

January 13, 2016

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College Campuses Are Full Of Subtle Racism And Sexism, Study Says

Posted: 01/12/2015 5:22 pm EST | Updated: 07/09/2015 3:59 pm EDT



Diversity on college campuses has increased, but women and minorities still face prejudice and discrimination, [a new study](#) from the Harvard University [Voices of Diversity](#) project found. This discrimination, often manifested in what are called "microaggressions," creates unwelcoming environments and can be detrimental to academic performance, the study says.

"It's clear that it doesn't matter if it's a public or private college, doesn't matter how big the school is, doesn't matter where it's located geographically," Paula Caplan, the study's lead author, told The Huffington Post. "From a public university in the Deep South to an Ivy League university, we're finding the same thing."

The study's researchers conducted interviews and surveys with students on four different campuses. Only one -- Missouri State University -- offered to be named. The others were referred to as Midwest University, Southern Regional State University and Ivy University (all pseudonyms).

Students at each school reported instances of discrimination, and the study includes a collection of these stories.

"Some white guy stepped on my foot ... and yelled at me and told me to go back to my country. And then I was thinking, 'Oh wait, this is my country, I was born here,'" Sang, an Asian-American senior, said in the report.

But most instances are less overt. These are microaggressions -- subtle digs and biases -- that permeate the culture. They could include something like a man rolling his eyes when a woman speaks, or people not wanting to be in study groups with those of different races.

Students said they also notice that white male students are called on in class more often than other students.

"I have to stop and think sometimes, 'Are they being racist? Or, is that just how they act? Or, are they just not being friendly because they're having a bad day?'" Raymond, an African-American respondent, said in the report.

Students often do not want to call people out for microaggressions for fear of losing friends or creating more hostile environments, the report says. Students also don't always know which institutions at their schools they can report these instances to.

There have been [many studies](#) that show this type of everyday discrimination hinders academic performance.

"Can you imagine taking an exam when you've got all this turmoil inside?" Caplan said.

The study found that women and minorities are made to feel like they do not belong on the campus -- for example, that they only got in thanks to affirmative action. Anthony, an African-American senior at the Ivy university, said he notices "a slight raising of the eyebrows, or eyes following you in the dining hall."

This feeling of not belonging extends to the professors and syllabuses, students said.

"When you get into one of these high-status universities, and you're a woman, you are made to feel so lucky to be there," Caplan said. "But you look around, and guess what? A vast majority of the professors are still men. They're still white men."

There's also a lack of diversity in course materials. Outside of classes about women or different cultures, you'd be hard-pressed to find course materials written by anyone other than white men, respondents in the study said.

"It's not that there's anything wrong with what white men say," Caplan clarified, "but when there's nothing on the syllabus by anybody who's in the group you are in -- either in race or sex -- with that absence, you don't have role models, you don't have people who were treated in similar ways."

The study offers a series of recommendations, including a mandatory class about the effects of discrimination and stereotyping in its most modern form. This way, non-minority students can increase their empathy and begin to understand their peers' experience.

Missouri State University has already begun making changes in response to findings from the study. These included a focus on recruiting African-American and Hispanic faculty and staff members and establishing an [Office for Diversity and Inclusion](#).

Because many students reported feeling discrimination off campus in the city of Springfield, MSU collaborated with the city's Chamber of Commerce to sponsor "facing racism" training sessions for community leaders.

As conversations about racism came to the forefront in Missouri following the killing of Michael Brown, the campus had the infrastructure to address student concerns. Brown was a black 18-year-old shot by white cop Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri -- near the area many MSU students are from. The school was [immediately](#) able to "hold dialogue sessions, panel discussions, and student-led activities in which student leaders crafted goals for their own community," the report says. Students [met with the Springfield](#) police chief, who then asked to be contacted personally if students felt racially profiled in the community.

"This is the kind of thing that makes you believe how much better things can get," Caplan said.

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Conversations

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Sharon Dalzell-Schlotthauer · Owner-Operator at Sharon's Massage in my own Studio. also Dr. Steven Young, YoungChiropractic
oh for heavens sake.. who didn't know this..???

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Shannon Jacobs
Subtle? are they kidding?

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John Hill · Cape Coral, Florida
I'm shocked I tell you, shocked... that campuses mirror the rest of society....

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Oh look, another college article with a buzzword attached to it.

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Kelly Almond

At least we're talking about it.

Like Reply  2 · Jan 12, 2015 7:08pm



Will Beltre

You know what they say about talk. I digress.

Like Reply · Jan 13, 2015 1:23am



Michael Kelly · Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Most people are selfish and think that they are they are the epitome of perfection. It only follows that they believe that people like them are closer to that perfection than people that differ from them. If one group controls all the institutions of power then that groups idea of "perfection" is going to rule the day. It is pointless to expect people to grow and mature,

Like Reply  4 · Jan 12, 2015 7:28pm



Michele Johnson · St. Catherine University/Phoenix

We need to start talking about economic grouping. Too much focus is placed on sticks and stones, that will always exist.

Like Reply · Jan 15, 2015 9:39am



Elizabeth Gregory

Or maybe they've just figured out that whining and complaining is easier than actually cracking a book.

Like Reply · May 17, 2015 7:08am · Edited



Chris Bassett · Drummer at Synchronicity III - A Police Tribute Band

Those damn heterosexual,white males!

Like Reply  6 · Jan 12, 2015 7:42pm



Elizabeth Gregory

Oh, my. The poor dears. Not being called on in class. Eye rolling! The horrors of it. I once had someone roll eyes at me and it took five years of therapy to fix my poor little broken "self". There is only one logical solution, of course. We must not allow white men in college. Put them in the fields pulling plows or maybe drilling soybeans (lots of edame for tofu for everyone). Without the white guys running things, then our country will be so much better off....like maybe...or....or perhaps....

Like Reply · May 17, 2015 6:43am



Jeff Kohley · Saint Charles, Illinois

In other breaking news, young people make bad choices, duh! When do we start requiring people to grow up and take responsibility for themselves? We are creating multiple generations of whiners and codependent people. How about we start teaching resilience, perseverance and adaptability!

Like Reply  10 · Jan 12, 2015 7:52pm



Daniel Dew

1. There are plenty of adults that make the same bad choices daily, and still consider themselves respectable members of society.

2. They already know "resilience, perseverance and adaptability", hence them attending a university and not succumbing to society's preconceived notions and prejudices regarding people of color .

Sadly Jeff, your opinion of the situation was regurgitated from the mind of someone that's never worn the skin, and never subjected to a life of being "other". I'm not saying people of color should focus on playing victims, but there's no harm in developing empathy for people who's lives may not be like yours.

Like · Reply ·  43 · Jan 12, 2015 9:39pm · Edited



Robert Brown

Daniel Dew...that response deserves a million thumbs up! Thanks You Sir

Like · Reply ·  10 · Jan 13, 2015 8:29am



Sharon Dalzell-Schlotthauer · Owner-Operator at Sharon's Massage in my own Studio. also Dr. Steven Young,YoungChiropractic

Daniel Dew and consider that one cannot teach what one does not know.. thinking ya know.. is not the same as knowing.. prejudice gets passed down as matter of fact.. when it's nothing of the sort.. beliefs are not necessarily based in fact..

Like · Reply ·  1 · Jan 13, 2015 8:31am

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Chris Angel · Shenandoah University

We have been so successful as a nation that we can waste our time on such triviality as "microaggression." How wonderful the world would be if everyone was incubated from every little transgression?! LOL What a bunch of delicate daisies you folks are! Thank you for making the world worse.

Like · Reply ·  16 · Jan 12, 2015 7:58pm



Dedrick Warmack · Oakland, California

There are more failures in our society than successes but you're talking about the successes of white America I'm sure

Like · Reply ·  2 · Jan 13, 2015 1:08am



Arthur Pfister · Claiborne & Dumaine

Mônica Vieira -and you make it worst.

Like · Reply ·  2 · Jan 13, 2015 3:24am



Sharon Dalzell-Schlotthauer · Owner-Operator at Sharon's Massage in my own Studio. also Dr. Steven Young,YoungChiropractic

now we're throwing our food at each other??? so much for critical thinking..

Like · Reply · Jan 13, 2015 8:33am

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Aaron Walker · Columbia University Teachers' College

If the cupcakes on college campuses can't handle it, there is certainly a community college nearby that will provide them with an associates degree in over sensitivity studies.

Like · Reply ·  13 · Jan 12, 2015 8:14pm



Marissa Elena · Assistant Professor at University of Cincinnati

Hoping you're not an actual educator.

Like · Reply ·  14 · Jan 13, 2015 10:35am



William Bieber

It's about childish

Like · Reply · Jan 12, 2015 8:48pm

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