

Microaffirmations, Privilege, and a Duty to Redistribute

Emma McClure, University of Toronto, emma.mcclure@mail.utoronto.ca

1. Consensus View: Use Microaffirmations to Counteract Microaggressions

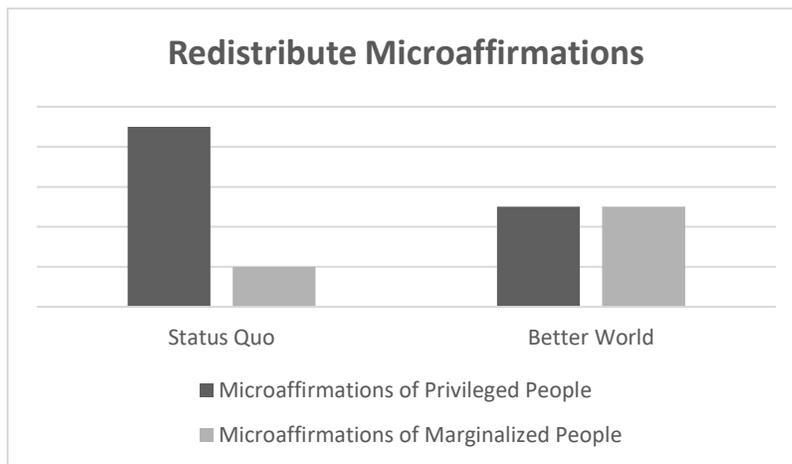
- Microaggressions = small harms that when repeated can accumulate into significant disadvantages for members of marginalized groups
- Microaffirmations = small benefits that when repeated can accumulate into significant advantages for members of marginalized groups

Problems with Consensus View:

1. **Condescension:** Microaffirmations are not merely a benefit that privileged people grant to (weak and needy) marginalized people.
2. **Hides Operation of Privilege:** Privileged people receive microaffirmations all of the time.
3. **Misrepresents as Supererogation:** Correcting the injustice of microaggressions is not a morally praise-worthy, optional endeavor.

2. My View, Part 1: Redistributive Account of Microaffirmations

- Microaffirmations = small acknowledgments that support an individual's agency



Fixing Problems with Consensus View:

1. **Less Condescending:** We all need microaffirmations in order to develop and maintain our autonomous capacities (imaginative, volitional, interpersonal).
 - Pay attention
 - Offer empathy
 - Give benefit of doubt
 - Tell us we make sense
2. **Reveals Operation of Privilege:** We can't just be nicer to everyone. We have to give less to privileged in order to give more to marginalized.
3. **Moral Duty, Not Supererogation:** We have a duty to resist our default habits and redistribute microaffirmations more equally.

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3. My View, Part 2: Microaggressing Against the Privileged

- Microaggressions = stereotype-based slights that corrode an individual's agency

Redefinition allows for microaggressions to be employed against privileged people.

- Interrupt
- Avoid eye contact
- Bump into when walking
- Overgeneralize/Stereotype:
 - “White guys shouldn't talk about this issue”
 - “White people can't be trusted”
 - “Men are rapists” (too extreme?)

Arguments for committing microaggressions against privileged people:

1. Allows us to combat continued inequality between privileged and marginalized people.
2. Excess microaffirmations give privileged people a protective coating that inhibits empathy. Microaggressions can help chip away at protective coating.

Not arguing we are morally required to microaggress against the privileged, but instead that it is morally permissible, perhaps even morally praise-worthy.

[If time allows]

4. Potential Problems with My View:

1. **In intersectional contexts, difficult to microaggress purely against privileged identity. Risk microaggressing against marginalized identity instead.**

e.g. “White Tears”

- Good to remind white women of our privilege and power to oppress
- But may also remind us of having our emotions dismissed and associated with hysteria

2. **When attempt to microaffirm, may end up being condescending—or worse, microaggressive!**

Again, intersectionality is important:

e.g. “You were so articulate. You spoke with poise and conviction. You were plenty loud enough, and we could hear you in the back.”

- Said to me
- Said to a young Black or Latina woman