Macrointervention processes and strategies for leaders, changemakers, advocates, allies, and targets: A new framework to address macroaggressions in systems

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Abstract

The presence of macroaggressions, or obvious, overt, system-wide racial offensives and abusive acts evidenced in organizational systems and structures (e.g., confederate flags; signs in public places that read: "we only speak English"), have continued to penetrate American society at an unparalleled rate. The onslaught of violence toward racial, ethnic, and cultural minority citizens—in particular Black Americans and the disproportionate death rates of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color linked with the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) underscores an urgent need for broad-based systemic action. While microaggressions are well-documented in the psychological literature, less attention has been directed toward macroaggressions and how to address the ever-present forms of racism that propagate inequity within all aspects of organizations and larger systems (e.g., health care, legal, education). We propose a six-step conceptual framework to address macroaggressions evinced in these systems. Additionally, we introduce macrointervention strategies and illustrative examples that can be deployed and tested in diverse ecologies by institutional leaders, changemakers, advocates, allies, and targets of bias. We recommend well-designed empirical investigations to evaluate the proposed conceptual framework and to what extent it can affect changes at the macro-level.

Keywords

Macroaggressions
Macrointerventions
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Systems
Organizations and institutions
Changemakers
Black americans

The critical need for local, regional, and national leaders to address issues of implicit and explicit race-based biases that are ever-present in institutional and societal ecologies cannot be overstated. The need for this effort has been underscored in the most recent health disparities outcomes based on race evinced during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic (COVID-19; Krishnan, Ogunwole, & Cooper, 2020) and the civil unrest observed on the national stage in response to the racial profiling and victimization of unarmed racial, ethnic, and cultural minority citizens—in particular Black Americans. The term to describe the detrimental power of cultural, institutional, and structural racism, which allows these pernicious events to unjustly thrive and be accepted as commonplace, has been coined *macroaggressions* (Pérez Huber & Salazano, 2014; Pierce, 1995; Sue et al., 2019).

In the last few decades, scholars have mainly focused on elucidating *microaggressions*, the everyday slights, insults, putdowns, invalidations, and offensive behaviors that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and other minoritized populations experience in daily interactions with White Americans and other dominant groups (Sue et al., 2007), which largely occur at the individual level (see Wong, Derthick, David, Saw, & Okazaki, 2014 for a comprehensive review). In contrast to microaggressions, macroaggressions occur at the institutional and societal levels and are not as well-documented in psychological literature. Less attention has been allocated toward identifying the institutional and societal forms of racism that propagate inequity within programs, policies, practices, procedures, and structures of organizations and larger systems (e.g., governmental agencies, legal and judicial systems, health care organizations, educational institutions, and business and industry; Pérez Huber & Salazano, 2014; Sue et al., 2019) and providing guidance and specific strategies on how to dismantle them. In addition to illuminating the widespread prevalence of macroaggressions, intervention points, and methods, there is a dearth of literature examining the current, short-, and longer-term effects of macroaggressions on systems and the individuals embedded in and served by those systems (e.g., hospitals, healthcare workers and staff, patients and families). Although the empirical, theoretical, and practice literature offers information on microintervention strategies to combat racial microaggressions (see Sue et al., 2019), the literature has little to no information on macrointervention strategies to combat macroaggressions.

This paper describes a newly-developed six-step conceptual framework to address macroaggressions evinced in diverse systems. Additionally, we introduce *macrointervention strategies* and illustrative examples that can be deployed and tested in diverse ecologies by (a) targets of macroaggressions, (b) institutional leaders and changemakers who possess the power and influence to overhaul policies and procedures to enforce equity, and (c) advocates and allies daring and bold enough to use their voices to illuminate the threat to civil rights that continues to persist in American communities and institutions. While this paper may focus on racial macroaggressions, we believe this framework is applicable to any form of macroaggressions that occur on the basis of bias, exclusion, or subjugation of groups of people based on other cultural identities such as social class, gender/gender expression, and religion. We also recognize that microaggressions intersect with macroaggressions and thus the proposed framework may be effective for targets of microaggressions as well. For example, the proposed framework could have utility to *individuals* who are the targets of bias evidenced in programs, policies, practices, procedures, and structures of organizations and larger systems (e.g., governmental agencies, health care organizations, educational institutions, and business and industry; Pérez Huber & Salazano, 2014; Sue et al., 2019).

1. Macroaggressions

Macroaggressions can be defined as obvious, overt, organizational- and institutional-wide racial offensives and abusive acts evidenced in structures (e.g., policies, procedures, and practices, and images; Pierce, 1970, 1995). Macroaggressions are considered to be far-reaching, broad based, and pervasive in scope. Although many scholars contend that macroaggressions are "large" and microaggressions are "small," this contention is problematic and inaccurate (see Druery, Young, & Elbert, 2018). In fact, there is overlap between microaggressions and macroaggressions. Macroaggressions create the toxic organizational climates and conditions that reinforce the occurrence of microaggressions. Toward this end, similar to microaggressions, macroaggressions can also include slights, insults, invalidations, and offensives evidenced in systems and structures (Compton-Lily, 2019), although rather than being subtle, scholars contend that macroaggressions are explicit, evidenced in plain sight, purposeful, and expansive (Donovan, Galban, Grace, Bennett, & Felicie, 2013). Importantly, aside from the detrimental and discriminatory institutional policies and practices, macroaggressions can take on varied harmful forms such as visual macroaggressions that serve as reminders of oppression and systemic devaluation (e.g., confederate flags; signs in public places that read: "we only speak English"). Other examples include political macroaggressions that directly and indirectly harm the well-being of communities of color (e.g., the politicizing of masks during the COVID-19 pandemic, which left many racial, ethnic, and cultural minority citizens vulnerable to infection; the prominent display of security on the U.S. Capitol during the Black Lives Matter demonstrations in 2020 that was not evident during the Capitol insurrection on January 6, 2021).

Macroaggressions emerge when systems, organizations, and institutions perpetuate and maintain policies, procedures, and practices that oppress employees and other individuals in their systems of operation (e.g., patients in a hospital, students in a school, women faculty on a university campus). These policies, procedures, and practices, are typically established by those for whom they benefit (e.g., usually a dominant group such as White American male leaders) and are often harmful to racial, ethnic, and linguistic minority and vulnerable populations who are often absent from positions of power, leadership, or decision-making roles in these systems. Although microaggressions can be considered and measured as a separate construct from macroaggressions, microaggressions are a part of intersecting and overlapping systems (see Compton-Lily, 2019; Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2015) similar to the four nested systems proposed by Bronfenbrenner in ecological systems theory (micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems; (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These overlapping systems are often differentiated by the distance from the individual and the extent to which they have direct or indirect influence on individual-level outcomes (Hooper & Crusto, 2013).

Additionally, micro- and macroaggressions both have aftereffects that accumulate over time. These effects can be evidenced in the organizational climate, retention of employees, employee morale, and other outcomes characterized as harmful, insidious, violent, and even deadly (see Sue et al., 2019). In both cases micro- and macroaggressions are maintained given that "Whiteness" is seen as superior to diversity (in all its forms). In the context in which macroaggressions are evidenced, diversity is undervalued, seen as a deficiency and often problematized and pathologized. In other words, the organization's policies and practices enables or provides the rationale for macroaggressions to exist and be maintained against individuals embedded in the system who are not part of the majority.

Toward this end, Pérez Huber and Solorzano (2015) defined macroaggressions as "the set of beliefs and/or ideologies that justify actual or potential social arrangements that legitimate the interests and/or positions of a dominant group over non-dominant groups, that in turn lead to related structures and acts of subordination" (p. 7). In this paper, we focus on the macroaggressive "social arrangements" that result in the oppression, marginalization, and dehumanization of individuals in non-dominant groups (with full acknowledgement that macroaggressions stem from flawed beliefs/ideologies that must be challenged). Pérez Huber and Solorzano (2015) further contended that microaggressions are the symptom and macroaggressions are the disease. For example, a practice that could be both a microaggression and a macroaggression would be the presence of images primarily of older White American men that line the walls and halls of many institutions (Williams, 2019). This practice, or the use of certain images, is both a microaggression because it occurs and impacts at the interpersonal level *and* a macroaggression because the practice is embedded within institutions and organizations and is reinforced by the pervasive White supremacist culture in terms of who is valued and warrants recognition. Thus, this practice impacts individuals and groups of people who are not represented by these images.

Importantly, some scholars argue that the term "microaggressions" is a misnomer in that "micro" means smalls, but microaggressions are *not* small (see Druery et al., 2018). Druery et al. (2018) contend that the commonly-used nomenclature of *micro*aggressions can be misleading, misapplied, and minimizing to the scope and type of race-related events that have been happening against racial, ethnic, and linguistic minority and other vulnerable populations. Levchak (2018) agrees that the distinction between microaggressions and macroaggressions may not be so clear and it could be more useful to consider these constructs on a continuum. We agree with Sue et al. (2019) assertion that microaggressions have a limited impact on an individual level and macroaggressions affect whole groups of people because of their systemic nature. In summary, the theoretical and empirical literature on macroaggressions is in its infancy and thus more research is needed to determine how micro- and macroaggressions might be differentiated and to what extent they have unique predictability (Donovan, Galban, Grace, Bennett, & Felicié, 2013) and call for similar and different interventions (e.g., microinterventions and macrointerventions).

2. The harmful impact of macroaggressions

Institutional and societal forms of racism propagate inequity within programs, policies, practices, procedures, and structures of organizations and larger systems, such as governmental institutions, business and industry, and legal, judicial, health care, education systems. With respect to government, for example, the 116th (2019–2020) Congress is the most racially and ethnically diverse than ever in history (24% racial and ethnic minority representation; Manning, 2020), however, it lags the percentage of racial and ethnic minority representation in this country (42%; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Psychological and structural barriers that racial and ethnic minorities and other groups face in running for elected office (e.g., United States' failure to adopt better systems and strategies that create more opportunity for underrepresented groups to run and win and the failure of political parties to recruit underrepresented groups to run), maintain the majority White American and male representation. Research indicates that racial and ethnic minority representation in government has positive outcomes for minorities, such as increased housing prices in majority non-White neighborhoods. Thus, increasing minority representation in elected office can be another valuable tool for addressing racial disparities (Beach, Jones, Twinam, & Walsh, 2018).

Racial and ethnic disparities, or disproportionate minority contact, are well-documented in the juvenile justice and adult criminal justice systems (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2009). These racial and ethnic disparities occur at all contact points within the juvenile justice system from minority youth being arrested more often compared to White American youth (Stevens & Morash, 2015) to disposition where decision makers are significantly more likely to commit minority youth to facilities using physical regimen and reserving smaller, therapeutic facilities for their White American counterparts (Fader, Kurlychek, & Morgan, 2014). Similar disparities have been found in the adult criminal justice system (Kamalu, Coulson-Clark, & Kamalu, 2010; Schleiden, Soloski, Milstead, & Rhynehart, 2020). While disproportionate minority contact with the justice system is a multifactorial problem, the role of obvious, overt, system-wide racial offensives and abusive acts cannot be ignored in efforts to reduce these disparities.

Racial and ethnic disparities in health and health care have been documented for decades and are due primarily to health systems and clinical encounter factors (see Smedley, Stith, Nelson, & Institute of Medicine, 2003) and structural racism that fosters racial discrimination (Bailey et al., 2017). More recently, substantive disparities have been observed in the overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities and COVID-19 deaths (Cooper & Crews, 2020). In addition to the undue burden on communities of color the costs of health inequities and premature death in the United States have been estimated to be over one-trillion dollars (Joint Center for Political & Economic Studies, 2010).

3. The long-standing pervasiveness of racism, implicit bias, discrimination, and disparities

In the wake of countless deaths of unarmed Black Americans at the hands of law enforcement, one question reverberates: *why does this keep happening?* Much attention has focused on the role of implicit bias, which has been a topic of quandary since Greenwald and Banaji (1995) first coined the term to explain the unconscious influence of past experiences on social cognition, decision-making, judgement, and behaviors, particularly among individuals who explicitly denounce prejudice but unintendingly engage in discriminatory behavior. Efforts to reduce implicit racial bias have included mandatory anti-racism trainings for companies and institutions, body-worn cameras for police officers, and the debated practice of cancel culture in which support is publicly withdrawn from individuals or entities who display immoral social behavior. While these strategies may be effective in some contexts, there is a dearth of robust empirical evidence demonstrating their effectiveness for changing biased attitudes and behaviors (e.g., FitzGerald, Martin, Berner, & Hurst, 2019; Scaife, Stafford, Bunge, & Holroyd, 2020; Yokum, Ravishankar, & Coppock, 2017). Some scholars have argued that attributing racial discrimination to implicit bias rather than explicit bias (i.e., macroaggressions) lowers individuals' perceptions of accountability and punishment for perpetrators' discriminatory behaviors (Kraus, Onyeador, Daumeyer, Rucker, & Richeson, 2019a, 2019b. Toward this end, Greenwald referred to most implicit bias training as "window dressing that looks good both internally to an organization and externally, as if you're concerned and trying to do something … but it can be deployed without actually achieving anything, which makes it in fact counterproductive" (Mason, 2020, para. 19).

Because implicit bias is difficult to detect and undo, scholars have focused on illuminating the racial disparities experienced by BIPOC due to structural and institutional racism. Structural racism describes a system in which "history, ideology, public policies, institutional

practices, and culture interact to maintain a racial hierarchy that allows the privileges associated with whiteness and the disadvantages associated with color to endure and adapt over time" (Lawrence, Sutton, Kubisch, Susi, & Fulbright-Anderson, 2004, p. 44). Institutional racism is one type of structural racism that describes "the biased racial outcomes associated with public policies and institutional practices" (Lawrence et al., 2004, p. 47). Both types are ever-present in *health care, health status, and life expectancy* (e.g., Gee & Ford, 2011; Owens-Young & Bell, 2020; Williams, Lawrence, & Davis, 2019), *housing/place of residence* (e.g., Riley, 2018), *education* (e.g., Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Williams, 2019), *criminal justice systems* (e.g., Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008; Rachlinski, Johnson, Wistrich, & Guthrie, 2009), *wealth distribution* (e.g., Kraus et al., 2019a, 2019b), *employment rates and outcomes* (Yearby, 2018), and *print and non-print media* (Dukes & Gaither, 2017). Despite the substantive accumulated evidence delineating racial disparities across these numerous dimensions (see Cooper et al., 2015; Smedley, Stith, Nelson, & Institute of Medicine, 2003) it is perplexing that the question persists of whether racial macroaggressions exist in our society and institutions.

For individuals who deny such disparities exist on the basis of race, bystander footage of George Floyd being murdered by Officer Derek Chauvin is irrefutable. The death of George Floyd and countless other BIPOC is tragic and, thus, the pernicious effects of interpersonal racism cannot be denied. Additionally, many scholars (e.g., Sue et al., 2019) contend it is the enduring systems and institutions, which have enabled interpersonal racism to be transmitted from generation to generation and that have influenced the psyches of the perpetrators that must be interrogated and dismantled. In other words, it is the combined effects of the *individual* x *interpersonal* x *systems and structures* that have created the perfect storm or foundation for racism, discrimination, and disparities to emerge, be maintained, and escalate in every system and structure (e.g., policies, procedures, and practices). Although the death of George Floyd happened in minutes, it is the years and years of socialization as human beings (children, adolescents, and adults) living in families and systems (neighborhoods, schools, and communities) that culminated in that traumatic moment collectively witnessed by millions of Americans and people world over that cannot be unseen. To add insult to injury, videos of Black Americans being murdered are immortalized across social media platforms— not as reminders of the consequences of hatred and bigotry, but repositories of negative public comments that support the use of excessive force and fuel racial divisions. These horrific events point toward a flawed law enforcement system embedded within structures and institutions that affect all facets of life from where BIPOC can walk down the street or shop at a store to where BIPOC can be safe inside their homes, raise a family, go on vacation, or apply for jobs.

Thus, an alternative question to *"why does this keep happening?"* might instead be, *"why doesn't anyone do anything to change it?"* The challenge lies in deconstructing the structural and institutional platforms on which racial macroaggressions have long occurred. They accumulate to create a racialized structure, or perception of the world, that allows all Americans to accept the nearly 50 percent incarceration rate of Black Americans as normal and expected than as a urgent social crisis (Lawrence et al., 2004). This complacency toward social injustice is what undergirds and fuels structural racism, which allows for prejudicial policies and procedures to undisputedly and unknowingly—and knowingly—pervade institutions, governments, municipalities, industries, and communities. Taken together, these historical practices and policies account for why finding effective intervention points that can ameliorate microaggressions and macroaggressions underpinned by structural racism is complex, challenging, and must be multi-pronged and systems-focused.

3.1. The call for leaders, changemakers, advocates, and allies

With racial and ethnic minorities accounting for the numerical majority of U.S. children and youth by the middle of 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020), it is incumbent on us to create a future for young people that is abundant in opportunity and possibilities and not wrought in division and conflict. Now, and perhaps more than ever before, people are recognizing the persistent disadvantages, violence, and daily trauma experienced by BIPOC and moving beyond condemning racism to demanding change in the nation that aligns with the constitutional values of liberty, equality, and democracy for all people.

This momentum should not be lost in the interest of complacency and conformity to the status quo. Importantly, one person alone cannot cleanse a system of the inequitable practices it was designed to sustain for generations. Although there have been strides by the Black Lives Matter movement to showcase the brave unwillingness of targets of micro- and macroaggressions, advocates, and allies to tolerate racism in the world, for true reform to occur, it is individuals who serve as the leaders of the social, political, and racial hierarchies that must be engaged given that they hold the power to influence systems, large groups of people, and the generations that follow. For changes to occur within any system, leaders must be compelled to examine the presence of macroaggressions within their institutions and spearhead diversity, equity, and inclusivity initiatives; changemakers must be willing to enact reform that is crucial for the survival of democracy and that recognizes the worth of each individual regardless of their race; advocates must continue to pursue new and innovative paths towards liberation; allies must be willing to step outside their comfort zones to demonstrate their solidarity. In sum, it is an ethical imperative for leaders to do away with macroaggressions and structural and institutional racism.

3.2. Barriers to answering the call

Leaders and Changemakers. Importantly, there are many reasons individuals choose not to challenge current norms and discriminatory institutional practices, including fear, both real and perceived, of going up against privileged and resourced systems that can cleverly disguise their macroaggressions from being noticed or reported, or simply do not see themselves as part of the "racism pandemic," elucidated recently, but has long existed. For institutional leaders, these fears can be categorized as (a) fear of saying or doing the wrong thing, (b) fear of what culture and climate assessments may reveal about presence of racial bias in the workplace, (c) fear of realizing one's benefit from or participation in oppressive systems, and (d) fear of addressing the behavior of longtime colleagues or other people in positions of power.

Targets of Macroaggressions. For targets of macroaggressions, these fears can be categorized as: (a) fear of challenging the status quo, (b) fear of not being believed or taken seriously, (c) fear of retaliation or retribution in the form of job dismissal, salary freeze, or finding a new job, (d) fear of alienation, resentment, or abandonment from work colleagues, and (e) fear that things will return "back to normal" despite the amount of effort and time spent advocating for change. We believe there is a space to hold this fear while still acting boldly, speaking truth to power, being compassionate, reducing defensiveness, listening and being inspired by new voices, and facing the challenge with purpose.

At the same time, no primer exists to our knowledge that provides leaders, changemakers, and targets of macroaggressions with the strategies and thought processes in which they must

meaningfully engage prior to interfacing with powerful institutions and/or powerful colleagues. As Sue et al. (2019) implored in their work on *micro*intervention strategies for addressing *micro*aggressions, "Future research and work aimed at disarming macroaggressions at the institutional and societal levels are equally if not more important to develop. What can targets, allies, and bystanders do to impact macroaggressions that flow from the programs, procedures, practices, and structures of institutions and from societal social policies?" (p. 140). Macrointerventions have relevance for all individuals in the systems, organizations, and institutions: leaders, changemakers, advocates, allies, and the targets of macroaggressions.

3.3. Macrointerventions

We define macrointerventions as the methodical and systematic strategies and/or processes in which individuals can engage to bring about systemic-level changes related to macroaggressions. Importantly, these macrointerventions directed toward macroaggressions, *can* also reduce microaggressions. Thus, we consider macrointerventions as directly and indirectly relevant for the combined effects of individual, interpersonal, and structural racism, implicit bias, discrimination, and disparities.

Macrointerventions strategies have relevance for issues related to the social exclusion, chronic disadvantage, misrepresented history, fallacious stereotypes, and inequitable and unjust policies, procedures, and practices that adversely impact the lives, wellbeing, and social mobility of BIPOC and other minoritized populations. Macrointerventions are specifically focused on (a) eliminating structural inequity, (b) uncovering new pathways to structural equity and competence, (c) elucidating macroaggressive practices of institutions, (d) providing a transportable framework that can be used in diverse organizations and systems (e.g., governmental agencies, legal and judicial systems, health care organizations, educational institutions, and business and industry), (e) interfacing with authoritative systems in the context of power differentials, and (f) measuring the risks and benefits of exposing macroaggressions.

Given the different paces at which institutions navigate their commitment toward acknowledging, understanding, and promoting structural equity and structural and organizational competence, this framework can be used as both a step-by-step process or compendium of strategies that can be deployed individually. Sue et al. (2019) underscored the need for intervention strategies for broader level racist and biased organizational and institutional programs and practices. Given this need, we offer a newly created framework (see Fig. 1) composed of six phases and corresponding macrointervention strategies. First, we describe the macrointervention phase and then we describe the corresponding macrointervention strategies.
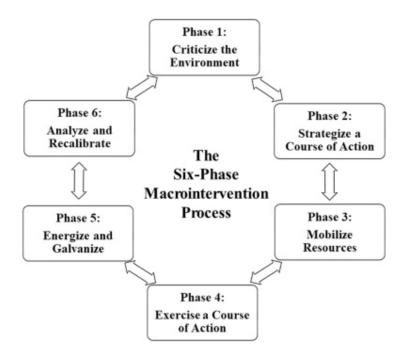
Fig. 1. The Six-Phase Macrointervention Process

Note: We recommend the following considerations: (a) Between each phase, weigh the risks, benefits, and consequences of implementing each macrointervention strategy; (b) Consult with a trusted to colleague on the planned course of action; (c) Recognize each macrointervention phase is bidirectional and if the macrointervention strategies are not working it may be useful to return to a previous phase.

3.4. Macrointervention Phase 1: Criticize the Environment

The goal of the first phase, *Macrointervention Phase 1: Criticize the Environment* is to acknowledge and criticize the presence of macroaggressions through a critique of the organization, institution, and/or environment (work place, house of worship, local government). This phase involves understanding what macroaggressions are, the nature of their macroaggression (intentional vs. unintentional; overt vs. covert), and the impact within the institution.

Leaders and allies may take some time to comprehend the situation or need repeated macroaggressions to occur to understand the breadth and scope of the problem. Either way, the first macrointervention phase involves an acknowledgement that the macroaggression is happening and that it is impinging upon the civil rights of people and processes within the system. Additionally, for individuals leading an institution, it may seem counterproductive to "open up a can of worms" or create a headline that could potentially harm the institution's reputation, however, the reward will be creating a just and fair work environment that benefits all. For individuals working for an institution, there may be a lot on the line to vocalize their employer is knowingly or unknowingly engaging in biased practices. Also, individuals with lived experience of bias may be more skilled at recognizing macroaggressions. Therefore, knowing with whom to share this information and when to share it is of critical importance. Most people have been taught that taking on powerful institutions is not worth it and that oppression is a hurdle that can be overcome with hard

work. This mindset is one of the main reasons we have seen progress thwarted in the last several decades. Silence gives permission to leaders to carry on with business as usual, allies to sit back, and targets and advocates to feel helpless. Therefore, acknowledging the macroaggression is critical. As indicated in Fig. 1, determining the consequences of criticizing the systems structure could engender certain outcomes. Thus, it could be that a colleague or ally acts on the behalf of a unit or individual who is the target of the macroaggressions in the system or organization.

3.4.1. Phase 1 Macrointervention Strategies: Criticize the Environment

- Determine the occurrence of the macroaggression(s). It is often useful to keep track of experiences and observations from others in the environment so that the claim of institutional bias or wrongdoing is grounded in documentation (e.g., *"Only one senior-level manager out of over a dozen is a person of color. Most people of color don't seem to make it beyond entry-level."*).
- In the case of covert macroaggressions, it is okay to trust your instincts that something unsettling may be happening. Use this feeling to monitor the environment and be more vigilant of what you see unfolding around you (e.g., *"I've seen four BIPOC submit applications this week for the new manager position, yet we were told during staff meeting that the position remains vacant due to lack of applications. Something doesn't seem right to me. I'm going to keep a closer eye on this."*).
- Reflect on why lack of diversity, equity, or inclusion is particularly detrimental within this system. How does this system impact people's lives? How would it operate differently with diverse representation? Answering these questions early on provides the impetus for moving the claim forward and a compelling argument for engaging support in future phases (e.g., *"Our company loses 10 million dollars in revenue every year from not engaging a broader demographic of consumers. We need greater representation on our team to ensure our products and services are reaching everyone."*).
- Have transparent conversations with trusted colleagues (e.g., community members, neighbors, and peers) to hear their perspectives and determine the scope of the macroaggression's occurrence (e.g., *"I've noticed very few people of color work here, has that been your observation as well?"*).
- Document the institutional response when macroaggressive events unfold within the institution, locally, or nationally. What is the length of time it takes to respond? Does the institutional response include actionable steps to promote equity or is it limited to a broad statement about condoning bigotry? (e.g., Note organizational press releases that report, *"We are committed to change,"* but do not define the change or the plan for achieving it through a top-down approach).
- Acknowledge progress in the context of institutions making progress on equity initiatives, make note of whose voices are invited but not heard (e.g., leadership) and whose voices are over-amplified for the sake of representation (e.g., the few minority staff members who are usually asked to serve on every diversity committee at the expense of their promotion and tenure).

3.5. Macrointervention Phase 2: Strategize a Course of Action

The goal of the second phase, *Macrointervention Phase 2: Strategize a Course of Action* is to gather evidence of the macroaggression. Video footage typically cannot be refuted, but in its absence, keeping documents and notes that include dates, times, locations and persons and

processes involved in the macroaggressions will be useful to inform conversations with colleagues. This process may take some time, but the more data that are gathered, the more thorough a case of bias can be presented. The next step within this phase is determining what the desired outcome should be. For example, is it for the macroaggressions to stop? For the targets of the macroaggressions to receive an apology? For the institution's macroaggressive practices to be publicized? For the organization to conduct an independent investigation on how long the macroaggressive practices have been sustained, their impact on targets of macroaggressions, and recommendations for how to best move forward? It could be all of the above.

Strategizing a course of action and prioritizing the desired outcome as well as the expected institutional response will be very important. Irrespective of the desired outcome, choosing the right person in power to share this information with is critical. Unless there is a designated diversity chair or person within the institution, it is important to identify a leader who is impartial and will take all claims seriously. If no such leader is available, consulting with trustworthy colleagues to identify the appropriate person will ensure the information will eventually reach the organization's leadership.

Special consideration should be made for: (a) who will share the message and evidence without being coerced into silence (e.g., one person or a group of allies), (b) how the information will be shared (e.g., written or verbal communication), (c) when it will be shared (e.g., during an individual meeting, staff meeting, board meeting, or town hall), and (d) if the information will be divulged to the public (e.g., via social media or non-print media). Lastly, within the *Macrointervention Phase 2: Strategize a Course of Action*, there should be some metric for determining if the implemented strategy was successful. Defining a metric to hold the institution accountable ensures the formal assessment of short- and long-term outcomes. For example, simply hiring more racial-ethnic minority police officers will not solve the underlying issue of structural racism within law enforcement. However, monitoring rates of violent police encounters, collecting data on the quality of relationships between community members and police, or tracking how municipalities allocate funding for their police departments are all metrics for system-wide, sustainable change.

3.5.1. Phase 2 Macrointervention Strategies: Strategize a Course of Action

- Gather evidence of the macroaggression(s). Data can be obtained through various outlets (e.g., human resources, public records, government agencies, professional organizations). If data are unavailable to support the scope of the macroaggression's occurrence, use national datasets to make comparisons for the situation within a local institution (e.g., data on professors within a single university can be compared with national rates of racial-ethnic minority university to determine how they compare to the national average and benchmark institutions).
- Anticipate hurdles to accessing data. Utilize positive relationships and invested peers to convince others of the importance of conducting the data analysis. Sometimes getting a person with power to request the data will make the process easier.
- Discomfort may exist related to identified data and analyzing data based on a single demographic variable such as race. Consider suggesting that the data be analyzed across multiple demographics, which can allay anxieties (e.g., *"Why don't we add other variables of interest to this analysis to make sure everyone is represented?"*).

- Make a checklist of pros/cons of broaching the macroaggression. What unintended consequences may ensue? (e.g., *"If I am fired tomorrow or have my tires slashed for bringing this up, is it worth it?"*).
- Identify the leaders, allies, champions within the institution who understand the gravity of the macroaggression. Conduct a mental survey of individuals who can be trusted and individuals who have some level of influence to move the claim forward (e.g., *"Who have I built personal relationships within the institutional network that will authentically care about the claim and corroborate it before higher ups?"*).
- Make a formal report of the macroaggression so it can be documented (e.g., make an anonymous or face-to-face complaint with the human resources office, diversity office). For some individuals, this macrointervention strategy could be a last resort.

3.6. Macrointervention Phase 3: Mobilize Resources

The goal of the third phase, *Macrointervention Phase 3: Mobilize Resources* is to mobilize all the necessary resources for putting the plan into motion. We suggest mobilizing resources such as (a) a group of trusted colleagues within and outside the institution to use as a sounding board, (b) a critiqued and rehearsed dialogue for how the macroaggression will be broached at all levels from entry-level colleagues to senior leadership, (c) an organized list of strategies from Phase 2 denoting what each course of action will be based on the institutional response, (d) a list of ancillary platforms (such as local media, social media, professional listservs, national advocacy groups) to move forward on the chance the institutional response is insufficient, (e) a contingency plan in the event of negative or unexpected outcomes (backlash), and (f) a collection of activities, recorded talks, or literature to share with advocates and allies to galvanize their support.

We strongly encourage consulting with several colleagues who have expertise or experience in raising macroaggression claims with leaders and groups in organizations. Determining who to engage *Macrointervention Phase 3: Mobilize Resources* will be key to deploying a plan successfully. We strongly recommend that there are supports in place to move through the six phases. Organize a group, committee, or coalition of peers and allies who can verify macroaggressive experiences within the institution, if possible. Seeking the aid of local or national civil rights organizations and even investigative news reporters can also help if no immediate support system exists.

3.6.1. Phase 3 Macrointervention Strategies: Mobilize Resources

- Clarify the documented mission, vision, and values of the institution and how they are being practiced and implemented (e.g., *"Diversity of thought and experience is listed as one of our organizational values. On this same note, might it be okay for us to discuss a topic that is important to me on this subject?"*).
- Review the organizational records, print and non-print media and local news outlets for previous examples of how similar and related macroaggressions were presented and what was the outcome.
- Serve on committees and attend multiple meetings across the institution to determine the best audience to present claims to (e.g. *"Our Monday meeting is full of people who just 'get it' and always talk about change. Let's start there first and see if they have also noticed the lack of BIPOC represented in our company"*).

- Build a coalition of local and nationwide experts through social media or professional listservs who can provide feedback on the strategy, suggest additional resources, or provide alternative strategies for achieving the same desired outcome.
- Build an adequate infrastructure of supports and resources for the long-term. Anticipate that people who started off in the battle may choose to leave. Ensure layers of support are present: other targets of macroaggressions who can share their personal experiences with bias, leadership who can take responsibility for workplace flaws that have contributed to macroaggressions, and allies who can attest to the deleterious effects they have seen their colleagues endure.

3.7. Macrointervention Phase 4: Exercise a Course of Action

The goal of the fourth phase, *Macrointervention Phase 4: Exercise a Course of Action* is to move forward with a course of action. Consider creating a list that ranks the best-case scenario, the second-best case scenario, and so forth. For example, if the institution agrees macroaggressions have been occurring, to what extent is there consensus on the outcomes (e.g., holding themselves accountable, laying out steps for remediating the macroaggressive behavior, and supporting targets of macroaggressions who have already been negatively affected). If the institution denies the occurrence of the macroaggressions, the team or coalition established during the Phase 3 mobilization may choose to illuminate the macroaggressive practices of the institution publicly to gauge a larger audience's opinion on the matter (e.g., if a clothing company is engaging in hiring discrimination, their consumers may choose to stop buying their clothing, thus communicating to the company that this behavior is unacceptable).

It is important to keep in mind that going public does not always result in the desired outcome but at a minimum it shines a light on the situation and may even impact the institution's profitability for a short while, which often results in some type of change. For example, while many legal advocates have fought against the American judicial system for disproportionately incarcerating BIPOC at higher rates than White Americans for the same low-level offenses, bringing attention to major retailers and restaurants who profit from prison labor can injure their brands and bring more awareness to prison commercialization. These institutions may, in turn, choose to distance themselves from other members of the system or advocate for a complete system overhaul.

3.7.1. Phase 4 Macrointervention Strategies: Exercise a Course of Action

- Identify the pivot points. For institutional leaders who do not accept claims of bias as evidenced from the supporting data, cutting one's losses with trying to persuade leaders in the organization may be the only course of action. Consider if there is an alternate course or group with which to consult.
- Identify the intersecting institutions within the system. If the institution is not responsive to claims of micro- and macroaggressions, their partner institutions may put pressure on them to respond. Additionally, this strategy may reveal a pattern of macroaggressions occurring simultaneously and being reinforced within the system of institutions that may also need exposure.
- Exercise a course of action keeping in mind the intersectional invisibility: does this process equally advocate for within group members of the affected population such as gender and sexual minorities or does it continue to favor the dominant group?

- Consider the consequences and the possible aftereffects. Not every fallout can be predicted but they can at least be thought through. Consult about and reflect upon whether you should move forward within each phase and what the consequences might be (e.g., *"What happens if we do not proceed? Who will get hurt?"*).

3.8. Macrointervention Phase 5: Energize and galvanizeGalvanize

The goal of the fifth phase, *Macrointervention Phase 5: Energize and Galvanize* is to energize or re-energize to move forward and continue onward. Experiencing macroaggressions first hand can be exhausting. Similarly, supporting others in systems who have experienced macroaggressions can be exhausting. Likewise, attempting to change organizations, systems, and institutions can take its toll. Racial battle fatigue is real. No matter how long or drawn out the work is, it is critical that champions for change take time to heal and care for themselves. It is also important to bring new people to serve in supportive roles who may have another level of influence or who may be able to reassess the process and provide recommendations for how to best proceed.

3.8.1. Phase 5 Macrointervention Strategies: Energize and Galvanize lvanize

- Remember that change does not have to occur all at once. Seeds may be planted and no visible or recognizable change is evidenced. Change tends to occur very slowly within systems so merely introducing thoughts about change is considered an accomplishment.
- Seek out support. Surround yourself with people who remind you that your actions are making an impact, even if not in the immediate moment.
- Recognize the "small" accomplishments along the way. Validate, acknowledge, and offer support to yourself and others in the process. Focus on what is within reach and what is possible rather than what might not be going as planned.
- Document missteps and successes from which others might learn. Self-reflect on missed opportunities or things that could have been done differently.
- Re-energize by taking time off from the work.

3.9. Macrointervention Phase 6: Analyze and Recalibrate

The goal of the sixth phase, *Macrointervention Phase 6: Analyze and Recalibrate* is to evaluate the process and determine (analyze and recalibrate) to what extent it is necessary to return to a previous phase, commence the process over, or take some other course. Phase 6 should include determining the status, outcomes, and aftereffects of the system, policies, procedures, and individuals who participated in each of the phases of the process. Consider taking an inventory of whether the efforts helped result in change. Consider documenting both the positive and negative outcomes. For example, did the institution respond? If so, what did they do? Did it result in authentic change? What are the next steps, if any?

3.9.1. Phase 6 Macrointervention Strategies: Analyze and Recalibrate

- Collect follow-up data over time. Are changes evident at least one year after the resolution? What is the next course of action if the intended or promised changes have not occurred?

- Consult with coalition members and affected targets of macroaggressions to gauge their perceptions of change. Individuals with multiple minoritized identities may not feel change in the same way as others who possess identities that may provide them with some privilege.
- Analyze current policies. Were old policies revised or new policies implemented? Identify new policies implemented by intersecting institutions to promote equity and use these as examples for your institution.
- Gauge the general sense of wellbeing within the institution. Do *all* members feel good about it? Do they exhibit pride in working there? Extrapolate the points for improvement based on evaluations and identify which staff could sponsor or support new efforts.

3.10. Case study

In order to illustrate the application of the six-phase Macrointervention Process, we provide a case study here depicting the common example of exclusion experienced by BIPOC in organizations. Problem: *Sam has been troubled by the lack of representation in the workplace, a social services agency which serves a racially and ethnically diverse client population and is situated in a very diverse city.*

Phase 1:Criticize the Environment: *Leaning into her gut feeling on this, Sam uses the six-phase Macrointervention process by first taking a mental inventory of who is present – and more importantly, who is not represented within the agency. The inventory confirms a stark reality that Sam had never seen openly-discussed by leadership before: less than 10% BIPOC staff, despite serving 90% BIPOC clientele. Sam decides to run her experience by her trusted colleague, Kai (someone she knows she can confide in and will provide honest feedback). Kai agrees with Sam's assertation that representation is a problem for the agency's productivity for many reasons from developing affirming relationships with clients to understanding the cultural and contextual factors that affect their lives. They even reflect on similar instances in which they both interviewed qualified BIPOC candidates that did not advance to second-round interviews. The both are critical of these processes and outcomes and decide to strategize about next steps.*

Phase 2: Strategize a Course of Action: *Sam and Kai anticipate challenges to collecting staff demographic data from human resources, so they decide to look up and make note of every open job posting on their company's website and keep a record on who is eventually hired for these positions. Within three months, they find that nine out of 10 of roles are filled by White American applicants, despite an equal amount of BIPOC colleagues they know applied to these same positions. They conclude this outcome must be attributed to something more than chance (macroaggression) and believe that senior leadership should be informed of this macroaggressive practice. Before doing so, however, they draft a list of the five senior administrators and confer on who they believe would be most receptive to learning this information. They determine Taylor is the safest administrator to broach the macroaggression with, but go back and forth on the pros and cons of bringing it up. The two realize there is a lot on the line for their professional careers if they bring these claims to light but believe deeply in establishing an equitable workforce to serve their community. They further decide hiring BIPOC staff will not solve the issue: there needs to be a concerted effort around recruitment and advancement.*

Phase 3: Mobilize Resources: *Before speaking with Taylor, Sam and Kai do some homework on their agency and gather more evidence. Through a website called* glassdoor.com*, they read multiple reviews spanning 10 years by former employees who identify as BIPOC commenting about an unsupportive work environment. They realize the pervasiveness of the macroaggression and consult their agency's values statement only to find diversity and inclusion listed as a top priority (but not being reflected in the agency's day-to-day activities and practices). They know there are a few staff members during their Wednesday meeting that openly advocate for different social justice issues and believe it would be a good idea to share with them the evidence they gathered so far to gain more support. After rehearsing a few times, they very methodically share their initial hunches and the supporting data they collected. Their colleagues are troubled by the findings reflected in the data, but only a few lend their* support *for advocating to higher ups out of fear of retribution. Sam and Kai gain two new supporters out of the seven they speak to. They forge ahead knowing there is power in numbers.*

Phase 4: Exercise a Course of Action: *Sam and Kai ask if their newly-formed team would be willing to meet privately over coffee or on Zoom to further discuss the macroaggressive conditions they have observed at work. Using examples published in newspaper articles on how employees changed hostile work environments, they strategize the best course of action is to have a meeting with Taylor about their observations, the* supporting *data they gathered, and the impact they believe it has on the workforce and clientele. In the event Taylor is not sympathetic to the information, they strategize their second course of action as filing a former complaint with human resources (HR). In the event the complaint is dismissed, their third course of action is to seek* support *from their local American Civil Liberties Union affiliate. The team decides to wait until a Thursday afternoon to approach Taylor with their claims. At first, Taylor feels a bit ambushed but the team reassures her this comes from a place of caring about the agency and enhancing its already-important role within the community. Taylor appreciates the thought and effort gone into tracking the disparities in representation noted by the team and assures them she will share the data they have compiled with other administrators at their next directors meeting and follow-up with them.*

Phase 5: Energize and Galvanize: *Several weeks go by and the team does not hear back from Taylor. They send Taylor two follow-up emails requesting a second meeting, but both go unanswered, despite having read receipts. They even notice that Taylor avoids them in hallways or deliberately chooses not to supervise cases they are assigned to. The team feels uneasy by the lack of response and concludes no action will be taken. They meet regularly outside of work for moral* support*, encouraging each other to be diligent about moving forward with their remaining courses of action. Other coworkers begin to hear about their efforts and, though none offer to publicly* support *their cause, are willing to file anonymous reports with HR about these macroaggressive practices. The team sets up an appointment with HR and discusses their claims. During the investigation period, they take time off to focus on their health and wellbeing and continue to check in with one another. They also begin to calculate missteps in their process and reflect on what they could have done differently to engage Taylor.*

Phase 6: Analyze and Recalibrate: *Seven months after their initial complaint, the team receives word from HR that they are willing to work with them to strengthen their hiring practices. The team realizes there will never be any claim of wrongdoing on the agency's part but accepts this as an acknowledgement by the agency that there is room for improvement. The team asks for a list of actions the agency will take for improving hiring and*

advancement. They also request a timeline on when these actions will be implemented and what metrics they would use to evaluate change (e.g., broader recruitment events, increased number of applications from and interviews for BIPOC). The team suggests engaging additional staff from the quality assurance department to review how client evaluations may change once new staff are hired. Additionally, they outline a list of policies implemented by neighboring agencies that have positively impacted their organizational climate, client evaluations, and retention of underrepresented staff. They request a monthly meeting moving forward to monitor and track progress and assist with recruiting and retention efforts.

4. Discussion

The purpose of the current paper was to draw attention to the long-standing contribution of systems and structures in the perpetuation and maintenance of racism, disparities based on race, and the far-reaching deleterious effects of macroaggressions. Informed by Sue et al. (2019), a secondary purpose was to introduce a newly-developed conceptual framework and process aimed at reducing macroaggressions in diverse organizations and institutions: a six-phase macrointervention process and macrointervention strategies.

We believe the proposed framework can be used by anyone who is embedded in a system where macroaggressions and microaggressions are present. Specifically, this framework can be used as a guide to engage with leaders, colleagues, and peers in systems that allow for and maintain structural macroaggressions. We recognize that the dismantling process often demands substantive time, multiple attempts, and moving backward and forward through the delineated six phases: (1) criticize the environment, (2) strategize courses of action, (3) mobilize resources, (4) exercise a course of action, (5) energize and galvanize, and (6) analyze and recalibrate. We do not consider the proposed framework and phases to be linear, although we do believe the phases have a logical purposeful flow. Additionally, we caution individuals in systems who are not in leadership positions and who do not possess the power and influence to overhaul policies and procedures to enforce equity. We recognize that following or implementing the proposed framework could engender unintended consequences, an increase in microaggressions, or even a "worse" outcome than the macroaggressions themselves (e.g., death).

Importantly, this work is meant to contribute to the very limited literature on solution-oriented strategies available for targets and populations of macroaggressions and others who are bold enough to use their voices to ameliorate historical and current policies, practices, procedures that maintain the dehumanization of BIPOC. More specifically, we contend macrointerventions can be used by (a) targets of bias in institutional and community settings to voice concerns of macroaggressive practices, (b) institutional leaders to overhaul policies and procedures to enforce equity, (c) advocates and allies passionate about social justice, and (d) changemakers daring enough to use their voices to illuminate the threat to civil rights that continues to persist in American communities and institutions. More attention must be allocated toward providing guidance and specific strategies on how to address the institutional and societal forms of racism that propagate inequity within programs, policies, practices, procedures, and structures of organizations and larger systems (e.g., governmental agencies, legal and judicial systems, health care organizations, educational institutions, and business and industry; Perez-Huber & Salazano, 2014; Sue et al., 2019).

This paper preliminarily fills a gap in the literature. Microaggressions—and more recently—microinterventions are more commonly discussed in the literature (Wong et al., 2014).

Although micro- and macroaggressions are underpinned by a deficit framework, the difference between these constructs and processes have been described. Microaggressions focus on the individual micro-level, can be commonplace, implicit, "subtle," go undetected, and normalized by the perpetrator *and* the target (Pierce, 1995). Macroaggressions focus on the broader, system, or structural level are insidious, and occur at all levels of society and are evidenced across most systems (e.g., education, health, law, media, politics). Interventions associated with macroaggressions, extend beyond individual-level interventions, although they often impact individuals. More specifically, even though we introduce macrointervention strategies that can be used to initiate systemic changes at the macro-level, our conceptual model has implications at the micro-level as well. Macrointervention strategies could impact both hospital policies *and* individual patients in a hospital.

In the context of COVID-19 pandemic and its deleterious outcomes (Cooper & Crews, 2020; Krishnan, Ogunwole, & Cooper, 2020; Laster Pirtle, 2020) and the civil unrest observed on the national stage in response to the racial profiling and victimization of unarmed racial, ethnic, and cultural minority citizens—in particular, Black Americans—a consideration of macroaggressions and macrointerventions is timely. The short- and long-term aftereffects of macroaggressions and the implementation macrointervention strategies proposed in this paper must be empirically investigated and the findings disseminated. Similarly, the utility and possible professional and ethical issues of the proposed conceptual model must be examined as well. What is clear is that just as we all play a role in the endurance of macroaggressions in systems through our willful ignorance, passivity, and bystander attitudes, we all play an equal role in their dismantling. Borrowing from the accumulated literature on microaggressions and, more recently, microinterventions, we offer a framework with specific strategies that can be employed by targets of macroaggressions, as well as organizational leaders, advocates, allies, and changemakers who possess the power and influence to overhaul policies and procedures to enforce equity, and changemakers willing to use their voices to promote fairness and justice for those who may not have a voice of their own to amplify.

Declaration of competing interest

We have no known conflict of interest to disclose, no finding sources to disclose, and no competing interests to disclose.

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