

# **Microaggression or misunderstanding? Implicatures, inferences and accountability**

## **Abstract**

This paper contributes a pragmatic perspective to the complex question of how to classify microaggressions that are committed via linguistic means. Given that microaggressions are often communicated implicitly, two key questions arise: (i) on what linguistic grounds is a recipient licensed to infer that a microaggression has been committed, and (ii) to what extent can a speaker claim they have been misunderstood and hence deny responsibility for having committed a microaggression? These questions are addressed through a discussion of the nature of implicature, inferences and accountability, highlighting that a key challenge lies in the fact that microaggressive content is typically not part of the representational content of what is achieved in interaction.

## **Keywords**

microaggression, misunderstanding, speaker intentions, background assumption, accountability, deniability

## **1. Introduction**

Microaggressions - defined roughly as communicative acts denigrating an individual by targeting perceived social aspects of their identity - present some key theoretical challenges regarding the nature of intention and evidence for meanings that speakers can (or should) be held accountable for. Given that microaggressions are typically covertly communicated, and often unintended, it can be difficult for a recipient to pin down whether a microaggression has, in fact, been communicated. On the one hand, perpetrators of microaggressions can attempt to claim them as misunderstandings which are, both theoretically and practically, premised on the idea that a speaker's intentions have been misconstrued. But even if a speaker does not claim to have offensive intentions, labelling an unintended microaggression as 'just a misunderstanding' downplays the negative impact it can have for the individuals involved and for reinforcing underlying subconscious attitudes in society.

This paper offers a modest contribution to ongoing discussions in social psychology, philosophy and other disciplines that have debated the nature of microaggressions (see McClure and Rini 2020 for an overview). It does this through a discussion of the pragmatic underpinnings of language-based microaggressions, that is, statements communicating potentially microaggressive messages, drawing on issues of implicatures, inferences and accountability. As will become evident, part of the complexity lies in the fact that microaggressive content is typically not part of the representational content of what is achieved in interaction, which will hence cast light on why they are so difficult to pin down.

## **2. Microaggressions: Some classification challenges**

Microaggressions are typically covertly communicated. On first blush, this makes them good candidates for being conceptualised as conversational implicatures (Grice 1975): implicitly recoverable aspects of meaning that go beyond the explicit content of what is said. Moreover, as implicatures are defeasible, a perpetrator is afforded plausible deniability for having intended any microaggressive content, as the offending message can always be explicitly denied (Jones 2016). So, when faced with a potentially microaggressive remark, a recipient is thus faced with a dilemma: was it a microaggression with offensive intentions, or ‘merely’ a misunderstanding?

One of the difficulties of solving this dilemma comes from the fact that a recipient can perceive microaggressions from statements that are:

- (a) intentionally offensive, reflecting prejudice (“you’re quite smart for a woman”);
- (b) well-intentioned, reflecting prejudice (“what a beautiful/interesting/unusual name”);
- (c) culturally-insensitive, not reflecting prejudice;
- (d) innocuous, misinterpreted by recipient (taxonomy adapted from Lilienfeld 2017: 159).

On the one hand, statements of type (a) can be characterised as what Sue (2010) labels ‘microassaults’: microaggressions that are “conscious, deliberate and either subtle or explicit” stemming from “biased attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors” (Sue 2010: 28). As conscious acts, they can feasibly be considered intentionally offensive. However, their ease of identification is a function of their degree of explicitness; cases of ‘on record impoliteness’ - namely, explicit, unambiguously offensive face attacks (Bousfield 2008) - may be easier to identify, but subtly or covertly communicated microaggressions are more difficult to identify as they constitute ‘off record impoliteness’ to be recovered as offensive implicatures. Statements of type (b) are even more difficult to identify: as ‘microinsults’, they are “frequently outside the conscious awareness of the perpetrator, but they convey an oftentimes hidden insulting message to the recipient” (Sue 2010: 32).<sup>1</sup> This means that even if the offending remark is couched in underlying prejudices leading to its utterance, a speaker may have ‘intended’ no offence—and in some cases may have actually intended to offer a compliment.

So, the ‘microaggression or misunderstanding’ dichotomy is, unfortunately, not this simple. Lilienfeld’s taxonomy highlights that microaggressions lie on a cline from those of types (a-b) that stem from underlying prejudices irrespective of a speaker’s intention to offend, to unintentionally offensive statements of types (b-d) that may or may not reflect prejudice. As we see, what makes identifying microaggressions particularly

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<sup>1</sup> Sue (2010: 37) also identifies a third category of microinvalidations that “exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of certain groups, such as people of color, women, and LGBTs”, thus diminishing a recipient’s claim that a microaggression has been committed. While important, these lie beyond the scope of this paper.

tricky is that they are a function not only of a speaker's intention to offend, but also any underlying prejudices.

The identification problem is made even more difficult by the fact that it's not always easy to pinpoint what the offensive remark actually was. Consider the following example from the romantic comedy film, *Knocked Up*, in which a one-night stand leads to Alison's unexpected pregnancy. In this scene, Jack, Alison's boss at an entertainment television company, has offered Alison an on-camera role in which she will interview pregnant celebrities in a bid to boost female ratings. Jill is Jack's deadpan and somewhat disdainful assistant.

Jack: About the work, most immediately, there's going to be some things that you're going to be able to get that other people in the office don't get. One of them: Gym membership.

Alison: You want me to...lose weight?

Jack: (laughing) No I don't want you to lose weight!

Jill: (deadpan) No, uh, we can't legally ask you to do that.

Jack: We didn't say lose weight.

Jill: No.

(*Knocked Up*, 2007, Universal Studios Home Entertainment)

When Jack mentions that Alison's new role will give her the perk of gym membership, there is a strongly inferable message that Jack wants Alison to lose weight before being put on screen. However, when confronted with Alison's inference to this effect in her question "you want me to lose weight?", Jack immediately denies having communicated it – and thereby removes his commitment to it – when he says, "no I don't want you to lose weight". Jill, however, weakens Jack's distancing from the message that he wants Alison to lose weight when she states "we can't legally ask you to do that". The use of legal authority as an account of why they can't ask her to lose weight gives rise to its own inferable implicature that they would ask her to lose weight if they could, while the use of "we" indicates that the issue of Alison's weight has been motivated by both Jack and Jill, or possibly from higher up in the company. Jack orients to this weakening, reiterating his previous denial with a paraphrase, "we didn't say lose weight". While his statement serves to, again, remove his commitment to its content, achieved by orienting to what was said to give him plausible deniability for having communicated anything to do with losing weight, in doing so he simultaneously makes available an inference that there is, in fact, something to infer that goes beyond what is said.

The difficulty that this example demonstrates is that it is not always a straightforward task to identify what the offending message was. That is, conversational implicatures are typically studied in terms of the propositional content they communicate in addition to the explicit content of what is said. But while Jack's initial mentioning of gym membership may give rise to the implicature "I want you to lose weight" or variants

thereof, it is more difficult to identify an expressed proposition that reveals the underlying microaggression that pertains to Alison being asked to lose weight because she is female, nor the offending prejudice that stems from female beauty standards in the entertainment industry.

So, what makes microaggressions so difficult to pinpoint – irrespective of a speaker’s conscious intention to offend – is that there typically isn’t one, clear denigrating message that constitutes an ‘offensive implicature’. Indeed, as implicatures are typically considered part of the speaker’s intended meaning, with some theorists offering the defining feature that they are consciously accessible to interlocutors (e.g. Recanati 1989), it is only implicitly-communicated microaggressions of type (a) that can be classed as implicatures, while microaggressions of type (b) fall outside the classical remit of speaker-intended implicatures. As Terkourafi (2021) points out, Grice’s ‘speaker meaning’ does not adequately encapsulate the totality of inferences a recipient can recover – what she calls “meaning occasioned by a speaker’s use of language” – and hence we require some other pragmatic tool(s) to account for such non-intended aspects of meaning.

The more explicit an aspect of meaning is, the less easy it is for a speaker to deny having communicated it (see e.g. Sternau et al 2017). As such, the inferability of different types of microaggressions is directly proportional to their deniability. To illustrate, consider the follow-up negotiation between Jack and Jill pertaining to Alison’s inference that she should lose weight.

Jack: I might say “tighten”.

Alison: Tight.

Jack: A little...tighter.

Jill: Just like toned and smaller.

Jack: Don’t make everything smaller. I don’t want to generalize that way. Tighter.

Jill: We don’t want you to lose weight. We just want you to be healthy.

Alison: Okay.

Jill: You know, by...by eating less. We would just like it if you go home and step on a scale, and write down how much you weigh, and subtract it by like twenty.

Alison: Twenty.

Jill: And then weigh that much.

*(Knocked Up, 2007, Universal Studios Home Entertainment)*

Having just explicitly denied Alison’s recovered inference that Jack is asking her to lose weight by his mentioning gym membership, he weakens his denial by rephrasing the inference as “tighter”. Jill goes further to effectively confirm Jack’s putative implicature by further specifying “toned and smaller”. Jack again offers a rebuttal in clarifying that she shouldn’t “make everything smaller”, partially negating Jill’s contribution, but also invoking cultural stereotypes pertaining to the female body to communicate its own

strongly inferable message about how she should look. At the end of the scene, Jill cancels all of Jack's previous denial attempts by stating that Alison should subtract "twenty" from her current weight, "and then weigh that much".

Through this subsequent development and negotiation of the meaning of Jack's initial utterance ('gym membership'), the implicature that was initially denied becomes more strongly entrenched in the discourse, and hence future denials become less interactionally legitimate. And as the content of the implicature that Alison should lose weight becomes less deniable, the underlying microaggressive content pertaining to female body standards on screen also becomes more salient. Indeed, as Jaszczolt (2009) suggests, inferences pertaining to strongly entrenched, social and cultural defaults are difficult to cancel as they are expected to arise across contexts. But note that in this extract, while the underlying prejudice is brought closer to the surface, it still remains possible to deny in view of not being put explicitly on record.

Focussing on covertly construed microaggressions, the remainder of this paper addresses two key questions: (i) on what grounds can a recipient claim a microaggression has been committed, and hence hold a speaker accountable for it, and (ii) to what extent can a speaker legitimately attempt to claim a recipient's interpretation as a misunderstanding, that is, that their intentions have been misconstrued, and hence deny that a microaggression has been committed? As I will discuss, while the multiplicity of inferable meanings from potentially microaggressive statements affords perpetrators plausible deniability for having intended any offence, it is exactly because microaggressions need not manifest as propositional, speaker-intended implicatures that they are so difficult to grasp.

### **3. Implicatures, intentions, and accountability**

As per Grice's (1975) original formulation, when a speaker's utterance flouts one of the maxims of conversation, given that the speaker is assumed to be adhering to the Cooperative Principle, the recipient is licensed to work out the implicature that the speaker might have intended instead of what was said. While, following Grice, implicatures are typically characterised with reference to the speaker's intention to be recognised, the phenomenon of microaggressions gives credence to the view that implicatures - that is, unsaid meanings that go beyond what is said - can arise in the absence of a speaker's intention to communicate (cf. Gauker 2001, Saul 2002a, 2002b). This is due in part to the fact that, as Grice (1975) himself noted, a single utterance can give rise to a multitude of different meaning formulations, while expressed meanings themselves can be indeterminate (Sperber and Wilson 2015), and allowing for such indeterminacy makes it difficult to pinpoint exactly what was communicated. Moreover, as Haugh (2007) points out, 'intention' itself is a complex concept: it is questionable as to the extent that implicatures can be held as consciously and a priori 'intended' in the minds of speakers at the point of utterance, and, relatedly, how far speaker intentions can be assumed to be determinately fixed.

Once we do away with assumptions of clear and fixed a priori speaker intentions, we are left with the result that recipients may interpret speakers' utterances in ways that may or may not align with speakers' initial, possibly indeterminate, intentions. But this does not mean that such mismatches should be discarded from a normative theory of utterance meaning. Rather, Haugh (2007) demonstrates that speakers can accept recipients' divergent inferences through their subsequent utterances, providing the strong empirical rationale for the view that implicatures can be co-constituted by all participants, irrespective of speakers' initial intentions. Elder (2019) relatedly argues that the indeterminacy of speaker intentions and the ways in which speakers and recipients come to joint understandings offers a case in favour of reconceptualising 'successful communication' as admitting cases in which speaker intentions and recipient inferences diverge.

But at the same time, it goes without saying that 'genuine' misunderstandings do occur insofar as speakers can have strong beliefs about what they did or did not intend to communicate, and these can differ significantly from recipients' understandings of speakers' utterances. As such, removing intentions from the explanatory toolkit altogether loses the important distinction between intended and unintended inferences that is important for the discussion of microaggressions. Indeed, the ramifications of such misunderstandings are not only of theoretical interest but can have real-life repercussions (Haugh 2008a), and when misunderstandings overlap with microaggressive content, recipients can experience long-term negative psychological effects (e.g. Wang et al. 2011).

To overcome the practical and theoretical difficulties of tapping into speakers' private intentions, Haugh (2008a) recommends looking at how speakers themselves topicalise them in interaction. He demonstrates that looking at participants' post facto discussions of communicative intentions reveals how participants' own assessments of speaker intentions fall into two separate folk conceptualisations of communication: (i) one that privileges 'what is said', viewing meanings as dependent on clear and unambiguous expressions that are not controlled by the speaker, and (ii) one that privileges speakers' intentions in determining what is communicated. These two folk conceptualisations map onto two dominant theoretical accounts of what speakers are deemed committed to through their utterances (see Elder 2021 for discussion), namely: (i) normative meanings of expressions, and (ii) recipients' cognitive inferential processes, respectively. Option (i) holds that it is the utterance itself that commits a speaker to some state of affairs due to the conventions of language use, the upshot being that a speaker can be committed to what they say irrespective of their intention to communicate (e.g. Brandom 1994, Geurts 2019). Option (ii) by contrast is the post-Gricean view (most notably in Relevance Theory, Sperber and Wilson [1986]1995) that a speaker commits themselves to meanings in virtue of what they say, and as it is the task of the recipient to 'access' the speaker's mental state through a process of cognitive inferencing, recipients in turn hold speakers committed to those meanings as speaker intended (e.g. Morency et al 2008, Moeschler 2013, Mazzarella et al 2018).

While there are intuitive bases for both kinds of account, individually they only provide a partial picture of how speakers and recipients converge and diverge in their interpretations of particular utterances. The following third option offers insight into how participants themselves hold one another accountable for the meanings that are communicated, namely through: (iii) public displays of understanding that are made available by recipients' responses (e.g. Heritage 1984). The benefit of option (iii) is that it does not simply focus on speakers' intentions or recipients' recovered inferences of individual utterances, but allows intentions to be emergent as an interaction progresses (Haugh 2008b). It is then to these emergent intentions that speakers are held normatively accountable by interactants as they become available in conversation, eschewing the need for inferences about private intentions in the interactional achievement of implicatures. And when participants talk about intentions themselves, they can hold one another morally accountable for the implicatures that they communicate. So as Haugh (2008a) advocates, examining post facto disputes over what was intended can enable us to examine (i) what intentions are attributed to speakers, (ii) what kinds of interpretative norms are invoked, and (iii) what kinds of sociocultural presuppositions are assumed by interactants. This is because even if recipients infer different meanings to what speakers' originally intended, or if speakers claim that they have been misunderstood, invoking participants' own discussions of such intentions highlights how the sociocultural environment in which an utterance is produced can affect its interpretation, and hence demonstrates the appropriateness of certain ways of speaking in different situations and to different audiences.

Now, while Haugh presents compelling arguments for the theoretical benefits of examining discussions of intentions and what may have been meant, there is growing literature evidencing both that, and why, language-based microaggressions are likely to go unreported by victims. This is due to what Sue (2010) terms the 'catch-22 of responding to microaggressions': on the one hand, when faced with a potentially microaggressive remark, the recipient has a classification dilemma as to whether it was, in fact, a microaggression (see also Salvatore and Shelton 2007). Assuming it was, they then have the deontic dilemma of whether they should address it, and if so, the practical question of how to go about it without confirming negative stereotypes or opening themselves to invalidation (see also Rini 2018). But once they have expended this cognitive effort in their deliberations, even if finally armed with a response, they may find that the opportune moment in which to respond has passed.

Since microaggressions often remain off-record as recipients elect not to engage with them at the time of the offence, we are still left with the question of: on what linguistic grounds can recipients attribute microaggressive remarks to speakers? More generally, as Haugh (2017) puts it, what counts as a licensed inference for which a recipient can legitimately hold the speaker accountable?

#### **4. Licensing inferences, plausible deniability, and how to respond to a microaggression**

As should be clear by now, microaggressions do not only surface as speaker-intended implicatures. The relevant inferences can lie on a continuum in how determinately paraphrasable they are (cf. Sperber and Wilson 2015), and, as the example from *Knocked Up* demonstrates, the relevant inferences may not even be determinately available from what is said, instead being subplicit inferences that “glide into the mind of the hearer as side effects of what is said or not said” (Bertuccelli Papi 2000: 147, quoted in Haugh 2017).

Ariel (2016) proposes a taxonomy of types of pragmatic inference that extend beyond speaker intended implicatures (see Elder 2019 for discussion). I focus here on her class of ‘background assumptions’, or in her later (2019) work following Sperber and Wilson ([1986]1995), ‘implicated premises’. As discussed in Relevance Theory, implicated premises are inferences that are necessary for the successful recovery of an implicated conclusion. Returning to the example from *Knocked Up* above, in order to get from the mention of ‘gym membership’ to the implicature ‘you need to lose weight’, it is necessary to entertain a chain of inferences along the lines of: being a member of a gym allows one to attend the gym; one typically exercises in the gym; exercise typically leads to weight loss. These could all be considered implicated premises. But the concept of an implicated premise does not account for all the background assumptions that one *could* entertain in order to arrive at the same implicated conclusion. Examples include assumptions specific to Alison and her current weight, which in turn could be due to assumptions ranging from benevolent concerns about Alison’s health (albeit unlikely), broader societal assumptions about female beauty standards (to which Alison does not conform), to negative attitudes towards overweight people in general. The microaggression that the issue of gym membership is invoked *because she is female* (for example) is not necessary to entertain in order to arrive at the implicature that Alison should lose weight - and hence should not count as an implicated premise - but it is nevertheless accessible as a relevant background assumption.

So, the case of microaggressions indicates there is utility in distinguishing something like ‘background assumptions’ - which we may class as *any* background information that is relevant to a speaker’s utterance - from ‘implicated premises’ proper that are required for the successful inference of speaker-intended implicatures. Such a distinction is worth making for the further reason that, on Ariel’s conceptualisation, implicated premises are in no way intended to be communicated by the speaker; as she says, “[t]he addressee is supposed to use them but to also immediately dispense with them, so they have no effect on the speaker's intended message” (Ariel 2019: 111). But of course a microaggressive message is not so easily dispensed with, even if the speaker is not committed to having communicated it, suggesting that background assumptions of a broader scope are what is needed to account for these non-propositional – and often speaker unintended – aspects of meaning.

Admittedly, we are currently none the wiser on what linguistic grounds a recipient has for identifying and calling out a microaggressive background assumption. This is because the question of whether the relevant prejudice in question has been invoked



depends on whether the resulting implicature has or has not been communicated. On the one hand, Haugh (2013) observes that speakers can modulate their degree of commitment to, or accountability for, an implicature in interaction by employing correction and/or repair strategies. However, how legitimately they can perform these actions depends on (i) the degree of indeterminacy of the implicature and (ii) the degree to which it is perceived to be intended by the speaker. Given that implicatures are by their nature indeterminate, Haugh argues that they can *always* be disputed by the speaker in the event a recipient attributes an unwanted interpretation to them. But, as he notes, implicatures as indeterminate is different from whether something has been implied. When the implicature in question is strongly inferable, for example due to its sequential placement in relation to other utterances in the interaction, a recipient is more strongly licensed to infer it, and in turn a speaker has reduced legitimacy in denying it. This difference is akin to Sternau et al's (2017) distinction between cancellability and deniability: while all implicatures can be cancelled by definition, their deniability is proportional to their strength.

All in all, the extent to which a recipient can 'legitimately' infer a microaggressive background assumption is dependent not only on whether the offending remark was the product of an underlying prejudice. It is also dependent on the extent to which a speaker has plausible deniability for having communicated a given implicature, which itself is dependent on how inferable the implicature in question is in the first place. Returning to our *Knocked Up* example, given that Jack immediately denies communicating the putative implicature that he wants Alison to lose weight in the first place, he has even greater license to deny the degree to which he intended Alison to entertain any of the microaggressive background assumptions. But even as the content of the implicature becomes increasingly more explicit, as the microaggressive prejudices remain backgrounded, they also remain deniable.

It is worth pointing out that, as Ariel (2019) highlights in her taxonomy of pragmatic inferences, implicated premises (background assumptions) do not have strong discourse prominence. This not only makes them difficult to respond to, but it also explains *why* they are difficult to respond to. As she says, they can be neither reinforced by adding the implicit message to what is said without redundancy - a feature, she says, of all speaker intended inferences - nor can they be paraphrased as additional speaker intended messages. Rather, implicated premises must "be seen but not heard" (Ariel 2019: 115). Given that background assumptions, as I have re-characterised them, are not even required for the successful recovery of speaker-intended implicatures, they need not even be seen.<sup>2</sup> No doubt this provides a perpetrator with a theoretical get-out in the face of accusation.

Finally, recipients can experience feelings of offence from speakers' utterances, without necessarily either (a) attributing offensive intentions to the speaker, or even (b) attributing a determinate offensive meaning to the speaker's utterance. So, how can a

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed, this rather suggests there may be some overlap with Ariel's class of 'truth-compatible inferences' that she states "must not even be seen" (2019: 115), but I leave this to future discussion.

recipient respond to a microaggression? Even in the absence of a clear target to one's feelings, Haugh (2015) demonstrates how recipients can hold speakers accountable for having caused offence by registering and sanctioning the offence in interaction, in turn possibly also holding themselves morally accountable for taking offence. Moreover, his observations for how recipients achieve this in practice demonstrate that holding a speaker accountable for causing offence does not necessarily mean explicitly and directly calling the speaker out. Rather, by extending the applicability of the interactional achievement approach to communication to the nature of offence, he reframes offence "not simply a response to the (perceived) intentions of a prior speaker or breaches of (perceived) social norms" (Haugh 2015: 41), but as a social practice by which participants orient themselves to offence in interaction.

One way that recipients can register their offence is by producing their own impoliteness implicature that targets the initial perpetrator. By keeping their offence off record, it is also defeasible, and as such can remain 'embedded' if the participants do not orient to the target of the implicature, namely the offence that the recipient has experienced. It is precisely because implicatures vary in their indeterminacy that recipients of offence, including microaggressions, can use them to their advantage to afford themselves plausible deniability that they have taken offence.

## **5. Concluding remarks**

In this paper, I have outlined some key pragmatic tools that highlight the complexities of classifying microaggressions in interaction. First, it has to be noted that the question 'microaggression or misunderstanding' isn't actually a fair question to ask, as the two concepts are not mutually exclusive. This is because inherent to the nature of microaggressions is that they reflect a perpetrator's underlying prejudice regarding some social characteristic that the victim is perceived to have, but the remark in question may or may not be uttered with malicious intent. In this regard, an offending statement can be a microaggression *and* a misunderstanding.

One of the key features of microaggressions is that they are typically communicated implicitly as offensive implicatures. In this regard, perpetrators are granted plausible deniability that they intended to communicate them. But further complications arise when we acknowledge the inherent indeterminacy of implicatures, not to mention that microaggressions can surface not only as implicatures for which speakers can be held accountable, but also as unintended background assumptions, all of which increases the complexity in fathoming whether a microaggression has been committed, let alone how to respond to it. Of course there is much more work to be done: the non-propositional effects of microaggressions make them good candidates for further sociopragmatic research into issues such as the relationship between affective content versus propositional content, different types of microaggressions that are communicated by inferences of different kinds, the types of facework strategies that are triggered when microaggressive content is made explicit in interaction, and the respective influence of

individuals' societal values versus speakers' beliefs about communicative intentions in the attribution of meaning.

It is worth bearing in mind that attempting a classification of microaggressions based on theoretical principles runs the risk of ignoring the “powerful emotions, subjective experiences, biases, values, and beliefs, as well as especially the pain and suffering of oppression” (Sue 2017: 171) that come with the territory. As such, some scholars argue it is preferable to study the lived emotional experiences of marginalised groups rather than the mental states of perpetrators (e.g. Sue 2017), while others focus on the underlying systemic oppression that microaggressions reflect (e.g. Friedlaender 2018) which can additionally account for instances representing oppression even where a recipient does not perceive it. This paper aims to have offered a complementary viewpoint that makes clearer the pragmatic issues at stake when distinguishing different types of implicitly communicated content, thus furthering our understandings of the nature of individual microaggressive tokens whose repercussions can have real-world outcomes on individuals' interpersonal relationships.

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