While there is extensive research on active forms of discrimination and exclusion (Mor Barak, 2011), exclusion that happens more subtly and oftentimes inadvertently, in the form of subtle forms of denigration, invalidation or slights, referred to as ‘microaggressions’, has only recently begun to draw research attention (Gartner and Sterzing, 2016; Lilienfeld, 2017; Sue, 2010). This kind of exclusion is often invisible and operates in subtle forms, the intended exclusion itself a form of covert resistance to inclusion.

Microaggressions denote subtle form of bias and discrimination such as slights, snubs or insults directed towards minorities, studied predominantly through the lens of race. Racial microaggressions have been defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). Since the mainstreaming of research on racial microaggression by Sue and his colleagues (Sue et al., 2007; Sue et al., 2008a), the concept has begun to be applied to other marginalized groups and demographics such as ethnic minorities and people of color (Balsam et al., 2011; Clark et al., 2014; Nadal, 2011), gender (Basford et al., 2014; Gartner and Sterzing, 2016), religious minorities (Husain and Howard, 2017), minority sexual orientation (Shelton and Delgado-Romero, 2011; Woodford et al., 2013), and to the immigrant experience as well (Shenoy-Packer, 2015). An intersectional approach to the study of microaggressions is also in need of further development (Nadal et al., 2015).

Responses to microaggressions have also been varied. Some like Wang and colleagues (2011) argue that microaggressions can affect the wellbeing and psychological health of those subject to it, while others like Campbell and Manning (2014) posit that microaggressions and the attendant focus on it have given rise to a culture of victimhood. Studies have noted the resultant feelings associated with microaggressions as those of powerlessness and a sense of invisibility (Sue et al., 2008b). The self-reinforcing cycle of illegitimacy experienced by people within marginalized identity groups (Vial et al., 2016) has also been noted. Coping with microaggressions can take on different forms such as turning to spirituality, seeking support networks and mentorship (Holder et al., 2015) or expressions of active or subtle forms of resistance. Thus, microaggression experiences could result in a diminished sense of self, or be actively or passively resisted to protect and shield one’s identity.

Given the nascent stage of research on microaggressions in general (Lilienfeld, 2017; Sue, 2017), and the dearth of studies that have examined microaggressions from more than one dominant identity
lens (Sterzign et al., 2017), we invite papers that examine microaggressions from individual marginalized identity perspectives or using an intersectional lens with emphasis on resistance.

The focus is on understanding the experience of microaggressions for individuals with multiple minority identities (such as race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) and ways in which resistance manifests itself, both in the act of the microaggression and the experience and response to it. Ways in which microaggressions relate to the process of identity re-formation, re-categorization or salience assigned to different minority identities, is also of particular interest. The stream will thus focus on examining microaggressions as resistance, and responses to and coping with microaggressions in the form of resistance that may either be overt or covert. We are also interested in themes of majoritarian backlash to the microaggression experience and invalidation and refutation of microaggressions such as the use of humor in conveying exclusion.

Based on the above, we invite papers that address any of the themes of microaggressions and resistance. We are especially interested in the following areas:

- Implicit resistance in the act of microaggressions
- Responses to microaggressions manifesting as resistance
- Identity impacts of microaggressions
- Intersectional microaggressions and resistance
- Backlash to racial and gender microaggressions
- Backlash to sexual orientation microaggressions
- Backlash to other marginalized identity microaggressions
- Negation and invalidation of the microaggression experience
- Power and resistance in microaggressions
- Experience of illegitimacy in microaggressions

The thrust areas are only indicative and not meant to be exhaustive. We welcome both conceptual and empirical papers using different epistemologies and methodologies that deal with subtle forms of exclusion (such as microaggressions) and manifest resistance. The resistance can be both direct or indirect, overt or covert, exercised by the issuer or by the recipient of exclusion. Papers on microaggressions from any of the marginalized identity perspectives such as race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc. are welcome. Of particular interest are papers focused on intersectional microaggressions and resistance.

References


