challenging actions due to limited awareness or skill (Collier-Spruel & Ryan, 2022: Selvanathan et al., 2020). In today's diverse and multifaceted world, the concept of intersectionality teaches us that individuals occupy different social positions based on the various identities they hold (Crenshaw, 1989). Consequently, these intersecting identities give rise to distinct identity-based needs. For allies, this means acknowledging the complexity of each person's lived experience and recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach to allyship may not be suitable or effective. Instead, allies should approach each situation with sensitivity and nuance, considering both the

individual and the specific context in which allyship behaviors are being enacted. By doing so, allies can better tailor their support and advocacy to align with the unique needs and challenges faced by individuals. By embracing the uniqueness of each person's identity and context, allies can foster a more inclusive and supportive environment that empowers individuals to thrive.

Remote Work

The principle of individualized consideration extends into the domain of professional life, where remote work has emerged as a solution to honor the diverse needs and preferences of the modern workforce. Remote work (also referred to as virtual work, virtuality, or telecommuting) is a flexible work arrangement in which an individual performs their job's duties and responsibilities from a location outside of a traditional centralized work office (Olson, 1983). Instead of being physically present at a designated office space, remote workers can carry out their job tasks from various locations. Through the use of the internet and communication technology, individuals can interact and collaborate with other members of their organization. The COVID-19 pandemic ultimately led to an increase in remote workers (Ozimek, 2020). Many workers were forced to make the shift from working in a physical office setting to working remotely. This work style has become more widely adopted as a result of the pandemic. In 2023, 12.7% of employees embraced full-time remote work, and 28.2% of employees were working a hybrid work model (Mitchell, 2024). While these figures reflected a growing interest in remote employment at the time, some organizations have since begun to scale back remote options, implementing return-to-office policies.

There are several benefits and challenges associated with remote work (Charalampous et al., 2019; Franken et al., 2021; Nyberg et al., 2021). These outcomes are ultimately influenced by factors such as organizational support, interpersonal relationships, knowledge sharing, and

family obligations. (Allen et al., 2015). Among the most widely cited advantages of this work arrangement, remote work offers employees greater autonomy and flexibility (Collings et al., 2021; Sewell & Taskin 2015). Remote employees can now choose where they work (e.g., home, coffee shop, while traveling), in some cases when (e.g., accommodate personal commitments, time zones), and how they want to work (e.g., personalized workspaces) (Leonardi et al., 2024). This increased autonomy empowers individuals to tailor their work experience to their unique needs. Flexibility also facilitates a better integration between work and nonwork roles, contributing to improved work-life balance (Allen et al., 2021). The absence of daily commutes can add hours back into employees' lives, enabling more time for leisure. The benefits of the added flexibility are particularly pronounced for workers with caregiving responsibilities or health-related limitations. Research has shown that remote work is positively associated with job satisfaction, especially when employees perceive they have the freedom to structure their day in ways that align with personal values and goals (Franken et al., 2021; Fonner & Roloff, 2010). However, these advantages may depend heavily on whether employees have clear boundaries between work and nonwork domains, which is not always easy for everyone to achieve in remote settings (Palumbo, 2020).

From the perspective of organizations, remote work has allowed companies to widen the talent pool. Companies are no longer limited to hiring talent within their immediate geographical vicinity of their physical office location. They can now tap into a global talent pool, which can lead to more diverse and skilled teams (Boh et al., 2007). When hiring for remote positions, organizations can search for talent from anywhere in the world, allowing companies to access a much broader and diverse pool of candidates. Organizations can bring together individuals from different cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. However, the cultural differences

amongst geographically dispersed teams can increase the likelihood of misunderstandings and conflicts, which can ultimately pose a threat to the social climate within the team (Hinds & Mortensen, 2005).

Construal Level Theory (CLT) offers a valuable lens through which to examine the impact of remote work on workplace interactions. Construal refers to the mental frameworks through which individuals interpret and make sense of information and events (Wiesenfeld et al., 2017). These construals can vary from higher-level (abstract) to lower-level (concrete) based on psychological distance (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Higher-level construal involves abstract thinking, where individuals process information in broad, generalized terms. In contrast, lower-level construals are more concrete and detailed, allowing for a richer understanding of specific actions and immediate contexts. CLT posits that psychological distance, whether temporal, spatial, social, or hypothetical, affects how individuals construe information, with distant events being perceived more abstractly and proximal events more concretely (Trope & Liberman, 2010). In the context of remote work, increased spatial and social distance between employees can lead to more abstract thinking, potentially influencing how individuals interpret workplace communications and interactions (Henderson et al., 2011). Spatial distance refers to the physical separation between employees. Social distance, on the other hand, involves the perceived closeness or connectedness between individuals, which can be influenced by the lack of in-person interactions and informal socializing opportunities in virtual settings. Both forms of psychological distance contribute to reduced trust, challenges in perspective-taking, and difficulties in building rapport within remote teams (Golden and Ford, 2025). As physical and social distance increases, employees may find it harder to engage in meaningful exchanges, resulting in potential miscommunications or a lack of engagement.

Remote work is associated with additional challenges that impact how employees work and interact with others. Negative work behaviors are prevalent in virtual environments due to conditions such as anonymity, ambiguity, and reduced accountability (Keating et al., 2024). In the absence of physical presence, communication in virtual settings relies heavily on technology, requiring both robust infrastructure and a strong culture of communication practices to support it. The shift to virtual workspaces has necessitated the adoption of a multitude of communication tools designed to bridge the gap between distributed teams. Maintaining clear communication and accountability can be challenging when team members are spread across different locations and time zones (Diam et al., 2012; Kahai et al., 2012). There are two primary modes of communication, synchronous or asynchronous (Berry, 2011). Synchronous communication involves real-time interactions where team members engage simultaneously (e.g., conference phone call, video call). Asynchronous communication occurs when team members interact at different times (e.g., emails, instant messaging, shared project management tools). The absence of face-to-face interactions can result in miscommunication, as social and contextual nuances and non-verbal cues are often lost in written messages or when employees refrain from turning their cameras on in video conferencing (Andres, 2012). Misunderstandings can escalate quickly without the benefit of immediate clarification and the healing power of face-to-face diplomacy. Technical issues related to communication technology or internet connectivity can further compound these challenges, causing frustration and delays in collaborative efforts. The communication difficulties experienced by remote work can result in reduced engagement, team cohesion, and a decline in collaboration among virtual teams (Hoch & Kozlowski, 2014).

Remote work inherently presents several obstacles to information sharing, work coordination, building trust, developing shared mental models, and managing feelings of

isolation (Burke et al., 1999; Raghuram et al., 2019). These challenges are rooted in the physical separation of team members. In co-located settings, spontaneous interactions, whether hallway conversations, impromptu desk-side questions, or nonverbal reactions during meetings, serve as important mechanisms for aligning understanding and surfacing unspoken assumptions. Without these informal touchpoints, virtual teams must adopt more deliberate strategies to ensure information flows freely and is accurately interpreted by all members. The absence of organic communication increases the risk of information silos, where knowledge becomes unevenly distributed. Team members may unintentionally withhold information simply because they lack the visual or environmental prompts that would otherwise signal the relevance of that information to others. As a result, critical updates may remain isolated within subgroups, undermining coordination and collaboration.

Work coordination in a virtual setting demands a higher degree of proactive planning and explicit articulation of tasks, responsibilities, and deadlines. Tasks, deliverables, and responsibilities must be communicated with greater clarity and specificity to compensate for the lack of informal feedback loops. Planning becomes more complex as teams navigate different time zones, work preferences, and competing personal demands. Virtual teams that are able to establish a robust technical infrastructure that fosters different modes of communication (e.g., videoconferencing, discussion forums, chat rooms, document repositories) are better equipped to overcome barriers to knowledge sharing in virtual environments (Rosen et al., 2007). Leaders play a pivotal role in guiding their teams toward consistent tool usage, reinforcing communication protocols, and ensuring all members are adequately trained and have equitable access to technology (Kayworth & Leidner, 2000).

The absence of regular in-person interactions introduces a different set of challenges that negatively impact employee well-being (Charalampous et al., 2019; Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Franken et al., 2021; Van Zoonen & Sivunen, 2022). The lack of physical proximity and informal social bonding opportunities, like "water cooler chats", can hinder the development of strong social bonds among team members and lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness (Kiesler & Cummings, 2002). Trust in teams is often cultivated through interpersonal interactions and shared experiences (Costa et al., 2018), which are less frequent and less nuanced online. Remote employees may miss out on valuable opportunities for informal learning and mentorship that often occur spontaneously within the physical office environment. The challenges with remote work extend to maintaining and reinforcing the organization's culture and values, as remote workers may feel disconnected from the organization or team's identity (Gilson et al., 2015; Millward et al., 2007). Remote workers may not have the same exposure to company norms, traditions, and rituals, as employees who work in a physical office setting. The physical isolation associated with remote work can hinder their ability to establish relationships, fully engage in the social fabric of the organization, and subsequently, impact their socialization into the organization, organizational identity development, and sense of belonging (Gilson et al., 2015; Verburg et al., 2013).

In the wake of the post-pandemic era, the landscape of work has undergone a significant transformation, with many employees and organizations embracing the hybrid work model (Golden, 2021). While remote work offers significant flexibility and breadth in accessing global talent, the hybrid work model blends this flexibility with the structure of traditional office settings. Hybrid work allows employees to split their time between working remotely and being present in the office, based on designated days established with their organization. Thus, remote

work offers both employees and organizations the opportunity to leverage the combination of autonomy of remote work with the collaborative advantages of in-person interactions. This model recognizes that while remote work can enhance individual autonomy and work-life balance, there is still an inherent value in face-to-face collaboration that nurtures team cohesion and organizational culture. Organizations adopting a hybrid approach are exploring the equilibrium between remote work benefits and the synergistic energy of onsite collaboration. By allowing employees to come into the office on certain days, companies strive to maintain the camaraderie and spontaneous interactions that contribute to a vibrant work culture.

Present Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how individuals who witness microaggressions perceive, respond to, and address such incidents within two distinct workplace environments: in-person and virtual settings. While several studies have investigated confronting microaggressions in traditional in-person work environments (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2020; Charbot-Mason et al., 2013; De Souza & Schmader, 2022; Jun et al., 2023; Ragin & Ehrhardt, 2021; Thai & Nylund, 2023; Warren et al., 2021), a significant gap exists with understanding these dynamics within virtual contexts. Despite the increasing prevalence of virtual work arrangements (Golden, 2021; Haan & Main, 2023), little attention has been directed towards comprehending how microaggressions manifest and are managed in these settings. Understanding these differences is paramount for cultivating inclusive and respectful work cultures, as the dynamics of virtual interactions may amplify or attenuate the impact of microaggressions compared to face-to-face interactions. Moreover, as organizations navigate the complexities of virtual workspaces, insights into how individuals navigate microaggressions in these contexts can inform the development of effective strategies for promoting DEI in remote and hybrid work settings.

While microaggressions can be based on a wide range of intersecting identities, this study focuses specifically on racial microaggressions. This focus is especially salient given the heightened racial consciousness that followed the death of George Floyd (Buchanan et al., 2020), as well as the widespread shift to remote work prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Together, these events not only brought racial equity issues to the forefront of public and organizational discourse (Fortune-Deloitte, 2020; Glazer & Francis, 2021; Roberson, 2020) but also reshaped the workplace settings in which microaggressions occur by shifting many interactions to digital platforms (Leonardi et al., 2024), where bias may manifest in new or less visible ways. At the same time, there has been growing political and organizational pushback against DEI efforts, with some institutions reducing or eliminating diversity initiatives altogether (Ng et al., 2025). This backlash underscores the importance of understanding how racial microaggressions are experienced and addressed. As remote work becomes a more common feature of organizational life, it is increasingly important to examine how racial microaggressions manifest and how individuals experience and respond to them within virtual work environments.

Hypotheses Development

The first research question focuses on whether the work environment plays a role in an individual's likelihood to confront microaggressions against coworkers. In face-to-face interactions, individuals have access to a wide range of nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice, which can convey one's emotional, cognitive, and attitudinal states (Hall et al., 2019). These nonverbal cues, along with other contextual factors can play a crucial role in signaling discomfort or disapproval. In an interpersonal interaction, a person must encode the different cues they are receiving and respond accordingly. According to the CPR Model, the first initial steps of the model focus on perceiving the event as

discrimination and interpreting the situation as an emergency (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008). The physical presence and direct interactions in an in-person environment might more immediately signal to a bystander about the severity of the situation. There might be more verbal, nonverbal, and contextual cues that may signal uneasiness about the situation from either the target or other people present. The immediacy and personal connection in physical settings could influence the likelihood of addressing microaggressions. This might empower individuals to confront negative behaviors more directly compared to a virtual setting.

Hypothesis 1: Individuals who witness microaggressions will be less likely to confront the behavior in virtual workplace contexts than in in-person contexts.

The second research question is focused on individual responsibility to confront microaggressions. Previous research demonstrates that bystanders feel less responsibility to confront microaggression when in the presence of others, specifically, the target or a formal leader (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2020). In-person environments might intensify the felt responsibility to act against microaggressions due to social norms and the immediate proximal presence of others. Social norms and expectations may play a more prominent role when people are physically present with their colleagues. In such settings, there is often an unwritten code of conduct that emphasizes the importance of addressing problematic behaviors, which could lead individuals to feel a stronger personal obligation to act. When microaggressions occur face-to-face, witnesses may feel that they are not just bystanders but active participants in maintaining a respectful and inclusive work environment. This sense of collective responsibility could further intensify their commitment to confronting microaggressions. In contrast, virtual environments might dilute the sense of urgency or personal responsibility due to the perceived distance and digital communication barriers (Leonardi et al., 2024). Individuals may be less inclined to take

immediate action when they witness microaggressions in virtual settings, as they might perceive themselves as being somewhat removed from the situation.

Hypothesis 2: Individuals who witness microaggressions will feel less personal responsibility to confront the behavior in virtual workplace contexts than in-person contexts.

The third research question examines if the type of support offered to targets differs depending on the work context in which the microaggression occurs. Previous research suggests that when a behavior carries greater risk within the workplace, an individual is more likely to confront discriminatory behavior in private. However, if the behavior is perceived to have a desirable outcome, the confrontation is more likely to occur in public (Cheng et al., 2019). Given that virtual environments make it more difficult to develop trust and resolve conflict amongst teams (Raghuram et al. 2019), there might be a level of uncertainty associated with how an individual's actions will be perceived in virtual environments.

Confrontation, especially in a professional setting, could be challenging and potentially uncomfortable. Individuals may lack the skills or confidence to effectively advocate in such situations (Collier-Spruel & Ryan, 2022: Selvanathan et al., 2020). Remote workers often have limited face-to-face social interactions with colleagues, which can make maintaining positive relationships essential for ongoing collaborations and cohesiveness within the team. In this context, individuals might prioritize maintaining good relationships with their colleagues, even if they witness microaggressions. The physical distance and reliance on digital communication technology can make the act of confrontation feel even more daunting, as virtual settings lack the non-verbal cues and immediacy present in in-person interactions (Hall et al., 2019). In hierarchical organizational structures, individuals may be reluctant to challenge or confront

someone in a higher position of authority. The potential repercussions of addressing a microaggression directly, especially if the perpetrator holds a position of power, can be daunting. Concerns about potential retaliation, damage to one's career, or strained relationships within the workplace may dissuade witnesses from advocacy.

Hypothesis 3a: Individuals who witness microaggressions will be more likely to offer private support than public support.

Hypothesis 3b: The preference for private over public support will be greater in virtual contexts compared to in-person contexts.

METHOD

Participants

The sample was comprised of a total of 306 participants, recruited using Prolific. An a priori power analysis using G*Power version 3.1 (Faul et al., 2007) indicated that this sample size was sufficient to detect a small to medium effect size with adequate statistical power. Inclusion criteria included being aged 18 years or older, US citizens, fluent in English, and reported working more than 30 hours per week. Participants were randomly assigned to complete either the in-person or the virtual workplace condition. The data of five participants were excluded from the final analysis for failing the attention check. An additional six entries were excluded due to duplicate data from the same participants. There were 295 participants who completed the survey (146 participants in the in-person condition and 149 participants in the virtual condition). The sample ranged in age from 20 to 73 years (M = 38.95, SD = 11.28), 50% Black, 49.3% male, and 76.3% heterosexual. Participants reported an average tenure of 7.30 years (SD = 7.06) at their current job, 45% of participants reported working in-person, 21.7% virtual, and 32.7% hybrid.

Pilot Test

A pilot test was conducted to collect preliminary data. The pilot study was conducted on 82 participants recruited from Prolific. The sample ranged in age from 20 to 79 years (M = 39.99, SD = 13.81), 59.8% White, and 69% were female. The data was used to gather insights, and ensure that everything functioned properly, before conducting the actual study. I specifically evaluated the length of the study, clarity of instructions, reliability of self-developed measures, and tested the saliency of the microaggressions used in the scenarios.

Procedure

This study received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Michigan State University prior to data collection (IRB approval number: a). To test the hypotheses, I used a between-subject experimental design to test the effects of work context (in-person vs. online) on confronting microaggressions. Participants completed a series of prescreening questions to determine their qualifications for the study. Qualifying participants were forwarded on to the informed consent (see Appendix A). If they chose to participate, participants were randomly assigned to either the virtual work context or the in-person work context. Participants completed the survey online and were shown a total of 3 scenarios. There were two scenarios that were examples of microaggressions one might experience in the workplace. Additionally, there was one filler scenario that was included to deemphasize the main research interests related to microaggressions and make sure participants respond thoughtfully. Participants were told that they would be witnessing various workplace interactions. They were instructed to try and place themselves mentally in each situation as if they worked at the fictional company and were engaging in a meeting with their colleagues. They were told to treat each scenario as an isolated event. Participants were asked to carefully consider how they would respond. Participants received $4 for their participation in this study.

Stimuli

The microaggression scenarios for the study were pilot tested. The scenarios were crafted to reflect the types of microaggressions outlined in King et al. (2023) and Sue et al. (2007). They were intentionally created to be nuanced and discreet to reflect the ambiguous nature of microaggressions, yet ensuring that they closely mirrored real-world microaggressions, one might experience in the workplace (see Appendix B for a list of piloted scenarios). Appendix C

contains an example script, illustrating how the microaggressions were incorporated into a realistic workplace scenario.

Pilot participants responded to a total of 6 scenarios. There were 4 scenarios that were examples of microaggressions, reflecting four of the types of microaggressions outlined in King et al. (2023) and Sue et al.'s (2007) typologies, and 2 filler scenarios (see Appendix B). Participants were provided with a transcript of the conversations between colleagues. Participants completed 1-item, where they rated the extent to which the comments made by the perpetrator (Ryan) fit the definition of a microaggression, using a scale ranging from 1 (Not at all a microaggression) to 5 (Strong indication of a microaggression). Based on pilot study ratings, two scenarios were selected for the main study: one depicting a subtle microaggression (Pathologizing Cultural Values, Scenario 1) and one strongly perceived as a microaggression (Tokenism, Scenario 3). The scenario rated least likely to reflect a microaggression was used as a filler. The scenario with the highest rating was excluded due to concerns about potential misinterpretation. See Table 1 for pilot study results. In the pilot study, participants read scripts, whereas in the main study, scenarios were performed by actors. The myths of meritocracy scenario was excluded because a key line ("Wow, Jamal, you're so articulate for a... I mean, I didn't expect that.") trailed off ambiguously, potentially leading to inconsistent participant interpretations. Given these considerations, I opted for the second-highest-rated microaggression scenario for the main study.

Participants in both conditions received identical scripts that explained the scenario, the objective of the meeting, and the members present for the meeting. For the in-person condition, participants were shown a video of people having an in-person meeting (see Appendix E for an example of the in-person scenario). Participants were told to place themselves in the situation

and act as though they were present at the meeting, sitting at the conference table. For the virtual condition, participants were shown a video of people having a virtual meeting over Zoom. They were told to place themselves in the situation and act as though they were the individual behind the screen that says "you" (see Appendix F for an example of the zoom scenario). They were instructed to act as though they were joining the conference call from home in their home office.

To prevent confounds from being introduced to the study, the scenarios were designed to be as identical as possible between conditions. The race and gender of the perpetrator, target, bystanders, and boss were kept the same for each scenario. For all scenarios, the bystander (Steve), perpetrator (Ryan), and boss (Christian) in the microaggression were from a socially dominant identity group (White man). The target (Jamal) of the microaggression had a minoritized identity, and to avoid introducing any confounds related to intersectional identities, the target of the microaggression for each scenario was a Black man. Both work contexts were designed to convey an environment where all individuals involved appear to be on the same level in terms of job status. This was achieved by avoiding any explicit indications of hierarchical roles or leadership within the scenarios. The order in which the scenarios were presented was randomly selected.

Measures

Open-ended Personal Reaction. After watching the vignette, participants responded to three open-ended questions. Participants were instructed to write down their initial reactions after witnessing the interaction. Participants reported how they would behave in the situation by describing what they would do and say in response to witnessing the behavior (see Appendix G).

After responding to the question about their initial reactions, they were told that it is common practice within the organization to provide updates/feedback on meetings that the boss

could not attend due to scheduling conflict. Participants were asked to respond to an open-ended question asking them to provide Christian with feedback about how the meeting went.

For the third open-ended question, participants were told that they could Slack message one of their colleagues on the team. They were then asked to specify who the message was directed to and what they would like to say. If participants chose not to say or do anything for any of the open-ended questions, they were instructed to indicate such.

Allyship Intentions. For each scenario, participants reported their likelihood of enacting different behaviors on a scale ranging from "1" (I would definitely not do this) to "9" (I would definitely do this). This measure was adapted from De Souza and Schmader (2022) and included four subscales: public allyship ($\alpha = .79$)**,** referring to actions taken to address discrimination in the presence of others (e.g., speaking out against discrimination while among other people); private allyship ($\alpha = .90$)**,** capturing behaviors that address discrimination in private settings (e.g., speaking out against discrimination in private); disinterested or inactive behavior ($\alpha = .72$), which includes responses that avoid engagement with the discriminatory act (e.g., "I will change the topic of conversation during the meeting"); and overall allyship intentions ($\alpha = .92$), a composite of allyship-related behaviors across contexts.

The measure was also modified to include items that assess the likelihood of participants directly calling out the behavior as being problematic or racist in public and private domains ("I will tell [perpetrator name] during the meeting that their behavior was wrong." "I will tell [perpetrator name] during the meeting that their behavior was racist." An item referring to the behavior as a joke was also included ("I will tell [target name] to lighten up, it's a joke"). (see Appendix H).

Responsibility to Confront. To assess perceived responsibility to confront the behavior, an adapted measure from King et al., (2024) was used. Participants were asked to rate their responsibility to confront using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "1" (not at all) to "7" (to a very great extent). The measure contained 3-items, "I feel responsible to act," "I believe I should engage by responding," and "I feel an obligation to speak up" (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.90$). The statements were modified to present tense, to reflect participants' perceptions of responsibility immediately following witnessing the scenario (see Appendix I).

Additionally, I used an adapted measure from Ashburn-Nardo and Karim (2019) to examine the responsibility to confront others present at the time of the microaggression. Instead of ranking the members in the scenario, participants were asked to rate the responsibility to confront using a slider ranging from "0" (least responsible to confront) to "100" (most responsible to confront). Participants were asked to rate each member in the scenarios, including the bystander, the target of the behavior, and their responsibility ($\alpha = 0.86$). This reliability estimate provides insight into whether participants perceived responsibility as a shared obligation or as differing across roles in the scenario. The high alpha indicates that participants viewed the responsibility to confront as similarly distributed across individuals. (see Appendix J).

Other Measures

Racial Salience. A modified version of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers et al., 1997) was used to assess racial identity salience. The 15-item scale was modified from the original MIBI, to be inclusive of other racial groups (Davis et al., 2022). The original measure was specifically written for responses from Black participants; however, items were altered to allow responses from all participants. For example, the item "Being Black is an

important reflection of who I am" was modified to "My race is an important reflection of who I am." Participants responded using a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The measure contains two subscales from the original measure: centrality and private regard subscales. The centrality subscale contained 8-items (α = .89) that ask participants to reflect on how important their race is to their self-concept ("In general, being a member of my racial group is an important part of my self-image"). The private regard subscale contained 7-items that assess how positively one feels about being a member of their racial group ("I feel good about members of my racial group"). The private regard subscale had a reliability that was lower than conventional standards of acceptability (α = .38). As a result of the low reliability, the scale is not considered further. (See Appendix K for the full measure).

Perceived Similarity. Participants were asked to rate their perceived similarity to each of their colleagues (Steve, Ryan, Jamal, and Christian) in the interaction using a single item. Participants responded to the measure using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "1" (Not at all similar) to "5" (Extremely similar). (see Appendix L).

Microaggression Rating. Participants completed 1-item, where they rated the extent to which the comments made by Ryan fit the definition of a microaggression, using a scale ranging from 1 (Not at all a microaggression) to 5 (Strong indication of a microaggression). Participants were provided with the definition of a microaggression (see Appendix M).

Demographic Questionnaire. A demographic questionnaire was administered to all participants. Questions asked about the participants' age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, job title, and tenure. (see Appendix N). Participants were asked to complete demographic questions before receiving their payment code and being debriefed (see Appendix O).

Attention Check. Participants were given attention check questions. To ensure data quality, an attention check was included to identify and exclude participants who may not have been carefully attending to the study materials. Participants were asked to recall the context in which the meetings took place, selecting from three options: in-person, online (Zoom), or a combination of both. Those who provided incorrect responses were excluded from the data analysis. In addition, they were asked to match images of the characters with their names. Those who provided incorrect responses were excluded from the data analysis.

RESULTS

Qualitative Results

To analyze the qualitative data collected in this study, I employed a thematic coding approach to identify and categorize patterns within participants' open-ended responses. Following data collection, I conducted an initial review of all qualitative responses to gain a holistic understanding of the range of behaviors and attitudes expressed by participants. I then developed a preliminary coding framework by identifying recurring themes and concepts. Presented in Table 2 and Table 3 are the frequency count for each theme. See Table 4 for exemplar quotes of participants' responses and Table 5 for feedback to the boss (Christian).

Reactions to Microaggressions

Theme 1: Direct Confrontation. Several participants chose to confront Ryan directly in the moment, ensuring that his comment was immediately challenged rather than allowing it to pass unaddressed. These individuals saw real-time confrontation as necessary to discourage workplace bias. They took a reactive stance against microaggressions by publicly confronting the comment. Responses such as “Ryan, that’s not okay to say” and “Whoa, you can’t just assume that about someone” reflect a commitment to public accountability, where the goal was not only to correct Ryan’s behavior but also to send a message to the entire group that such remarks are not tolerated. One form of direct confrontation involved explicitly labeling Ryan’s comment as racist, biased, or based on stereotypes. Participants who took this approach chose to call out the problem in clear and unambiguous terms. For instance, “Ryan, that’s racist” and “That’s a stereotype, and it’s not okay” demonstrate a firm stance against racial microaggressions.

Beyond simply identifying the comment as racist or stereotypical, some participants took their confrontation further by trying to educate Ryan on why his comment was problematic.

These individuals aimed not only to challenge the statement but also to provide context and information that might prevent similar comments in the future. For example, “You may not have realized it, but assuming someone’s music taste based on their race is a form of bias” suggests that some participants saw the moment as an opportunity for learning rather than just correction. This strategy’s combination of both explicit confrontation and education encourages Ryan to reflect on the deeper implications of his remark. Participants who engaged in immediate, public confrontation saw their actions as necessary not just to challenge Ryan’s behavior, but also to set a precedent for the group.

Theme 2: Indirect Confrontation. While some participants chose to publicly rebuke Ryan’s comment, others utilized more subtle strategies to address the microaggression, including using more neutral or diplomatic language, seeking clarification, or privately addressing Ryan. These strategies allowed participants to challenge the comment without engaging in overt conflict. The choice to confront the issue indirectly often reflected a desire to avoid conflict, maintain professionalism, or gauge Ryan’s intent before taking further action. A commonly utilized form of indirect confrontation was using softer, more neutral language to challenge Ryan’s assumption without making him defensive. Instead of labeling the comment racist or stereotypical, some participants opted for gentle pushback. Several participants described Ryan’s remark as “inappropriate,” “problematic,” “off,” or “not cool.” Phrases like “That’s kind of a problematic assumption” and “That’s a little off, don’t you think?” conveyed disagreement while softening the language used to classify the comment made. While these statements hint at disapproval, they don’t outright condemn the behavior or address why the comment was problematic. This type of response may reflect a desire to display discomfort without fully

engaging in a racial discussion. Allowing participants to signal disapproval without taking on the burden of explaining the issue or having the situation potentially escalate into a broader conflict.

The most common indirect approach was asking for clarification in a way that exposed the flaw in Ryan's logic without directly calling him out. Participants used questions like "Ryan, are you saying that all Black people like hip-hop?" or "can you explain what you mean?" to highlight the racial stereotyping in a non-confrontational manner. It allowed participants to signal discomfort rather than directly critique the comment. These responses placed the burden on Ryan to justify his assumption, subtly prompting him to reflect on the racial bias in his statement. This strategy forced Ryan to confront his own bias without an explicit accusation, reducing the likelihood of defensive reactions.

Some participants indicated that they would prefer to address Ryan privately rather than confront him in front of the team. This approach was more common among individuals who felt uncomfortable calling out the microaggression publicly but still believed the issue needed to be addressed. Statements such as "After the meeting, I'd pull Ryan aside and mention that his comment could be taken the wrong way" suggest that some individuals viewed one-on-one conversations as a safer, more productive space for addressing workplace bias. This approach allowed participants to avoid public confrontation while still ensuring that Ryan understood the impact of his remark. These private conversations were seen as an opportunity to educate Ryan on racial bias and stereotypes in a more personal setting. Rather than simply pointing out that his comment was inappropriate, these individuals sought one-on-one discussions as a way to encourage growth and learning without making Ryan feel attacked. "I'd explain to Ryan privately that assumptions like that can reinforce harmful stereotypes" indicates that some

participants viewed private conversations as a chance to foster awareness rather than just correct the behavior.

Theme 3: Support. Support for Jamal was a recurring theme in participants' responses, with many attempting to counteract the discomfort caused by Ryan's comment through expressions of reassurance, encouragement, apologizing on Ryan's behalf, as well as displays of emotional support. These responses suggest that some participants recognized the potential harm of the microaggression and sought to mitigate its impact by affirming Jamal's value and contributions. Participants sought to counteract the negative implications of Ryan's comment by reassuring Jamal that his interests and contributions were valued. This included responses such as "Jamal, you've got great taste in music—don't let anyone tell you otherwise." They responded by expressing solidarity with Jamal, validating his interests. These responses attempted to neutralize the impact of the microaggression by reframing Jamal's experience in a positive and affirming way. When the scenario involved assigning roles for a project, some participants took active steps to ensure that Jamal was valued for his expertise rather than his identity. For example, "Jamal has been working on the marketing analysis for weeks, so he's the best person for the presentation." Reflecting a deliberate effort to support Jamal's professional contributions. Instead of reducing Jamal to a symbolic figure for diversity, they highlighted and recognized his qualifications.

Beyond public expressions of solidarity, some participants indicated that they would privately check in on Jamal after the meeting to ensure that he was okay and to offer emotional support outside of the immediate group setting. Recognizing that Jamal might not feel comfortable addressing the microaggression in front of the entire team, the participants instead, sought to privately address the incident with the target. Participants expressed sentiments such as

"I would message Jamal privately after the meeting to see how he felt about the comment" and "I'd pull Jamal aside later to ask if he was okay and if he wanted to talk about it." These responses reflect an awareness that microaggressions can have a lasting emotional impact, even if they seem minor in the moment. Some participants framed their private check-ins as an opportunity to empower Jamal to decide how he wanted to address the situation. These individuals recognized that while Ryan's comment was inappropriate, the decision to escalate the issue should ultimately rest with Jamal. Responses such as "I'd ask Jamal if he wanted to address it or if he'd prefer to just move on" and "I'd let Jamal know that if he wanted to file a complaint, I'd support him and be a witness." They would be willing to support Jamal, in whatever decision he made.

There were a few participants who took it upon themselves to apologize to Jamal on Ryan's behalf, recognizing that Ryan's comment may have been offensive or hurtful. These responses included statements such as "Jamal, I'm really sorry about that—Ryan shouldn't have said that." These responses suggest that some participants felt a sense of responsibility to acknowledge and correct the harm caused, even though they were not the source of the microaggression.

Theme 4: Deflection. Deflection was another strategy utilized, where participants either tried to change the subject, refocus the conversation back to work topics, or used humor to minimize the situation and challenge the perpetrator. After witnessing the microaggression, some individuals chose to steer the conversation back to work-related topics as a way to de-escalate potential conflict. Some participants chose to refocus on the task by explicitly stating their intentions to redirect the team back to the task at hand, "we're supposed to be brainstorming on the new product launch! Let's get to work before the boss gets here!" In these instances,

participants prioritized maintaining the professional flow of the meeting over addressing the microaggression.

Another common deflection strategy was to change the subject. Some participants changed the conversation in a way that neutralized tension without ignoring the issue entirely. For example, one participant responded, “Hey Jamal, I bet the concert was awesome—who was performing?”, subtly shifting the conversation toward Jamal’s personal experience rather than the stereotype imposed on him. This strategy allowed the participant to not draw any attention to the comment made by Ryan while preventing the meeting from derailing into a potentially uncomfortable discussion.

Similarly, other participants chose to carry on with the conversation as if nothing had happened**.** These individuals redirected the discussion by sharing what they did over the weekend, asking others about their plans, or stating what portion of the presentation they would like to handle, effectively bypassing the microaggression altogether. For example, some responses included, “I’d just share what I did—went hiking with my kids,” or “I’d let everyone know I could take the intro part of the deck.” This continuation behavior functioned as a subtle form of avoidance**,** prioritizing workflow and group cohesion over engaging with a potentially difficult conversation about bias. In doing so, these participants re-centered the meeting’s purpose while implicitly signaling that Ryan’s comment did not warrant disruption or discussion**.**

Humor emerged as another strategy that participants used to navigate discomfort, challenge stereotypes, or deflect tension in response to Ryan’s comment. While some participants employed sarcasm and irony to highlight the problematic nature of the remark, others used humor as a buffer to avoid confrontation while signaling disapproval. One of the most common ways humor was employed was through pointed sarcasm that exposed the

absurdity of Ryan's assumption. Participants responded, "Oh, I guess all Black people listen to rap, huh?" directly mocking the racial stereotype embedded in his comment. Humor was also used as a way to navigate the discomfort of the situation. For instance, "I would feel humor and secondhand embarrassment for Ryan, so I would laugh out loud." Left feeling awkward and uncertain, participants chose to fill the space with laughter to defuse the discomfort of the situation.

Theme 5: Report to Leadership. While many participants either confronted the microaggression directly or avoided engaging with it altogether, a notable subset took a different route, reporting the incident to leadership or documenting it for potential escalation. These participants viewed Ryan's comment not only as an interpersonal lapse but as an issue with potential organizational implications**.** Their responses reflected a belief that such remarks should be taken seriously by those in positions of authority and that ensuring psychological safety and accountability required leadership involvement. Some participants described a deliberate effort to raise the issue with Christian, the team's manager, after the meeting. One participant noted, "I will try to shift the conversation to a different topic in the meeting and then privately mention it to my boss in case it comes up." This reflects a strategy aimed at avoiding disruption in the moment while still taking steps to ensure the behavior is not ignored. Similarly, others suggested they would raise the issue post-meeting if the situation worsened or repeated: "If this kind of thing happened more than once, I would definitely bring it to Christian's attention."

Another approach involved formal documentation of the incident, either as a record for HR or as a personal account to support future action. One participant shared, "I would detail the conversation in an email to myself and then speak directly to Christian, our manager. I would also speak privately with Jamal to ask him if he is okay and if he would like us to go to HR

directly or on his own accord." This reflects a dual concern: not only for accountability and documentation but also for ensuring that Jamal's perspective and agency were respected in determining the next steps. Others took an even more cautious approach, such as, *"*I'd save the Zoom transcript just in case, but I'd check with Jamal before making a formal complaint." In some cases, participants were explicit about their willingness to escalate the issue beyond the team level if they felt it warranted formal intervention. One individual stated, "I'm going to have to step in and insist we end this meeting and go talk with HR," suggesting that the severity or accumulation of comments from Ryan could justify immediate escalation. Another participant wrote, "I would follow up with Christian and suggest he bring in HR to review expectations about professionalism and inclusion," reflecting a proactive desire to prevent future incidents through institutional channels.

Theme 6: Silence. Silence emerged as a frequent response strategy among participants, with many choosing not to verbally react to Ryan's comment. Participants cited different reasons or justifications for their lack of a response, whether it be not recognizing the comment as problematic, desires to maintain workplace harmony, avoid confrontation, or defer to Jamal. Some participants did not interpret Ryan's comment as a microaggression and therefore saw no reason to respond. These individuals either viewed the remark as harmless, benign, or even factual, leading them to believe that addressing it would be unnecessary or an overreaction. A number of participants rationalized Ryan's comment as a natural or logical assumption rather than a racial stereotype. Responses such as "Well, it's not common for Black men to like country music" reflect an implicit acceptance of racial generalizations as reasonable rather than harmful. These participants tended to view Ryan's statement as a casual, offhand remark rather than a reflection of deeper racial bias.

For some participants, silence functioned as a deliberate strategy to prevent workplace conflict or escalation. Responses such as "I wouldn't say anything to avoid creating tension" or "It's not worth starting an argument over" suggest that some employees saw silence as a way to preserve professional relationships and avoid making meetings uncomfortable. Some participants recognized the problematic nature of Ryan's comment, yet still chose to remain silent. Several participants indicated that they felt uncomfortable but did not see it as their place to intervene. One of the most common justifications for silence was the belief that it was not the participant's responsibility to respond: "This is between Ryan and Jamal, so I wouldn't step in." Participants often expressed that if Jamal was uncomfortable with Ryan's comment, it was up to him to address it. For instance, responses such as "I wouldn't say anything. If Jamal was bothered, he could speak up himself." Some White participants explicitly stated that they feared being perceived as a "White savior" if they intervened, expressing concerns about inserting themselves in a conversation about race. Meanwhile, a few Black participants hesitated to speak out because they had frequently encountered similar racial experiences in the workplace and felt that confronting individuals often led to negative perceptions of them rather than productive conversations.

Additionally, there were participants who, despite the racial undertone within Ryan's comments, wanted to wait to respond. They remained silent because they perceived no negative reaction from Jamal himself, believing that if the comment had truly been offensive, Jamal would have responded accordingly. Statements such as "If Jamal wasn't bothered, why should I step in?" or "Jamal didn't seem upset, so I wouldn't say anything" indicate that some individuals base their judgment on how the perceived target reacted rather than evaluating the racial implications of the comment themselves. If Jamal did not react to Ryan's comment, then they

would have remained silent. However, if he expressed outrage by the microaggression, they would then defend Jamal.

Feedback to Boss

Theme 1: Acknowledgment of Incident. Participants varied widely in how they acknowledged Ryan's comment when providing feedback to Christian, with responses falling along a continuum from neutral description to explicit condemnation. Some participants chose to retell the situation without interpretation, focusing purely on what was said. These responses often included statements such as, "Jamal said he went to a country music concert and others thought that surprising because he is Black," or "We discussed what we did over the weekend and talked some about our music differences." These plainspoken accounts reflect a form of neutral acknowledgment, where participants recognized that the incident occurred but stopped short of assigning intent, emotion, or meaning.

Others focused more on the tone and appropriateness of the remark, labeling Ryan's comment as "inappropriate," "weird," or "awkward." While these labels suggested that participants recognized some level of inappropriateness, they lacked specificity and often failed to mention the racial undertone of the remark. For example, one participant remarked, "I would say the meeting went pretty well except for when things got a little weird with comments," while another stated, "The meeting went fine, but Ryan made a slightly rude comment." These responses suggest a hesitancy to name the behavior clearly, potentially reflecting a discomfort with addressing race directly or a desire to avoid interpersonal conflict. In contrast, a smaller group of participants explicitly labeled the comment as racist, showing a greater willingness to confront the racial implications of Ryan's words. One participant stated directly, "I would tell Christian that Ryan made a racist comment to Jamal," while another wrote, "Ryan said

something racist." These responses were often accompanied by a clear call for accountability, signaling that these participants believed the incident warranted not only acknowledgment but also managerial intervention. Although such responses were less frequent, they demonstrate a stronger stance on the importance of naming harm clearly in order to prompt action.

Finally, some participants appeared to give Ryan the benefit of the doubt, expressing uncertainty about his intent and opting for more diplomatic language. One participant said, "I don't know if he meant it in a bad way, so I'd probably just say it was a bit awkward," while another shared, "He might not have realized how it sounded, but it could have come off wrong." These comments suggest a reluctance to assume malicious intent, which may reflect a preference to preserve workplace relationships or an internal conflict about how to interpret the ambiguity of the microaggression.

Theme 2: Team Dynamics. Ryan's comment had a noticeable impact on team dynamics, shaping both the emotional tone of the meeting and the group's ability to function collaboratively. Expressions of discomfort were common across responses. Participants described feeling unsure how to react in the moment and unsettled afterward. As one put it, "It made me feel uncomfortable and excluded." Others shared that while the comment wasn't directed at them, they still experienced secondhand discomfort, reflecting a broader awareness of the impact such remarks can have on team cohesion.

Ryan's comment had a significant impact on team dynamics, influencing both the emotional climate and the group's ability to work effectively together. In several responses, participants emphasized the interpersonal tension created by the remark. One participant remarked, "I would let Christian know that Ryan's remarks were not just awkward but created a hostile environment for everyone." These reflections suggest that Ryan's comment not only

placed Jamal in an uncomfortable position but also disrupted the group's ability to collaborate effectively.

Theme 3: Calls for Action. While providing feedback to Christian, there were participants that directly called for Christian to intervene. These participants viewed Christian as having a responsibility to address workplace bias and ensure an inclusive environment. Some respondents urged Christian to speak directly with Ryan about his comments, stating, "he needs to have serious talk with Ryan about the way he throws these snark comment at Jamal." There were also requests insisting Christian to demand an apology from Ryan "Christian…you need to tell Ryan to apologize." Others emphasized the need for Christian to proactively engage with Jamal to understand his perspective, "I would ask him to follow up with Jamal to hear his feelings on the situation." Highlighted the importance of engaging with Jamal to support his well-being and ensure that he feels valued and heard within the team.

Participants called for Christian to take corrective action to prevent future incidents. Several recommended sensitivity training or diversity workshops as a company-wide initiative. For example, "The comments were a little inappropriate. May be time for some refresher training." Additionally, some participants requested Christian escalate the matter to HR rather than handling it informally. Some framed this as a necessary step to ensure accountability. In extreme instances, participants requested Ryan's removal from the team. These responses indicate a desire for clear consequences rather than informal discussions that might allow the issue to be dismissed or downplayed.

Theme 4: Avoidance. Participants demonstrated varying degrees of avoidance in reporting or addressing workplace microaggressions to Christian, particularly when discussing the microaggressions made by Ryan. Many responses reflected hesitancy in raising concerns,

with participants often opting to focus solely on work-related aspects of the meeting. For example, some described the meeting as "just small talk, nothing too special," or shared that "I would just tell him the general things we talked about. I wouldn't mention the music comment." Others explicitly stated that it was not their place to bring up the issue, as one participant noted, "I wouldn't bring it up unless Jamal did." A subset of participants indicated that they would only report the incident if it escalated or became a recurring pattern, explaining, "If something more were to come up of the meeting after the comments, I would notify him." These responses demonstrate a tendency to minimize the situation, often rationalizing avoidance by framing the meeting as uneventful or waiting for more concrete signs of a problem. In some cases, participants acknowledged that Ryan's comment was inappropriate or wrong but still chose not to share this with Christian. In addition to these minimizations, a notable group of participants described the meeting in neutral or positive terms, saying it was "great," "successful," "just a normal meeting," or that the team had "accomplished the task." Others framed it as a productive session, or alternately as unproductive ("didn't accomplish task") but still avoided referencing the incident at all.

Among participants in the virtual condition, another layer of avoidance emerged. Some chose not to take action because they were unsure whether Jamal was actually upset by the comment. Limited access to nonverbal cues made it difficult to assess his emotional response. One participant remarked, "It was hard to tell if Jamal was offended by it or not. That's the thing with Zoom—you can't really read someone's body language." Another noted, "Without seeing his facial expression clearly, I wasn't sure if Jamal was uncomfortable or just letting it go." This ambiguity led some to interpret the situation as less serious or not theirs to address, reinforcing a pattern of inaction driven by the constraints of the virtual setting.

For some, the fear of being perceived negatively played a crucial role in their decision to remain silent. Participants worried about how speaking up might affect their own image, with one respondent explaining, “I don’t want to be the one that tells my boss every single thing; I’m not that kind of person.” Others worried about appearing as if they were overstepping or making the situation about themselves, which could diminish the sincerity of their intentions. In contrast, some Black participants struggled with the fear of being seen as the “bad guy” or too confrontational, particularly given the racial dynamics of the situation. One participant acknowledged, “I would likely avoid telling him directly, given my demographics and how the ‘complaint’ may be received.” The relationship with Christian also influenced participants' willingness to speak up. Some indicated they would only address the issue if they felt comfortable with Christian. One participant remarked, “I likely would not mention the racist comment unless I felt very comfortable with Christian.” These responses highlight how both groups navigated concerns about perception, albeit through different cultural and social lenses, ultimately leading to avoidance behaviors.

A significant number of participants chose to defer responsibility to Jamal, suggesting that it was his role to decide whether to address the issue with Christian. One respondent explained, “I would let Jamal tell Christian if anything was wrong. It would not be my place.” Others expressed a desire to avoid seeming intrusive or misjudging the situation, as one participant noted, “If Jamal felt disrespected or offended, he can handle that. I am not going to go to Christian and say that Ryan may have made an offensive comment.” For some, the safest approach was complete detachment, framing the situation as none of their business. These participants preferred to remain neutral, sharing sentiments like, “I would say it was a standard

meeting. Not my place to comment on comments." Such responses reflect a desire to maintain workplace harmony or protect oneself from potential fallout.

Slack Message

Table 6 displays the frequency with which participants selected each character (e.g., Jamal, Ryan, Steve, HR, Christian, or no one) as the person they would message privately. Participants' Slack messages reflected diverse interpersonal strategies depending on whom they chose to contact. The majority of messages were directed privately to Jamal (the target). Messages directed to Jamal often expressed concern and support, with participants checking in privately to say things like, "Hey, just wanted to see how you're doing after that comment." Others used the message to acknowledge the inappropriateness of the microaggression, stating that "that was really out of line" or sharing that "Ryan's comment didn't sit right with me." Some participants explicitly sought to validate Jamal's experience, affirming that his interests and presence were valued, while a subset framed their outreach around his autonomy, offering solidarity without pressure, as one participant wrote, "If you want to say something or go to HR, I've got your back."

Messages directed to Ryan, the perpetrator, reflected a range of tones and strategies. Some participants chose to confront him directly, using Slack to explicitly challenge the comment, for example, "You need to rethink what you said," or posing reflective prompts such as, "Did you mean it that way?" However, more commonly, participants adopted a subtler, more diplomatic tone, signaling discomfort without outright accusation. One participant messaged, "Hey, not sure if that landed the way you meant it to," offering gentle feedback while preserving workplace harmony. Importantly, very few participants contacted other group members (e.g., Steve, Christian), and an even larger proportion reported they would not message anyone at all.

This suggests limited engagement with the broader team and a preference for either private support or silence**.**

Messages to HR were typically more formal and procedural, often suggesting that the incident be documented or further investigated. These responses reflected a shift in focus from interpersonal resolution to institutional accountability, emphasizing the role of HR in upholding psychological safety and inclusion within the organization.

Notably, there was a disconnect between participants' stated willingness to confront bias and their actual Slack message behavior. While many participants endorsed private confrontation on the allyship intentions measure, they did not consistently use the Slack message to personally address the perpetrator. In fact, a substantial number avoided messaging Ryan altogether, instead opting for private support to the target or contacting HR. This pattern suggests that even when participants intended to engage through indirect or lower-risk channels, they often refrained from taking action when the opportunity arose.

In both scenarios, participants were asked who they would privately message over Slack following a microaggression during a team meeting. Chi-square analyses revealed no significant differences in recipient selection based on work modality (virtual vs. in-person) for either scenario. In the Pathologizing Cultural Values Scenario, $\chi^2(5, N = 294) = 2.77$, $p = .74$, and in the Tokensim Scenario, $\chi^2(5, N = 294) = 4.00$, $p = .55$, indicating that the distribution of message recipients did not vary by condition. However, significant differences emerged based on participants' racial identity. In the Pathologizing Cultural Values Scenario, there was a significant association between race and recipient choice, $\chi^2(5, N = 294) = 17.93$, $p = .003$. White participants were more likely to say they would not contact anyone, whereas Black participants were more likely to message Ryan. Similarly, in the Tokenism Scenario, race significantly

predicted recipient selection, $\chi^2(5, N = 294) = 18.70$, $p = .002$. Once again, White participants tended to avoid messaging anyone or chose to message HR, while Black participants were more likely to message Jamal or Ryan.

Quantitative Results

Hypothesis Testing

Prior to completing the quantitative analyses, I cleaned the data. I began by checking the answers for unreliable participants and careless responses. Additionally, I examined responses to the attention checks to confirm that participants accurately understood and engaged with the experimental scenarios. Participants who failed these checks were also removed from the analysis. I screened the data for duplicate entries, using participant IDs and response timestamps to identify potential repeat submissions. I then reverse-coded the relevant items and then generated composite scores and sub-scores for each scale.

Table 7 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations for the Pathologizing Cultural Values Scenario. As expected, higher microaggression ratings were significantly associated with greater allyship intentions, including private allyship ($r = .50$, $p < .001$), public allyship ($r = .41$, $p < .001$), and stronger likelihood of labeling the incident as racist ($r = .44$, $p < .001$) or problematic ($r = .46$, $p < .001$). Microaggression severity rating was also positively correlated with the overall composite allyship intentions ($r = .51$, $p < .001$) and personal responsibility to confront ($r = .35$, $p < .001$), suggesting that stronger recognition of harm was linked to increased motivation to intervene. Participants who rated the microaggression more severely were also more likely to assign responsibility to others to confront, including Steve ($r = .16$, $p = .006$), Christian ($r = .27$, $p < .001$), and Jamal ($r = .14$, $p = .02$), as well as to endorse their own personal responsibility to confront ($r = .35$, $p < .001$). Notably, allyship intentions

were positively correlated with perceived responsibility to confront ($r = .57$, $p < .001$). In contrast, microaggression severity was negatively correlated with perceived similarity to Ryan ($r = –.29$, $p < .001$), indicating that participants who found the comment more harmful were less likely to identify with the perpetrator. Meanwhile, perceived similarity to Jamal was positively associated with severity ratings ($r = .14$, $p = .02$), suggesting that identification with the target may increase sensitivity to injustice. Gender differences emerged, with women rating the microaggression as more severe than men ($r = .18$, $p = .002$). Finally, silence or disinterest in the situation was significantly associated with lower personal responsibility to confront ($r = –.27$, $p < .001$) and reduced perceptions of self as responsible ($r = –.23$, $p < .001$). Participants who scored higher on disinterest were more likely to identify with Ryan ($r = .21$, $p < .001$), and women were also significantly less likely to disengage than men ($r = –.13$, $p = .03$).

Table 8 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations for the Tokenism Scenario. Consistent with the previous scenario, participants who perceived the microaggression as more severe were significantly more likely to endorse allyship behaviors. Microaggression severity was positively associated with private allyship ($r = .56$, $p < .001$), public allyship ($r = .48$, $p < .001$), and with labeling the comment as either racist ($r = .50$, $p < .001$) or problematic ($r = .40$, $p < .001$). These ratings also aligned with stronger overall allyship intentions ($r = .57$, $p < .001$). In addition, participants who rated the tokenizing comment as more severe also expressed greater perceptions of responsibility. Specifically, microaggression ratings were positively correlated with perceived personal responsibility to confront ($r = .37$, $p < .001$), as well as perceived responsibility assigned to others, including Steve ($r = .27$, $p < .001$) and Christian ($r = .28$, $p < .001$). Importantly, higher severity ratings were linked to reduced perceived similarity to Ryan, the individual who made the tokenizing remark ($r = –.42$, $p < .001$). Disinterest was again

associated with lower responsibility to confront ($r = –.29$, $p < .001$), reduced personal accountability ($r = –.23$, $p < .001$), and greater identification with Ryan ($r = .36$, $p < .001$).

ANOVAs were used to test the hypotheses. H1 stated that individuals who witness microaggressions will be less likely to confront the behavior in virtual workplace contexts than in in-person contexts. There was partial support for H1. For the pathologizing cultural values scenario the work context significantly predicted overall ally intentions to confront the behavior $F(1, 293) = 4.91$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Those in the virtual condition ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 2.35$) had significantly lower overall allyship intentions than those in the in-person condition ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 2.36$). However, the work context was not significant for the Tokenism scenario. Thus, displaying partial support for H1.

H2 predicted that individuals who witness microaggressions will feel less personal responsibility to confront the behavior in virtual workplace contexts than in-person contexts. As a reminder, personal responsibility to confront was assessed using two different measures. I began by analyzing the 3-item personal responsibility to confront measure from King et al. (2024). For the pathologizing cultural values scenario, work context significantly predicted participants' perceived responsibility to confront the behavior $F(1, 282) = 4.78$, $p = .029$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Participants in the online condition ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 1.76$) reported significantly less perceived individual responsibility to confront compared to those in the in-person condition ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.89$). The work context was not significant for the Tokenism scenario. Next, I analyzed the Ashburn-Nardo and Karim (2019) measure of responsibility to confront, which included separate items assessing the perceived responsibility of each character in the scenario. Consistent with the previous findings, participants' own responsibility to confront did not significantly differ across work contexts. Additionally, there were no significant differences by

condition in the perceived responsibility of Steve (the supervisor), Ryan (the perpetrator), or Christian (the team leader) to confront the microaggression. Thus, H2 was partially supported. Finally, the perceived responsibility of the target (Jamal) to confront the microaggression was significantly higher in the in-person condition, $F(1, 284) = 11.93$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$, with in-person participants ($M = 60.70$, $SD = 33.80$) assigning greater responsibility to Jamal than those in the virtual condition ($M = 46.48$, $SD = 35.72$).

H3a stated that individuals who witness microaggressions will be more likely to offer private support than public support. However, results from the paired samples t-tests indicated no significant difference between private and public support in both the pathologizing cultural values $t(298) = 1.37$, $p = .17$ and the tokenism $t(298) = 0.11$, $p = .92$ scenarios. Thus, H3a was not supported**.** H3b predicted that the preference for private over public support would be greater in virtual contexts compared to in-person contexts. To test this, a 2 (Allyship Type: Private vs. Public; within-subjects) × 2 (Condition: Virtual vs. In-Person; between-subjects) mixed-design ANOVA was conducted for each scenario (see Table 9). For the pathologizing cultural values scenario, the interaction between allyship type and condition was not significant, $F(1, 297) = 0.08$, $p = .78$, nor was the main effect of allyship type, $F(1, 297) = 1.87$, $p = .17$. However, there was a significant main effect of condition, $F(1, 297) = 3.96$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$, such that participants in the virtual condition ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 2.45$) reported significantly lower private allyship than those in the in-person condition ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 2.46$). For the Tokenism Scenario, the interaction between allyship type and condition was not significant, $F(1, 297) = 2.85$, $p = .09$. Neither was the main effect of allyship type, $F(1, 297) = 0.01$, $p = .92$, nor the main effect of condition, $F(1, 297) = 0.82$, $p = .37$, was significant. Overall, H3b was not supported.

Exploratory Analyses

For the Pathologizing Cultural Values Scenario, participants in the in-person condition (M = 3.57, SD = 1.27) were significantly more likely to perceive Ryan's comment as a microaggression than those in the virtual condition (M = 3.19, SD = 1.46), $F(1, 293) = 5.98$, p = .02, η^2 = .02. This difference in perception was reflected in participants' labeling of the comment: those in the in-person condition (M = 4.98, SD = 1.85) were more likely to label the microaggression as problematic than those in the virtual condition (M = 4.55, SD = 1.76), $F(1, 293) = 4.28$, p = .04, η^2 = .01. They were also more likely to label the microaggression as racist (M = 4.26, SD = 2.47) than participants in the virtual condition (M = 3.37, SD = 2.46), $F(1, 293) = 9.67$, p = .002, η^2 = .03.

To assess whether perceived responsibility predicted allyship intentions and whether this relationship differed by work context, regression analyses were conducted separately for the Pathologizing Cultural Values Scenario and the Tokenism Scenario. Each model included participants' mean-centered responsibility scores and an interaction term between centered responsibility and work context (coded as 0 = virtual, 1 = in-person). For the Pathologizing Cultural Values Scenario, the overall model significantly predicted allyship intentions, $F(3, 295) = 48.19$, $p < .001$. There was a significant main effect of perceived responsibility, β = .56, $p <$ .001, indicating that individuals who felt more responsible to confront the microaggression reported stronger allyship intentions. However, neither the main effect of condition (β = .09, p = .46) nor the interaction between responsibility and condition (β = .004, p = .98) was significant. Similarly, for the Tokenism Scenario, the overall model significantly predicted allyship intentions, $F(3, 295) = 42.07$, $p < .001$. There was a significant main effect of perceived responsibility, β = .572, $p <$ .001, indicating that greater perceived responsibility was associated

with stronger allyship intentions. However, neither the main effect of condition (β = .015, p = .917) nor the interaction between responsibility and condition (β = –.035, p = .862) was significant.

A 2 (Work Context: virtual vs. in-person) × 2 (Race: Black vs. White) ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in allyship intentions for Scenario 1. There was a significant main effect of work context, $F(1, 295) = 4.28$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .014$, with participants in the in-person condition reporting higher allyship intentions than those in the virtual condition. There was no main effect of race, $F(1, 295) = 0.001$, $p = .98$, and no significant interaction between work context and race, $F(1, 295) = 1.10$, $p = .30$. These results indicate that while work context influenced allyship intentions, this effect did not vary as a function of participant race.

Regression analyses were conducted to examine whether race, gender, and their interaction predicted personal responsibility to confront the microaggression (see Table 10). In Scenario 1 (Pathologizing Cultural Values), significant main effects of both race and gender emerged. Black participants reported higher responsibility to confront than White participants, $B = 1.34$, $p < .001$, and women reported higher responsibility than men, $B = 0.67$, $p = .032$. A significant Race × Gender interaction also emerged, $B = –1.65$, $p < .001$, indicating that racial differences in perceived responsibility varied by gender. To examine this interaction, simple slopes analyses were conducted. Among men, Black participants ($M = 5.14$, $SD = 1.62$) reported significantly greater responsibility than White participants ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 2.10$), $t(146) = –4.35$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [–1.94, –0.73], $d = 1.87$. Among women, responsibility levels did not significantly differ by race, $t(145) = 1.02$, $p = .31$, $d = 0.17$. Examining gender differences within racial groups revealed that White women reported significantly greater responsibility than White men, $t(145) = –2.00$, $p = .047$, 95% CI [–1.32, –0.01], $d = 0.33$, while among Black participants,

men reported higher responsibility than women, $t(146) = 3.50$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.43, 1.54], $d = 0.58$. These findings suggest that racial differences in responsibility were particularly pronounced among men, whereas gender differences were especially evident among Black participants. Figure 3 plots the interaction effect.

A similar pattern emerged in Scenario 3 (Tokenism), where regression analyses again revealed significant main effects of race and gender on responsibility to confront. Black participants expressed more responsibility than White participants, $B = 1.21$, $p < .001$, and women expressed more responsibility than men, $B = 0.79$, $p = .008$. Additionally, the Race × Gender interaction was significant, $B = –1.66$, $p < .001$, suggesting that race-based differences in responsibility varied across genders. To investigate this interaction, simple slopes analyses were conducted. Among men, Black participants ($M = 5.80$, $SD = 1.27$) reported significantly greater responsibility than White participants ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 2.03$), $t(146) = –4.35$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [–1.75, –0.66], $d = 1.68$. Among women, there was no significant difference in responsibility between White ($M = 5.39$, $SD = 1.87$) and Black participants ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 1.96$), $t(145) = 1.44$, $p = .151$, $d = 0.24$. White women reported significantly greater responsibility than White men, $t(145) = –2.47$, $p = .015$, 95% CI [–1.43, –0.16], $d = 0.41$, and among Black participants, men again reported higher responsibility than women, $t(146) = 3.21$, $p = .002$, 95% CI [0.33, 1.40], $d = 0.53$. These results echo the pattern observed in Scenario 1, reinforcing the finding that race-based differences in perceived responsibility were most pronounced among men, while gender-based gaps were more evident within racial groups. See Figure 4 for the plotted interaction effect.

A mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Model 4 (Hayes, 2012) to test whether perceived responsibility to confront mediates the relationship between race (0 = White,

1 = Black) and allyship intentions (see Table 11). Results indicated that Black participants reported significantly greater perceived responsibility to confront, $B = 0.49$, $SE = 0.22$, $t(297) = 2.21$, $p = .028$. In turn, perceived responsibility significantly predicted allyship intentions, $B = 0.71$, $SE = 0.06$, $t(296) = 11.96$, $p < .001$. The indirect effect of race on allyship intentions via responsibility was significant, $ab = 0.35$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.67], suggesting a mediated relationship. The direct effect of race on allyship intentions was non-significant when controlling for responsibility, $B = –0.35$, $p = .13$, indicating full mediation.

A second mediation analysis (PROCESS Model 4) tested whether perceived similarity to the target mediated the relationship between race and responsibility to confront the microaggression (see Table 12). Black participants reported significantly higher perceived similarity to the target, $B = 1.17$, $SE = 0.12$, $p < .001$. In turn, similarity predicted greater perceived responsibility to confront, $B = 0.51$, $SE = 0.10$, $p < .001$. The direct effect of race on responsibility was non-significant when controlling for similarity, $B = –0.11$, $p = .657$. However, the indirect effect was significant, $ab = 0.60$, 95% CI [0.33, 0.92], indicating full mediation. These results suggest that Black participants' greater perceived responsibility to confront may be explained by their stronger sense of similarity to the target.

A third mediation analysis (PROCESS Model 4) to examine whether race centrality mediates the relationship between race and responsibility to confront. Results indicated that Black participants reported significantly higher race centrality than White participants, $B = 1.23$, $SE = 0.10$, $t(297) = 12.72$, $p < .001$. However, race centrality did not significantly predict responsibility to confront, $B = 0.18$, $SE = 0.13$, $t(296) = 1.39$, $p = .167$. The direct effect of race on responsibility was also not significant, $B = 0.26$, $p = .34$. The indirect effect through centrality was not significant, $ab = 0.23$, 95% CI [–0.11, 0.57], indicating no evidence of mediation.

A multiple regression was conducted to examine whether perceived responsibility, gender, and race predicted disinterested allyship responses. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 291) = 10.10$, $p < .001$, and explained 9.4% of the variance. Perceived responsibility significantly predicted lower disinterest, $B = –0.19$, $SE = 0.04$, $\beta = –.28$, $p < .001$. Gender was also a significant predictor, $B = –0.37$, $p = .011$, such that women reported lower disinterested responses than men. Race was not a significant predictor of disinterest, $p = .233$.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined how employees respond to workplace microaggressions across virtual and in-person environments, with a focus on allyship intentions, perceived responsibility to confront, and support strategies. Results provided partial support for the hypothesis that individuals are less likely to confront microaggressions in virtual contexts. Specifically, in the Pathologizing Cultural Values Scenario, participants in virtual settings reported significantly lower allyship intentions and felt less personal responsibility to intervene compared to those in person. These context effects did not emerge in the Tokenism scenario. Although no significant differences were found between private and public support overall, exploratory analyses revealed that private support was significantly lower in virtual settings for the Pathologizing scenario. Jamal (the target) was also assigned greater responsibility to confront the microaggression in the in-person condition. These findings suggest that virtual work environments may dampen both direct and indirect confrontation behaviors under certain conditions.

One potential explanation for why context effects emerged only in the Pathologizing Cultural Values scenario is that the Tokenism scenario was less subtle. Its overt nature may have prompted clear and immediate recognition of bias across both virtual and in-person conditions, which could have minimized the influence of contextual cues. When a microaggression is unambiguous, participants may rely less on environmental features to guide their response. As a result, variation in confrontation behavior based on work setting may be less likely to emerge. Another possibility is that ordering effects played a role. Participants responded to the Tokenism scenario last, which could have shaped participants' perceptions or emotional engagement.

The CPR Model offers a useful framework for interpreting these findings. This model outlines a five-step process that individuals typically progress through when deciding whether to confront discriminatory behavior (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008). It emphasizes a sequential process involving recognition of prejudiced behavior, emergency interpretation, personal responsibility, deciding how to act, and taking action. Interruptions or hesitations at any of these steps can reduce the likelihood of confrontation. The findings from the Pathologizing Cultural Values Scenario suggest that virtual work contexts may disrupt multiple steps of this model. Participants in virtual settings were less likely to engage with the incident, both in terms of allyship intentions and felt responsibility. This suggests that virtual contexts may dull the emotional and social cues that typically help observers identify a behavior as prejudiced (Step 1) or recognize it as urgent enough to require intervention (Step 2). The limited social presence in virtual environments, such as reduced eye contact, muted group reactions, and delayed or filtered communication (Henderson et al., 2011), may obscure the interpersonal harm, making it easier for individuals to minimize or overlook the need to act. Importantly, these differences emerged even though the in-person condition was not truly live. As such, this design likely represents a conservative test of the impact of virtual contexts. It is possible that had participants been physically present in the interaction, the observed differences might have been even stronger.

Qualitative responses provide additional insight into Step 1 (recognition) and Step 2 (emergency interpretation). While many participants recognized the comments as problematic, their descriptions often reflected uncertainty about intent or concerns about overreacting. This aligns with prior work showing that subtle forms of bias are more difficult to interpret as urgent or actionable (Jones et al., 2016; Sue et al., 2008; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). The reduced social presence in virtual settings (Lenoardi et al., 2024) may make microaggressions appear less

harmful or diminish perceived group consensus around the inappropriateness of a remark. Some participants indicated that they would only consider responding if the behavior continued or became a pattern, suggesting that they did not view the isolated comment as serious enough to constitute an "emergency" requiring immediate action. This reflects an interpretation of harm, in which the incident was viewed as too minor, ambiguous, or socially inconsequential to justify confrontation. In the absence of escalation or visible distress from the target, some participants chose to monitor the situation rather than intervene, implicitly waiting for subsequent behavior to cross a subjective threshold of severity.

When observers interpret a comment as an isolated incident with unclear intent or uncertain emotional impact, they may hesitate to label it as urgent (Lindsey et al., 2015), particularly in virtual contexts where group cues and emotional tone are muted (Bailenson, 2021). When cues such as eye contact, vocal tone, or body language are diminished or absent, it becomes harder for observers to assess whether the remark elicited harm, offense, or discomfort (Keating et al., 2024). As a result, even when the comment is recognized as biased, its emotional and social urgency may not be perceived clearly enough to justify intervention. The findings underscore how the perceived emergency of a situation is not fixed, but instead constructed through contextual, relational, and environmental cues, many of which may be diminished in remote work settings (Leonardi et al., 2024). As a result, observers may downplay the seriousness of an incident and delay responding, even when they recognize that something inappropriate occurred.

At Step 3 of the CPR model, personal responsibility, participants in virtual settings reported feeling less responsibility to confront, again, only in the Pathologizing scenario. Additionally, participants in the in-person condition were more likely to assign responsibility to

Jamal, the target. These findings may reflect a form of responsibility diffusion that is magnified in virtual environments, where individuals feel less accountable to respond. Virtual environments may facilitate a cognitive distancing effect (Leonardi et al., 2024), where microaggressions are seen as issues to be managed over time or by someone else, rather than as acute incidents requiring immediate intervention. Although this study did not directly assess psychological distance or construal level, the observed reduction in perceived responsibility may reflect such distancing processes. The responsibility to confront is shifted away from the self. Notably, this was not accompanied by a shift in perceived responsibility toward other potential actors (e.g., HR, leadership, or bystanders), suggesting that participants did not generally diffuse responsibility across the group but instead directed it more squarely at the target (Crosby et al., 2008; Singletary & Hebl, 2009; Swim & Heyer, 1999).

The qualitative data deepen this pattern, revealing that many participants actively deferred to Jamal to set the tone or direction for responding to the microaggression. Some participants framed this deference as a way of respecting his autonomy, suggesting they would support him if he chose to act, but would otherwise stay quiet. Others implicitly displaced their own role in confrontation by suggesting that it was not their place to intervene unless Jamal did so first. This form of deference, while potentially well-intentioned, carries significant implications. It may serve to justify inaction while preserving the bystander's moral self-image (Carlson et al., 2020; Kutlaca et al., 2020), and at the same time, it reinforces the burden placed on the target to lead the response to their own harm.

In virtual settings, deference to the target was amplified by limited nonverbal cues, making it harder to gauge Jamal's emotional response. This ambiguity made it difficult to assess whether intervention was needed or even welcome. In the absence of observable discomfort or

distress, some participants interpreted the situation as less serious or deferred judgment altogether. This inability to read the emotional climate in real time appears to contribute to a form of moral hesitation or paralysis, as participants waited for a clear signal from Jamal that confrontation was necessary. In doing so, they relied on the target to confirm the presence and severity of harm, reinforcing the problematic assumption that the burden of acknowledging and addressing bias rests with the person who experiences it. The underlying logic becomes: if Jamal does not react, speak up, or visibly withdraw, then perhaps the comment was not that harmful, or not theirs to address. These dynamics contribute to a broader displacement of responsibility in virtual contexts (Radke et al. 2020), where bias is seen as something for the target to assess, respond to, and manage, rather than a collective concern. This perspective, while possibly rooted in respecting Jamal's autonomy, can inadvertently shift the burden of confronting discrimination onto those who are already marginalized.

An additional pattern emerged when considering the intersection of social identity and perceived responsibility**.** For the Pathologizing Cultural Values Scenario**,** Black participants and women reported significantly higher levels of personal responsibility to confront microaggressions, regardless of work context. This suggests that individuals with marginalized identities may experience a stronger internalized obligation to respond, potentially shaped by personal experiences with bias or a heightened sense of solidarity with the target (Burson & Godfrey, 2020; Cortland et al., 2017; Craig & Richeson, 2012). While this effect was not specific to virtual or in-person settings, it may reflect broader patterns in which historically marginalized individuals feel compelled to advocate not only for themselves but also for others who share similar identities. Their lived experiences with discrimination may foster a heightened sense of vigilance and an internalized sense of duty to address injustice when it arises (Bueno & Brown,

2023). The microaggression may not have been directed at the participant, however, by remaining silent, they could subsequently become the next target in the future. This could suggest that identity-based factors influence movement through the steps of the CPR Model, even when situational cues (such as work context) remain constant. However, it is important to recognize the potential burden this place on marginalized employees, particularly in environments where organizational support is limited. While Black participants may feel a heightened responsibility to act, an inclusive workplace culture requires that all employees share this responsibility (Ashburn-Nardo, 2019; Sue et al., 2019). When only marginalized individuals confront prejudiced behavior, it can reinforce power imbalances and perpetuate a cycle where bias is only challenged when it directly affects someone within the marginalized group (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Gervais & Hillard, 2014; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). This can also create a double standard where White or majority-group members are permitted to remain passive observers without consequence.

While both Black participants and women reported greater personal responsibility to confront microaggressions, this did not consistently translate into stronger allyship intentions or public action, particularly in the quantitative data. This disconnect between felt responsibility and intended behavior highlights the complexity of navigating allyship, especially for those with marginalized identities (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). This divergence points to the presence of motivational and social constraints that disrupt the final CPR step. Qualitative responses suggest that this tension may reflect a form of racial double-bind, where individuals, particularly Black participants, recognize the moral or social imperative to respond but also weigh the potential consequences of speaking up, such as being labeled confrontational, hypersensitive, or disruptive to group dynamics. In this way, the CPR model's "responsibility" step may not directly lead to

the final “action” step, not because of apathy, but due to identity-based constraints on how action is perceived. Even when participants feel compelled to intervene, their decisions are shaped by how their actions will be interpreted within power-laden social contexts (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). This pattern underscores the importance of considering social identity not only as a moderator of who feels responsible but also as a key factor shaping what forms of confrontation are seen as viable, safe, or effective.

With regard to Step 4-5, deciding how to act and then taking action, exploratory analyses revealed that even private support was lower in virtual environments in the Pathologizing Cultural Values scenario. This pattern suggests that action is not only influenced by perceived risk or moral obligation, but also by environmental affordances. In virtual settings, the lack of informal, unscheduled interaction may inhibit spontaneous supportive behavior (Lim, 2024). Participants may interpret silence as the norm or feel less urgency to follow up after a meeting concludes. These findings challenge assumptions that private forms of allyship are utilized more (Cheng et al., 2019), highlighting the need to consider how communication structure and perceived immediacy impact follow-through. This raises the possibility that virtual workspaces do not simply shift the form of intervention (from public to private), but may in fact, suppress both forms by undermining the interpersonal triggers and relational momentum that typically drive action. The preference for indirect responses in virtual settings may also reflect the heightened risk of miscommunication and social ambiguity in these environments (Keating et al., 2024). Without access to tone of voice, body language, or shared physical context, participants may worry that their actions will be misunderstood, appear overly harsh, or trigger unintended conflict (Good et al., 2012; Kaiser & Miller, 2004). As a result, individuals may default to low-

risk strategies, such as silence, vagueness, or delayed follow-up, that feel socially safer but are often less effective in addressing the harm.

The qualitative data reveal that participants often selected action strategies aimed at minimizing disruption or interpersonal tension, even when they recognized the behavior as problematic. Rather than addressing the microaggression directly, participants commonly reported changing the topic, privately checking in with the target, seeking clarification, or using humor/sarcasm. These forms of indirect or delayed responses suggest a broader tendency toward conflict avoidance**,** where maintaining social harmony or protecting relationships is prioritized over addressing harm (Good et al., 2012). In doing so, participants may have chosen actions that felt safer, more polite, or less likely to trigger backlash, but also less likely to meaningfully confront the behavior or shift group norms**.** This tension between intention and impact is central to understanding allyship in both virtual and in-person contexts. While some of these conflict-avoidant responses may be emotionally or socially strategic, they can ultimately be ineffective or even counterproductive. For example, shifting the conversation away from the microaggression may create the illusion that the issue has been resolved or was not serious enough to warrant discussion.

Importantly, this pattern of indirect action stood in contrast to participants' self-reported intentions. On the allyship intentions measure, participants endorsed both public and private forms of confrontation, indicating a willingness to speak up, challenge bias, or support the target. However, these intentions were not consistently reflected in the behaviors they described during the scenarios. Participants who had previously expressed strong allyship intentions often described indirect, avoidant, or non-confrontational responses when responding to open-ended questions about how they would act. Only a limited number of participants chose public

confrontation, and even private strategies such as messaging the perpetrator were frequently avoided. Instead, participants often chose lower-risk options, such as privately affirming the target, contacting HR, or taking no action at all.

In some cases, these well-intentioned but cautious actions may do more harm than good by conveying a false sense of resolution or placing the burden of response solely on the target. These patterns underscore the distinction between performative and effective allyship. Performative allyship often serves to alleviate the bystander's own discomfort or protect their social image, without disrupting the status quo (Kutlaca & Radke, 2023). In contrast, effective allyship involves not only recognizing microaggressions and feeling a responsibility to act but also taking meaningful steps that challenge discriminatory behavior and support the target in a visible and impactful way (Collier-Spruel & Ryan 2022).

The data also point to the important role of emotional support directed toward the target, particularly in the absence of direct confrontation. Even when participants did not confront the perpetrator, many expressed intentions to affirm Jamal, check on his well-being, or reassure him that his presence was valued. These expressions of social support may serve an important psychological and relational function, particularly for marginalized individuals navigating exclusionary workplace dynamics (Seawell et al., 2014; Trujillo et al., 2017). Such support may help buffer the emotional toll of microaggressions, reinforce the target's sense of belonging, and mitigate feelings of isolation (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Settles et al., 2021; William et al., 2022). While emotional support is beneficial (Manohar & Kline, 2024), it should not be viewed as a substitute for direct intervention. Sending a supportive private message might alleviate personal guilt for the bystander or restore the bystander's self-image as a morally responsive person, but it does little to disrupt the structural or interpersonal dynamics that allow

microaggressions to persist. Without addressing the behavior publicly, the perpetrator may remain unaware of the harm caused, and other observers may interpret the silence as complicity or indifference. In this way, private emotional support, while well-intentioned, can reinforce a cycle of passivity and contribute to a workplace climate where problematic comments go unchallenged.

Theoretical Implications

The present findings offer several theoretical contributions to the (CPR) Model and emerging frameworks on allyship. These findings challenge longstanding assumptions in allyship research that allies are primarily individuals from dominant or privileged social groups who intervene on behalf of marginalized others (Broido, 2000; Reason et al., 2005). While prior studies have highlighted the effectiveness of privileged-group confrontation in reducing bias (e.g., White allies confronting racism; Czopp & Monteith, 2003), the data suggest that this perspective may overlook how allyship operates in practice. In the current study, participants from marginalized backgrounds, particularly Black participants, frequently reported taking on the responsibility of confronting microaggressions. This shift in burden highlights the limitations of a narrow definition of allyship that centers dominant-group actors and overlooks the lived experiences and proactive resistance strategies of marginalized individuals. The results align with more recent theoretical frameworks such as bidirectional allyship (Scaramuzzo et al., 2021), which emphasize that allyship is a shared, relational process, not merely a top-down display of support. Allyship, in this view, is not reserved for those with privilege but is a collective practice shaped by social identity, personal experience, perceived safety, and organizational context. These findings underscore the need to reconceptualize allyship as an inclusive and dynamic form of resistance, where marginalized individuals may act as allies to others within or across identity

groups. Ignoring this dimension risks reinforcing inequitable expectations in the workplace, where those most affected by bias are also tasked with correcting it.

The results also call for a rethinking of the CPR model's final step involving taking action (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008). The model presents this as a binary decision: act (confront) or do nothing (silence). Instead, participants in this study displayed a range of responses, including emotional support, subtle cues, humor, documentation, private confrontation, and formal reporting. These actions varied not only in intensity but also in intent, visibility, and perceived consequences. For example, privately checking in with the target may feel emotionally safe and supportive but may not disrupt harmful group norms, while public confrontation or reporting to leadership may carry social and professional risks yet signal a stronger stance against workplace bias. Understanding "action" as a continuum of responses better reflects the complex realities individuals face when deciding how to intervene. It acknowledges that multiple forms of response can be meaningful, and that some may be more viable depending on identity, power dynamics, and organizational culture. Importantly, this reframing recognizes that even nonverbal or indirect actions (e.g., changing the subject to protect the target, messaging privately, or asking for clarification) may reflect genuine efforts to address harm, even if they fall short of public confrontation. This nuance is particularly critical in virtual contexts, where options for spontaneous or relational intervention may be limited. Expanding the model in this way provides a more comprehensive lens for understanding how and why people intervene in biased interactions.

Finally, these findings highlight the importance of embedding social identity and power more centrally within the CPR model. The transition between perceived responsibility and overt action emerged as a site of identity-based tension. While many participants recognized a

microaggression and reported feeling personally responsible to intervene, their decisions about how and whether to act were shaped by anticipated social consequences, including concerns about how their behavior would be interpreted based on their identity. These identity-based constraints did not uniformly deter action, but they did influence how some individuals engaged, sometimes prompting more cautious, indirect forms of confrontation (Cheng et al., 2019; Czopp & Monteith, 2003). The current CPR model does not explicitly account for how marginalized individuals may face greater interpersonal and institutional barriers to confrontation than their privileged counterparts. Integrating identity-based moderators into the CPR framework would improve its ability to predict and explain confrontation behavior in real-world organizational settings. Specifically, this integration could help explain why some individuals stop at the deciding how to act step, not due to apathy, but because of legitimate fears about how their actions will be perceived and the personal risks they carry. A more intersectional CPR model would also be better suited to guide interventions aimed at fostering inclusive climates, where all employees, not just those with privilege, can confront bias without fear of backlash.

Practical Implications

These findings offer several actionable insights for organizations. DEI initiatives must evolve to address the unique affordances and constraints of remote work. Traditional in-person confrontation strategies may not translate well to digital settings, where emotional cues are muted and opportunities for spontaneous intervention are limited. Training programs should incorporate scenario-based learning that reflects the dynamics of virtual communication, such as Team/Slack messages, Zoom interactions, or asynchronous collaboration tools, and offer employees concrete tools for recognizing and responding to microaggressions in digital contexts**.** Given the ambiguity of online interactions (Keating et al., 2024), it is also critical for

organizations to establish and clearly communicate behavioral norms for digital conduct**,** including how to flag inappropriate comments, how to document concerns, and what informal and formal channels are available for support. Encouraging private, asynchronous forms of allyship, such as direct messages, follow-up emails, or documentation, can empower employees to act even when public confrontation may feel too risky or disruptive.

Leadership plays a central role in shaping team norms, reducing prejudice, and influencing whether employees feel empowered to speak up (Ashburn-Nardo, 2019). The findings show that some participants chose to document the incident or defer responsibility to managers, especially when they felt uncertain or unsupported in the moment. This underscores the need for manager training focused not only on recognizing microaggressions but also on responding in inclusive, transparent, and supportive ways. Managers should be encouraged to follow up proactive**ly** after tense or ambiguous interactions, create space for team members to raise concerns informally, and model active allyship themselves. In virtual teams, where visibility is low and psychological safety can erode quickly, trust-building becomes especially important (Bell et al., 2023). Leaders can foster this by normalizing open dialogue, emphasizing shared accountability for inclusion, and avoiding responses that discourage future reporting.

One of the most critical implications of this study is the need to distribute the burden of advocacy more equitably across employees. Marginalized individuals, particularly those with lived experience of discrimination, reported feeling a heightened sense of responsibility to speak up. However, this emotional labor is taxing and can lead to fatigue (Walls & Hall, 2018). To counter this, organizations must foster a culture where allyship is viewed as a shared and collective responsibility rather than an individual moral choice. This means creating structures and norms that encourage dominant-group members to speak up, respond appropriately, and

support their colleagues visibly. Ultimately, marginalized employees should not have to carry the dual weight of experiencing bias and being expected to respond to it alone.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into responses to microaggressions in different work environments, there are also limitations that should be noted. First, participants were asked to self-report how they would respond to hypothetical situations. Self-reported intentions to confront may not fully reflect real-world behavior, nor was I able to capture the frequency of their actual behavioral tendency to confront microaggressions. Also, participants might be motivated to respond in socially desirable ways, leading them to overestimate their willingness to intervene. In the context of microaggressions, where responses may involve navigating delicate social dynamics, this limitation is particularly relevant. Participants may express strong intentions to confront discriminatory behavior when there is no immediate social or professional risk, yet their actual behavior in a live situation could differ due to fear of conflict, uncertainty, or the influence of situational factors. While this raises concerns, it is worth noting that participants demonstrated a wide range of responses, including a notable proportion who chose not to confront the microaggression. This variability, and the fact that avoidance or silence remained common even in low-stakes, hypothetical contexts, suggests that social desirability may not have been a dominant influence on participant responses. Still, stated intentions may differ from real-world behavior, especially in situations involving potential social or professional risk.

Second, the study was limited by the methodological constraint related to replicating an in-person work environment within an online study format. Participants assigned to the in-person condition still completed the study entirely online, viewing recorded videos of conference room

interactions and imagining themselves as present in that scenario. While this design choice was necessary to ensure ethical standards and maintain control over experimental conditions, it inherently limited the realism of the in-person experience. The simulated nature of the scenario may not have fully captured the complex social cues, spontaneous interactions, and physical presence that influence real-world responses to microaggressions in face-to-face settings. The lack of true in-person interactions also restricted the ability to fully examine the role of non-verbal communication. Despite this limitation, meaningful differences between the virtual and face-to-face conditions still emerged, suggesting that the study design captured at least some of the psychological and social dynamics that distinguish these environments. Given ethical constraints around exposing participants to real microaggressions, future studies could utilize emerging technologies such as virtual reality (VR) or artificial intelligence (AI) to create more immersive and realistic scenarios. These methods would allow researchers to observe actual behavioral responses in controlled yet realistic environments.

Third, the study focused on only two forms of racial microaggressions (tokenism and pathologizing cultural values), which could potentially limit the generalizability of the findings across the broader spectrum of microaggression types. While these two themes are highly relevant in workplace settings and were carefully selected, they reflect only a subset of the broader typologies described by Sue et al. (2007) and King et al. (2023). Prior to data collection, both scenarios were pilot tested and identified by participants as clear examples of racial microaggressions. Nonetheless, future research may benefit from including a broader range of microaggressions, particularly those with varying levels of ambiguity. Microaggressions with varying degrees of ambiguity might have been more effective in highlighting how contextual factors influence interpretation and response. Requiring participants to engage more deeply with

the scenario, interpret social cues, and make more nuanced judgments about whether and how to intervene. Future research should consider using a broader range of microaggression types, as outlined by Sue et al. (2007) and King et al. (2023) typology, with varying levels of ambiguity. Including scenarios that represent more subtle forms of microaggressions would allow researchers to assess whether certain contexts amplify or diminish responses to different types of bias. By exploring how specific microaggression typologies interact with work environments, future studies could offer a more nuanced understanding of how to effectively foster allyship behaviors across different workplace settings.

Fourth, while the study explored racial differences in confrontation strategies, other demographic factors such as gender, organizational tenure, and intersecting identities were not fully examined because it was not the primary focus of the study. These factors could significantly influence how individuals perceive and respond to microaggressions. Gender was held constant across scenarios. All characters were portrayed as men in order to isolate race as the primary variable of interest. This design choice allowed for tighter experimental control but may have limited ecological validity. Reactions to microaggressions may differ meaningfully depending on the gender of the perpetrator or the target. For example, participants may be more sympathetic or protective toward a female target, or less likely to expect her to address the issue alone. Likewise, a female perpetrator might be perceived differently in terms of intent or authority**.** Future research should adopt an intersectional approach to better understand how overlapping identities shape both the perception of microaggressions and the likelihood of allyship in workplace settings.

Additionally, organizational factors such as role seniority, team dynamics, and workplace culture may shape how individuals respond to microaggressions. Exploring how individual

characteristics interact with these broader structural contexts can offer more nuanced insights and help tailor DEI strategies to the complexities of real-world workplace environments. For example, future research should examine how team-level variables such as task interdependence influence bystander responses. In teams where success depends on close collaboration, members may feel a heightened sense of responsibility to confront bias in order to preserve group cohesion and performance. Conversely, these same dynamics could discourage confrontation if individuals fear disrupting relationships or provoking conflict. Because interdependence may either amplify or suppress intervention depending on perceived risk and relational norms, this represents a promising area for future exploration. Understanding team-level moderators can clarify when and why supportive behaviors emerge and inform strategies for building more inclusive and psychologically safe team climates.

Fifth, the study compared fully virtual and fully in-person work environments but did not examine hybrid work contexts. Given the increasing prevalence of hybrid models in today's workplace, this is an important gap. Hybrid environments may present unique challenges (Williams & Shaw, 2025), as employees transition between virtual and physical interactions with colleagues. Hybrid settings introduce variability in workplace experiences that might impact perceptions of responsibility. Employees who experience microaggressions in a virtual context but have opportunities to address them in person (or vice versa) may face unique challenges in determining the appropriate time, place, and manner for intervention. The lack of clear norms for navigating these situations in hybrid contexts could lead to uncertainty and hesitation among potential allies. Additionally, both fully remote contexts and hybrid work models often involve asynchronous communication, where microaggressions might occur in written forms such as

emails or chat messages, posing distinct challenges for immediate confrontation compared to verbal interactions.

Future research could build on these findings by more explicitly examining the role of psychological distance in shaping responses to workplace microaggressions in virtual environments. While this study suggested that work modality influences confrontation behavior, it did not directly assess psychological distance as conceptualized by CLT. According to this framework, greater psychological distance, whether temporal, spatial, social, or hypothetical, can lead individuals to process events more abstractly and with less emotional immediacy (Trope & Liberman, 2010). In virtual settings, features such as having cameras turned off or relying solely on text-based chat may increase social and psychological distance, potentially reducing bystanders' perceived urgency to respond or their sense of personal responsibility. Future studies should directly manipulate or measure psychological distance to test its effect on bias recognition, perceived severity, and likelihood of confrontation.

Additionally, this study did not assess the impact of nonverbal cues on confrontation behavior, though qualitative findings suggest their absence may limit participants' ability to read emotional responses. Nonverbals such as facial expressions, eye contact, tone of voice, and group reactions often serve as critical indicators of discomfort and social norm violations in in-person settings (Sauter et al., 2010). Without them, observers may hesitate to act due to uncertainty about whether harm occurred or whether their intervention would be accepted by the target. Future research should investigate how the presence or absence of nonverbal signals shapes perceptions of harm and responsibility to act.

CONCLUSION

Workplace context shaped responses to racial microaggressions, with virtual environments associated with lower allyship intentions and perceived responsibility to confront, particularly for subtle incidents. Psychological distance inherent to virtual settings appeared to disrupt early stages of the confrontation process, consistent with extensions to the Confronting Prejudiced Responses Model. Identity-based differences further indicated that Black participants and women reported greater perceived obligation to act. These findings underscore the need for organizational interventions that promote allyship and bias confrontation across both in-person and virtual contexts. Understanding the factors that influence confrontation behavior could provide valuable insights into developing effective DEI interventions that address the complexities of these settings. By tailoring strategies to different communication methods and settings, organizations can better support employees in recognizing and responding to microaggressions across all work environments, contributing to a more inclusive and respectful workplace culture.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the research study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain the risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Study Title: Workplace Interaction Study

1. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this research study is to learn more about the ways individuals think about workplace interactions.

2. WHAT YOU WILL DO

Consenting participants will also be asked to respond to a scenario.

3. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

You may not benefit personally from being in this study. However, we hope that this research may eventually benefit others hoping to learn more about how people interact with their colleagues.

4. POTENTIAL RISKS

The researchers do not expect that there are any potential risks to completing this study.

5. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All data will be stored on the hard drive of a secure computer and will only be accessed by trained experimenters. Data will be stored for five years after the publication of research stemming from this project---as specified by the American Psychological Association.

6. YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

You have the right to say no to participate in the research. You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

7. COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY

Participants will receive $2 for participating in this study. The study is projected to take no more than 20-30 minutes.

8. CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact Ann Marie Ryan Ph. D., Department of Psychology, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824, phone: 517-355-0203, e-mail: ryanan@msu.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research

Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd, Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

9. DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT.

Selecting "I agree" below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

☐ I Agree

If you would like a copy of the consent form, please email Jordan Holmes (home226@msu.edu).

APPENDIX B: PILOT TEST SCENARIOS

Potential Scenario #1 - Filler

Ryan: Jamal, you seem a bit overwhelmed. Is everything okay?

Jamal: I've just got a lot on my plate right now with this project and a few other responsibilities.

Steve: Yeah, it's a busy time for all of us.

Ryan: *I understand. It's important to prioritize tasks and delegate when necessary to manage your workload.*

Potential Scenario #2 – Microaggression (myth of meritocracy)

Ryan: I really think the new software implementation is going to be a game-changer for us. The demo was pretty impressive.

Steve: ...and that's why I think the new software implementation is going to streamline our processes significantly.

Jamal: Yeah, I agree. The demo was impressive. I think it will cut down on a lot of manual entry.

Ryan: Exactly. By the way, how did you get into this field? You're really good at what you do.

Jamal: Thanks, John. I actually got interested in it during college. I took a few elective courses in computer science, and it just clicked for me.

Ryan: *That's great. Did you get into college through a minority scholarship program or something like that?*

Potential Scenario #3 – Microaggression (pathologizing cultural values)

Steve: So, what did you guys do over the weekend?

Ryan: I went hiking with my family. The weather was perfect for it. How about you, Jamal?

Jamal: I went to a country concert downtown. It was amazing. The musicians were incredibly talented.

Steve: That sounds awesome! I've always wanted to get into country.

Ryan: *Country, huh? That's interesting. I would've pegged you as more of a hip-hop and rap guy.*

Potential Scenario #4 - Filler

Ryan: Jamal, I noticed that your project missed the deadline. Can you tell us what happened?

Jamal: I apologize. There were some unforeseen technical glitches and data discrepancies.

Steve: That's understandable. How much more time do you need?

Jamal: I can finish it in a week with some help on the technical issues.

Steve: I can help with that.

Ryan: *Great. Let's set the new deadline for next Friday. We need to clarify our expectations and make sure our timeline is realistic.*

Potential Scenario #5 - Microaggression (tokenism)

Steve: So, we need to finalize who's going to present each section of our project at the client meeting next week.

Ryan: Right. I can handle the introduction and the technical details. Steve, you can cover the financial aspects.

Jamal: I'd be happy to present the market analysis. I've been working on it for the past few weeks.

Ryan: *That sounds good. Actually, Jamal, how about you represent our team in the presentation? It'll look good to have a Black face to showcase our diversity.*

Potential Scenario #6 – Microaggression (ascription of intelligence)

Steve: So, we need to finalize our approach for the new marketing campaign. Any thoughts on the initial concepts?

Jamal: I think we should focus on targeting a younger demographic through social media. They're the ones most likely to engage with our product.

Ryan: *Wow, Jamal, you're so articulate for a... I mean, I didn't expect that.*

APPENDIX C: FINALIZED SCENARIO SCRIPTS

Scene: An open-plan office space during a project meeting.

Characters: Jamal (a Black man), Steve (a White man), and Ryan (a White man). Christian (Boss – Not present at the meeting)

Scenario: The team is gathering for a brainstorming session to generate ideas for an upcoming marketing campaign, that they will present to their boss Christian.

Scenario #1 – Pathologizing Cultural Values

Steve: So, what did you guys do over the weekend?

Ryan: I went hiking with my family. The weather was perfect for it. How about you, Jamal?

Jamal: I went to a country concert downtown. It was amazing. The musicians were incredibly talented.

Steve: That sounds awesome! I've always wanted to get into country.

Ryan: *Country, huh? That's interesting. I would've pegged you as more of a hip-hop and rap guy.*

Scenario #2 - Filler

Ryan: Jamal, you seem a bit overwhelmed. Is everything okay?

Jamal: I've just got a lot on my plate right now with this project and a few other responsibilities.

Steve: Yeah, it's a busy time for all of us.

Ryan: I understand. It's important to prioritize tasks and delegate when necessary to manage your workload.

Scenario #3 – Tokenism

Steve: So, we need to finalize who's going to present each section of our project at the client meeting next week.

Ryan: Right. I can handle the introduction and the technical details. Steve, you can cover the financial aspects.

Jamal: I'd be happy to present the market analysis. I've been working on it for the past few weeks.

Ryan: *That sounds good. Actually, Jamal, how about you represent our team in the presentation? It'll look good to have a Black face to showcase our diversity.*

APPENDIX D: PILOT STUDY DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1

Pilot Study - Descriptive Statistics for Microaggression Ratings

Type	Comment Made by Ryan	*M*	*SD*
Filler	**“**It’s important to prioritize tasks and delegate when necessary to manage your workload”	2.03	1.28
Microaggression – Myth of meritocracy	**“**Did you get into college through a minority scholarship program or something like that?”	4.09	1.10
Microaggression - Pathologizing cultural values	“Country, huh? That’s interesting. I would’ve pegged you as more of a hip-hop and rap guy.”	3.68	1.32
Filler	“Let's set the new deadline for next Friday. We need to clarify our expectations and make sure our timeline is realistic.”	1.45	0.83
Microaggression - Tokenism	“Jamal, how about you represent our team in the presentation? It'll look good to have a Black face to showcase our diversity.”	4.39	1.00
Microaggression – Ascription of intelligence	“Wow, Jamal, you’re so articulate for a... I mean, I didn’t expect that.”	4.49	0.98

Note. The extent to which the comments made by Ryan fit the definition of a microaggression, using a scale ranging from 1 (Not at all a microaggression) to 5 (Strong indication of a microaggression). Based on the data, three of the comments were selected to be included in the main study. The tokenism and pathologizing cultural values microaggressions were selected, in addition to the first filler scenario focused on prioritizing and delegating tasks.

APPENDIX E: EXAMPLE OF IN-PERSON SCENARIO

Figure 1. Example of in-person condition.

APPENDIX F: EXAMPLE OF VIRTUAL SCENARIO

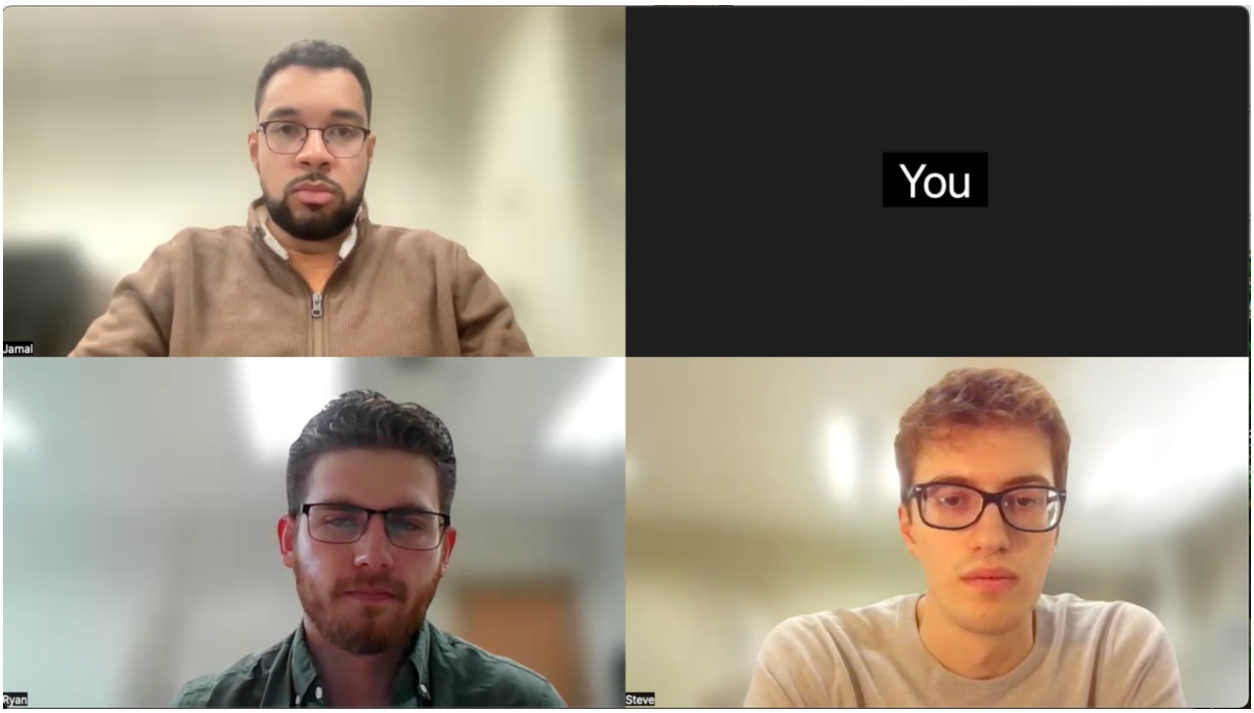

Figure 2. Example of virtual condition.

APPENDIX G: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Instructions: After watching the interaction between Steve and Jamal, would you like to say or do something? Please describe how you would react. Please write out specifically what you would say or do next. Indicate if your comments are directed toward someone specific on the team, by using their name in your response. If you would not like to say or do something in response, please explicitly indicate so.

What would you say in response to this interaction? _____

What would you do in response to this interaction? _____

The boss, Christian was unable to attend this meeting due to a scheduling conflict. It is common practice within the organization to give the team updates and feedback after meetings, The boss, Christian asks for feedback, what feedback would you give to him about how the meeting went? What would you say to Christian? _____

If you want to email anyone or add something in Slack to your other colleagues from the meeting, What would you say?.

Who would you contact? _____

What would you say in response to this interaction? _____

APPENDIX H: ALLY INTENTIONS MEASURE

Instructions: Please report the likelihood of enacting the following actions, on a scale ranging from "1" (I would definitely not do this) and "9" (I would definitely do this).

1. I would tell everyone I thought it was a good meeting. (not seeing microaggression)
2. I would let my boss know that the meeting went well (not seeing microaggression)
3. I would tell Ryan during the meeting that their comment was problematic. (Public)
4. I would tell Ryan during the meeting that their comment was racist. (Public)
5. I would tell Ryan privately after the meeting that their comment was problematic. (Private)
6. I would tell Ryan after the meeting that their comment was racist. (Private)
7. I would tell Jamal after the meeting that Ryan's comment was problematic. (Private)
8. I would tell Jamal after the meeting that Ryan's comment was racist. (Private)
9. I would have changed the topic of conversation during the meeting. (Disinterested)
10. I would tell Jamal to see Ryan's comment as a joke. (Disinterested)
11. I would be unlikely to do or say anything to Ryan or Jamal during the meeting. (Disinterested)
12. I would be unlikely to do or say anything to Ryan or Jamal about the conversation after the meeting. (Disinterested)
13. I would tell my boss Christian that Ryan said some problematic things during the meeting.
14. I would tell my boss Christian that I thought the meeting had some awkward moments.

APPENDIX I: PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY SCALE

Instructions: Please read each statement carefully. Select the option that best reflects your perception of the experience, using a scale ranging from “1” (Not at all) and “7” (To a very great extent).

1. I feel responsible to act.
2. I believe I should engage by responding.
3. I feel an obligation to speak up.

APPENDIX J: RESPONSIBILITY TO CONFRONT

Instructions: Please rate who you think is most responsible for responding to [perpetrator name]'s comment, using a slider ranging from "0" (Least responsible to confront) and "100" (Most responsible to confront).

1. [Bystander's name]
2. [Target's name]
3. [Boss's name]
4. You

APPENDIX K: MULTIDIMENSIONAL INVENTORY OF BLACK IDENTITY MEASURE

Instructions: Please respond to the following statements using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale.

Centrality Scale

1. Overall, my race has very little to do with how I feel about myself, (reverse scored)
2. In general, being a member of my racial group is an important part of my self-image.
3. My destiny is tied to the destiny of other members of my racial group.
4. Being a member of my racial group is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am. (reverse scored)
5. I have a strong sense of belonging to other members of my racial group.
6. I have a strong attachment to other members of my racial group.
7. My race is an important reflection of who I am.
8. My race is not a major factor in my social relationships, (reverse scored)

Regard Scale: Private Regard Subscale

1. I feel good about members of my racial group.
2. I am happy that I am a member of my racial group.
3. I feel that members of my racial group have made major accomplishments and advancements.
4. I believe that because I am a member of my racial group, I have many strengths.
5. I often regret that I am a member of my racial group.
6. Members of my racial group contribute less to society than others.
7. Overall, I often feel that members of my racial group are not worthwhile.

APPENDIX L: PERCEIVED SIMILARITY

Instructions: Please rate how similar you think you are to your other colleagues in the interaction. Use the following scale ranging from "1" (Not at all similar) and "5" (Extremely similar).

1. Christian (Boss)
2. Steve (Bystander)
3. Ryan (Perpetrator)
4. Jamal (Target)

APPENDIX M: MICROAGGRESSION RATING

Microaggressions are defined as "a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority."

Instructions: Please rate the extent to which the comment made by [perpetrator's name] fits the definition of a microaggression. Use a scale ranging from 1 (Not at all a microaggression) to 5 (Strong indication of a microaggression).

APPENDIX N: DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONS

1. How old are you?
2. How would you describe your gender identity?
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Non-Binary
    d. Transgender
    e. Agender
    f. Prefer not to answer
3. How would you describe your race? Select ALL that apply.
    a. American Indian
    b. Asian
    c. Black or African American
    d. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
    e. White (including all European heritage)
    f. Other
4. How would you describe your ethnicity?
    a. Hispanic
    b. Latino
    c. Neither Hispanic nor Latino
5. How would you describe your sexual orientation?
    a. Heterosexual
    b. Homosexual
    c. Bisexual
    d. Pansexual
    e. Asexual
    f. Other
6. How long have you worked at your current job (in years)?
7. Which of the following best describes your current work arrangement?
    a. In-person
    b. Remote
    c. Hybrid
8. What is your job title? _____

APPENDIX O: DEBRIEF FORM

Thank you for participating in our study. This form is designed to provide you with information about the purpose and importance of this study.

The purpose of this study was to learn more about confronting microaggressions in workplace interactions. Microaggressions are subtle, often unintentional acts or remarks that convey derogatory or negative messages based on a person's marginalized identity. They can occur in various settings and can have a significant impact on individuals' well-being and sense of belonging. This study seeks to determine factors that impact the likelihood of individuals confronting microaggressions in different work contexts.

The experimental design was relatively straightforward and is of the type often encountered in psychological research. Given the mild nature of the experimental design, we anticipate that there are and will be no risks involved for any of our participants. However, after viewing the scenarios, if you experienced emotional discomfort that negatively impacted you, below are some websites with resources:

American Psychological Association - How to Cope with Discrimination
Project WHEN- (Workplace Harassment Ends Now)
Equal Opportunity Employment Commission
Psychologist Locator

Additionally, if you have questions or concerns regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact the investigators. Additionally, if you would like more information about the study or have further questions about it, please feel free to contact:

Jordan Holmes, Department of Psychology, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824, e-mail: holme226@msu.edu.

OR

Ann Marie Ryan, Ph.D., Department of Psychology, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824, phone: 517-355-0203, e-mail: ryanan@msu.edu

APPENDIX P: PARTICIPANT REACTIONS (THEME FREQUENCY)

Table 2
Frequency of Themes from Survey – Participant Reactions

Theme	In-Person	Virtual	Total
Public Confrontation	170	175	345
Private Confrontation	34	15	36
Label Behavior as Racist	17	24	58
Label Behavior as Stereotyping	41	14	31
Label Behavior as Problematic	42	49	90
Educate	56	37	79
Clarification	5	47	103
Private Message Jamal (target)	1	6	11
Apologize	21	8	9
Emotional Support	7	11	26
Reassurance/Encouragement	5	27	48
Humor	3	13	20
Laugh	9	15	20
Smile	10	8	11
Wow/Yikes/Gasp	6	11	30
Expressed Discomfort	36	8	17
Report to Christian	9	24	34
Report to HR	91	15	21
Refocus on Task	2	22	58
Change Subject	13	6	15
Continuation of Conversation	6	135	226
Give Benefit of the Doubt	17	5	7
Agreement with Microaggression	6	8	21
Defer to Others	26	15	21
Defer to Jamal	102	20	37
Leave the Meeting	170	7	13
Nothing - Acknowledge Wrong	34	15	41
Nothing	17	99	201

Note. Themes with fewer than 5 total mentions across all conditions were excluded from this table to focus on more commonly occurring responses.

APPENDIX Q: FEEDBACK TO BOSS (THEME FREQUENCY)

Table 3
Frequency of Themes from Survey – Feedback to Christian

Theme	In-Person	Virtual	Total
Label Behavior as Racist	30	34	64
Label Behavior as Stereotyping	7	10	17
Label Behavior as Problematic	36	47	83
Check on Jamal	4	4	8
Praise for Jamal	7	9	16
Team Conflict	20	24	44
Expressed Discomfort	19	25	44
Address Incident with Ryan	16	17	33
Request Training	6	8	14
Retell Situation	44	51	95
Great Meeting	101	96	197
Meeting Normal	36	45	81
Work Complete	52	44	96
Didn't Accomplish Task	11	9	20
Give the Benefit of the Doubt	4	6	10
Defer to Jamal	6	6	12
Defer to Others	1	7	8
Afraid of Repercussions	2	4	6
Nothing - Acknowledge Wrong	27	19	46
Nothing	8	3	11

Note. Themes with fewer than 5 total mentions across all conditions were excluded from this table to focus on more commonly occurring responses.

APPENDIX R: PARTICIPANT REACTIONS (QUALITATIVE THEMES)

Table 4
Qualitative Analysis Themes from Survey – Participant Reactions

Theme	Sub-Theme	Exemplar Quote
Direct Confrontation	Label Racist	"I understand what you are trying to say, but your exact words are hurtful and racist." (WP)
	Label Stereotyping	“I would tell Ryan to not stereotype people’s interests based upon their race.” (BV)
	Educate	“Actually Ryan, country appeals to a very broad audience. Based on stereotypes you cannot assume what genre someone enjoys. I myself enjoy some rap and blues would you assume I don't like it because I’m a professional white woman?” (WP) “I appreciate the importance of diversity, but I believe it's essential that we focus on selecting team members for specific tasks based on their experience and skills. We all bring different strengths to the table, and I want to make sure we are all recognized for our abilities, not just our background.” (BP)
Indirect Confrontation	Ask for clarification	“What is that supposed to mean?” (WV) “Well, that's interesting, Ryan, why would that be your assumption about Jamal?” (BP)
	Label Problematic	“I would tell Ryan that was a weird thing to say.” (WV) “That it was inappropriate to assume Jamal likes Hip Hop.” (BV)
	Private Confrontation	“I would respond to Ryan privately and tell him that his comment was unnecessary and not helpful.” (WP)
Deflection	Refocus on Task	"I think it’s great that we’re talking about weekend plans, but let's try to focus back on the ideas for the campaign.” (BP)
	Change the subject	“Ryan, that was a good one! Jamal, I bet the country concert was a blast. I’ve always wanted to go to one—what was the highlight of the show for you.” (BV)

Table 4 (cont'd)

	Humor/Sarcasm	"I would make a comment about me liking country music as well to diffuse tension." (WV) "Ha ha ha Ryan! You wouldn't know hip hop and rap to be honest." (WV) "We have plenty of diversity we need more whitefaces presenting market analysis Jamal and Ryan should switch." (BV)
Support	Emotional Support	"I would follow up with Jamal privately to check on him and offer support if needed." (BP) "I would reach out to Jamal to see if he was upset after that comment. If he was upset about it I would offer to speak to Christian about the situation." (WV)
	Reassurance/Encouragement	"It's cool that Jamal enjoys country music, variety is the spice of life, right? I actually think it's awesome that we all have different tastes." (BV)
	Apologize on behalf of others	"Jamal is more than a Black face, and is just as qualified to lead the presentation than anyone else at the table." (BP) "I would privately talk to Jamal, and apologize about the situation stating there is no place for it in the workplace. I would also talk to Ryan, and tell him that it is unacceptable and not to repeat it." (WV)
Report to Leadership	Report to Christian (boss)	"I will try to shift the conversation to a different topic in the meeting and then privately mention it to my boss in case it comes up." (WV)
	Document Incident	"I would detail the conversation in an email to myself and then speak directly to Christian, our manager. I would also speak privately with Jamal to ask him if he is okay and if he would like us to go to HR directly or on his own accord." (WP)
Silence	Nothing - Acknowledge Wrong	"Ryan made the awkward comment and it's on him to fix it if he desires. I'm not going to bail him out." (WV) "I would cringe, but keep to myself and hope Jamal would let it pass." (WP)

Table 4 (cont'd)

Afraid of Repercussions	"I wouldn't do anything else. Black people have to deal with micro-aggressions in the workplace all of the time. If Jamal calls it out, Jamal will be made out to be the bad guy. So Black people just deal with this on a day-to-day basis." (BP) "Unless Jamal asks me to say something directly, I am not going to cause problems for him by trying to "white savior" the situation." (WP)
Defer to Jamal	"I wouldn't say anything. If Jamal was uncomfortable with Ryan's response he can address it with Ryan if he chooses to do so." (BV)

Note. The letters in parentheses indicate the participant's condition and race: (WP) - White participants in the in-person condition, (WV) - White participants in the virtual condition, (BP) - Black participants in the in-person condition, and (BV) - Black participants in the virtual condition.

APPENDIX S: FEEDBACK TO BOSS (QUALITATIVE THEMES)

Table 5

Qualitative Analysis Themes from Survey – Feedback to Christian

Theme	Sub-Theme	Exemplar Quote
Acknowledgement of Incident	Label as Racist	"The meeting was productive, but some comments made by one of my colleagues were VERY awkward and racially charged." (WP)
	Label as Problematic	"The comment made by Ryan about Jamal was unprofessional and inappropriate." (BV)
	Retell Situation	"Ryan asked Jamal to represent the team in the presentation, saying it would be good to have a Black face to show our diversity." (WV) "We discussed what we did over the weekend and talked some about our music differences." (WV)
	Give Benefit of the Doubt	"The meeting mostly went fine, but Ryan may have inadvertently said some uncomfortable things." (WP)
Team Dynamics	Expressed Discomfort	"I didn't find some Ryan's comments to be work appropriate. It made me feel uncomfortable and excluded." (BV)
	Team Conflict	"There were also some tensions that arose… it highlighted the need for better conflict resolution mechanisms and possibly a mediator to ensure discussions remain constructive." (BV)
Calls for Action	HR Involvement	"Tell Christian that I feel compelled to speak with HR regarding Ryan's comment as it was super inappropriate and made me feel very uncomfortable to continue working with him." (WV)
	Request Training	"There was a moment when Steve made a joke about Jamal's country concert, which was funny but might have felt a bit off to Jamal. In the future, maybe we can encourage a bit more awareness about how humor lands with everyone, just to keep things inclusive." (BV) "May be time for some refresher training." (WP)

Table 5 (cont'd)

	Address Incident with Ryan	"He [Christian] needs to have serious talk with Ryan about the way he throws these snark comment at Jamal. It is not the time or place to say things like that." (BP)
	Check on Jamal	"The meeting went well, except for some awkward moments. I would also mention that Jamal seemed a little singled out, and could maybe use a check-in." (BV)
Avoidance	Defer to Jamal	"I wouldn't bring it up unless Jamal did." (WP)
	Great Meeting	"The meeting went great. We spoke on all the topics we needed to." (BP)
	Nothing - Acknowledge Wrong	"Only about the business that went down. Not the racist stuff." (BP) "I'd say that the meeting went well. It is not my place to point out personality conflicts unless they severely impact the quality of work required." (WV)
	Afraid of Repercussions	"I would tell him how the meeting went. I may or may not mention the racist statement, depending on how my relationship is with him." (BP) "I would likely avoid telling him directly, given my demographics and how the "complaint" may be received. I would let him know that the meeting generally went OK, when asked." (BV)

Note. The letters in parentheses indicate the participant's condition and race: (WP) - White participants in the in-person condition, (WV) - White participants in the virtual condition, (BP) - Black participants in the in-person condition, and (BV) - Black participants in the virtual condition.

APPENDIX T: SLACK MESSAGE

Table 6
Who Participants Decided to Private Message (Slack)

	Pathologizing Cultural Values (Scenario 1)		Tokenism (Scenario 3)	
	In-Person	Online	In-Person	Online
Ryan	13	11	26	19
Steve	8	6	8	5
Jamal	28	34	20	22
HR	21	14	32	33
Other	4	5	8	5
Wouldn’t contact anyone	72	79	52	65

APPENDIX U: CORRELATIONS (PATHOLOGIZING CULTURAL VALUES)

Table 7

Correlation, Mean, and Standard Deviations for Pathologizing Cultural Values Scenario (Scenario 1)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1. Microaggression Rating	3.38	1.37	-																				
2. Private Allyship	4.12	2.46	.50**	-																			
3. Public Allyship	3.95	2.77	.41**	.68**	-																		
4. Disinterested	4.85	1.31	-.06	-0.03	-.14*	-																	
5. Label Racist	3.80	2.49	.44**	.92**	.82**	-.06	-																
6. Label Problematic	4.75	1.80	.46**	.88**	.77**	.09	.85**	-															
7. Ally Intentions	4.07	2.37	.51**	.97**	.84**	-.07	.96**	.91**	-														
8. Personal Reasonability	4.43	1.92	.35**	.52**	.55**	-.27**	.54**	.51**	.57**	-													
9. Race Centrality	3.07	1.03	-.00	-.04	.11	-.02	.04	.08	.01	.14*	-												
10. Race Private Regard	3.11	0.53	-.04	.12*	.18**	.24*	.17**	.22**	.15*	.26**	.47**	-											
11. Racial Salience	3.09	0.71	-.02	.01	.15**	-.07	.09	.14*	.06	.21**	.95**	.72**	-										
12. Perceived Similarity - Jamal	3.55	1.22	.05	.10	.19**	-.03	.16**	.20**	.14*	.31**	.41**	.29**	.42**	-									
13. Perceived Similarity - Ryan	2.04	1.30	-.29**	-.07	-.02	.21**	-.04	.00	-.06	.06	.05	.34**	.15**	.02	-								
14. Responsibility – Steve	39.13	32.49	.16**	.27**	.32**	-.04	.30**	.28**	.31**	.42**	.07	.18**	.12*	.23**	.13*	-							
15. Responsibility – Jamal	53.32	35.32	.14*	-.00	.09	.15*	.02	.07	.03	.03	.04	.13*	.08	.02	.00	.10	-						
16. Responsibility – Christian	51.31	37.82	.27**	.37**	.28**	-.10	.35**	.27**	.37**	.39**	.01	.09	.04	.15*	.00	.33**	.11	-					
17. Responsibility - Participant	43.37	34.87	.35**	.49**	.51**	-.09	.51**	.48**	.53**	.58**	.01	.12*	.05	.23**	.03	.61**	.22**	.46**	-				
18. Age	38.95	11.28	.06	.02	-.06	-.01	-.03	-.03	-.01	-.19**	-.03	-.07	-.05	-.08	-.09	-.10	.07	-.14*	-.04	-			
19. Gender	0.50	0.50	.18**	.02	.03	-.13*	.00	-.03	.02	-.05	.09	-.14*	.02	-.05	-.23**	-.01	.01	-.02	.02	.11			
20. Race	0.50	0.50	.03	-.04	.09	.04	.05	.08	.00	.13*	.59*	.46*	.63**	.48**	-.04	.10	.12*	-.05	.06	-.09	-.02		
21. Tenure	7.30	7.06	-.09	-.05	-.10	.04	-.09	-.06	-.07	-.20**	-.01	.02	.00	-.07	-.05	-.02	.02	-.11	-.12*	.48**	.01	-.05	-

Note. $N = 295$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Race coding: 1 = Black, 0 = White. Gender coding: 1 = Women, 0 = Men. Personal responsibility to confront was measured two ways. The 3-item King et al. (2024) was rated using a 7-point Likert scale (8. Personal Responsibility in the table). The Ashburn-Nardo and Karim (2019) item used a scale of 1-100 (17. Responsibility – Participant in the table).

APPENDIX V: CORRELATIONS (TOKENISM)

Table 8

Correlation, Mean, and Standard Deviations for Tokenism Scenario (Scenario 3)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1. Microaggression Rating	3.85	1.40	-																				
2. Private Allyship	5.38	2.72	.56**	-																			
3. Public Allyship	5.36	3.04	.48**	.70**	-																		
4. Disinterested	4.08	1.50	-.25**	-.14*	-254*	-																	
5. Label Racist	5.01	2.80	.50**	.91**	.83**	-.14*	-																
6. Label Problematic	5.26	1.75	.40**	.86**	.77**	.04	.80**	-															
7. Ally Intentions	5.37	2.63	.57**	.97**	.85**	-.19**	.95**	.88**	-														
8. Personal Reasonability	5.21	1.85	.37**	.51**	.52**	-.29**	.48**	.49**	.55**	-													
9. Race Centrality	3.07	1.03	-.02	.03	.10	.04	.11	.04	.06	.14*	-												
10. Race Private Regard	3.12	0.53	-.18**	-.01	.06	.37**	.08	.16**	.02	.15*	.47**	-											
11. Racial Salience	3.09	0.71	-.07	.02	.10	.16**	.11	.09	.05	.16**	.95**	.72**	-										
12. Perceived Similarity - Jamal	3.55	1.22	.16**	.16**	.21**	.02	.22**	.20**	.19**	.31**	.41**	.29**	.42**	-									
13. Perceived Similarity - Ryan	2.04	1.30	-.31**	-.31**	-.27**	.36**	-.26**	-.17**	-.32**	-.09	.05	.34**	.15**	.02	-								
14. Responsibility – Steve	44.55	34.19	.23**	.23**	.31**	-.09	.27**	.23**	.28**	.47**	.09	.18**	.14*	.20**	.10	-							
15. Responsibility – Jamal	57.23	34.96	.05	.05	.12*	.04	.10	.09	.08	.13*	.16**	.16**	.19**	.18**	-.05	.26**	-						
16. Responsibility – Christian	62.94	36.30	.31**	.31**	.24**	-.20**	.22**	.18**	.31**	.33**	-.06	-.11	-.08	.06	-.13*	.36**	.11	-					
17. Responsibility - Participant	53.27	33.93	.36**	.36**	.45**	-.23**	.37**	.31**	.41**	.62**	.15*	.11	.16**	.31**	-.10	.73**	.24**	.43**	-				
18. Age	38.95	11.28	.02	.02	.00	-.08	.02	-.02	.02	-.08	-.03	-.07	-.05	-.08	-.09	.01	.07	.06	.04	-			
19. Gender	0.50	0.50	.04	.04	.04	-.13*	.02	-.07	.04	-.01	.09	-.14*	.02	-.05	-.23**	.00	-.04	.01	-.03	.11	-		
20. Race	0.50	0.50	.03	.03	.17**	.07	.13*	.11	.08	.10	.59**	.46**	.63**	.48**	-.04	.05	.23**	-.08	.09	-.09	-.02	-	
21. Tenure	7.30	7.06	.02	.02	-.04	.03	.01	.02	.00	-.13*	-.01	.02	.00	-.07	-.05	.08	.07	-.03	-.01	.48**	.01	-.05	-

Note. $N = 295$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Race coding: 1 = Black, 0 = White. Gender coding: 1 = Women, 0 = Men. Personal responsibility to confront was measured two ways. The 3-item King et al. (2024), was rated using a 7-point Likert scale (8. Personal Responsibility in the table). The Ashburn-Nardo and Karim (2019) item used a scale of 1-100 (17. Responsibility – Participant in the table).

APPENDIX W: REGRESSION PREDICTING ALLY INTENTIONS

Table 9

Regression Results Predicting Allyship Intentions from Perceived Responsibility, Work Context, and Their Interaction

Predictor	*B*	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*p*
Scenario 1 – Pathologizing Cultural Values					
(Constant)	3.42	0.36	-	9.56	< .001
Personal Responsibility	0.69	0.19	0.56	3.61	< .001
Work Context (0 = virtual, 1 = in-person)	0.42	0.57	0.09	0.75	0.46
Responsibility x Work Context	0.00	0.12	0.004	0.02	0.98
Model R^2 = .33, $F(3, 295) = 48.19$, $p < .001$					
Scenario 3 - Tokenism					
(Constant)	5.44	0.41	-	13.44	< .001
Personal Responsibility	0.81	0.22	0.57	3.74	< .001
Work Context (0 = virtual, 1 = in-person)	0.08	0.77	0.12	0.10	0.92
Responsibility x Work Context	-0.02	0.14	-0.04	-0.17	0.86
Model R^2 = .30, $F(3, 295) = 42.07$, $p < .001$					

Note. Perceived responsibility variables were mean-centered. DV = Allyship Intentions. Perceived personal responsibility was assessed using the King et al. (2024) measure.

APPENDIX X: REGRESSION PREDICTING PERCEIVED RESPONSIBILITY

Table 10
Regression Analysis Predicting Perceived Responsibility to Confront from Race, Gender, and Their Interaction

Predictor	*B*	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*p*
Scenario 1 – Pathologizing Cultural Values					
(Constant)	3.81	0.22	-	17.32	< .001
Race (0 = White, 1 = Black)	1.34	0.31	0.35	4.35	< .001
Gender (0 = Male, 1 = Female)	0.67	0.31	0.17	2.16	0.03
Race × Gender Interaction	-1.65	0.44	-0.37	-3.79	< .001
Scenario 3 - Tokenism					
(Constant)	4.60	0.21	-	21.64	< .001
Race (0 = White, 1 = Black)	1.21	0.30	0.33	4.07	< .001
Gender (0 = Male, 1 = Female)	0.79	0.30	0.22	2.67	
Race × Gender Interaction	-1.66	0.42	-0.39	-3.96	< .001

Note. Race was coded as 0 = White, 1 = Black. Gender was coded as 0 = Male, 1 = Female. The dependent variable is perceived responsibility to confront the microaggression.

APPENDIX Y: RACE AND GENDER INTERACTION (PATHOLOGIZING CULTURAL VALUES)

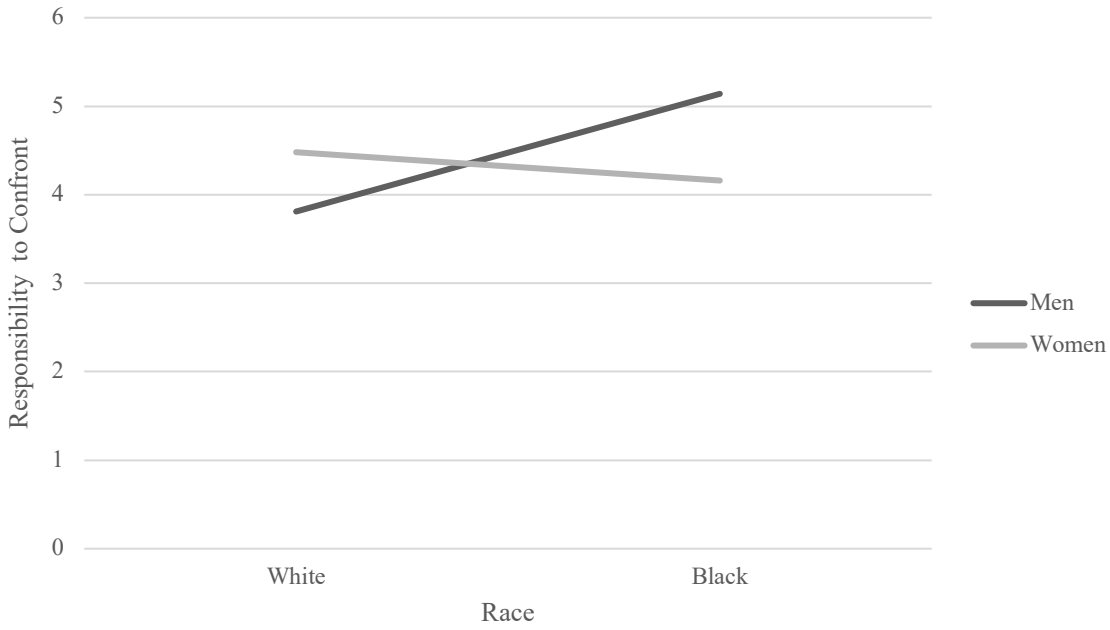

Figure 3. Interaction between race and gender on perceived responsibility to confront the microaggression in the Pathologizing Cultural Values Scenario. Black men reported the highest responsibility, while White men reported the lowest. Race differences in perceived responsibility were significant among men, but not among women.

APPENDIX Z: RACE AND GENDER INTERACTION (TOKENISM)

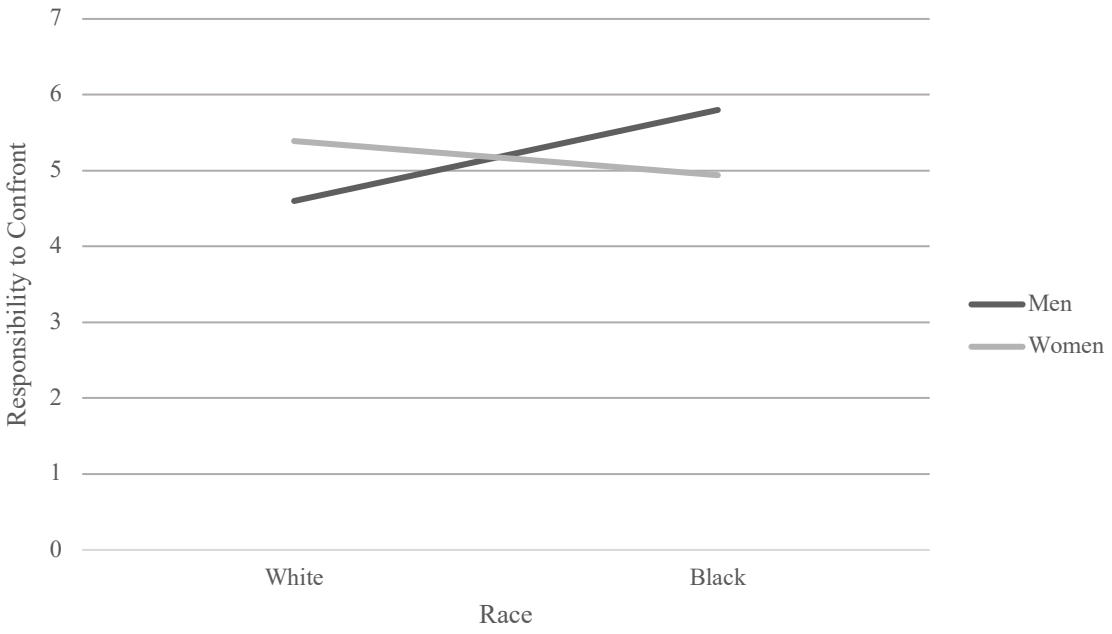

Figure 4. Interaction between race and gender on perceived responsibility to confront the microaggression in the Tokenism scenario. Again, Black men reported significantly greater responsibility than White men, whereas no significant race differences emerged among women. White women reported greater responsibility than

APPENDIX AA: MEDIATION OF RACE VIA RESPONSIBILITY

Table 11
Mediation of Race on Allyship Intentions Through Perceived Responsibility (Scenario 1)

Effect	Coeff.	SE	*p*	95% CI
Path a (Race → Responsibility)	.49	.22	.03	[.054, .922]
Path b (Responsibility → Allyship)	.71	.06	< .001	[.593, .827]
Direct effect (Race → Allyship)	–.35	.23	.13	[–.795, .101]
Indirect effect (via Responsibility)	.35	.16	—	[.028, .673]

Note. Race was coded 0 = White, 1 = Black. Confidence intervals for the indirect effect are based on 5,000 bootstrap samples.

APPENDIX AB: MEDIATION OF RACE VIA SIMILARITY

Table 12
Mediation of Race on Responsibility Through Perceived Similarity to Target (Scenario 1)

Effect	Coeff.	SE	*p*	95% CI
Path a (Race → Similarity)	1.18	.12	< .001	[0.93, 1.42
Path b (Similarity → Responsibility)	0.51	.10	< .001	[0.32, 0.71]
Direct effect (Race → Responsibility)	–0.11	.24	.66	[–0.59, 0.37]
Indirect effect (via Similarity)	0.60	.15	—	[0.32, 0.91]

Note. Race was coded 0 = White, 1 = Black. Confidence intervals for the indirect effect are based on 5,000 bootstrap samples.