



EXAMINING MICROAGGRESSIONS TOWARDS ASIAN AMERICAN PHYSICIANS THROUGH QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

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Asian Americans have been historically portrayed as the model minority – individuals who have achieved academic and occupational success through hard work and determination (Yi & Museus, 2015). Because of the model minority stereotype, Asian Americans are believed to experience little racism despite a long-documented history of prejudice and discrimination in the U.S. (Wong & Halgin, 2006). Our study re-centers the racialized experiences of this population and shows how Asian Americans are marginalized in professional settings—the very settings that are thought to “prove” their success. Specifically, we use qualitative interviews to examine the ways in which Asian American physicians, who are a subset of a larger study on physicians of all racial backgrounds, encounter microaggressions. Microaggressions are subtle verbal, nonverbal, visual, and behavioral insults directed toward people of color that are usually hostile and derogatory (Sue, Capodilupo, Torina, Bucceri, Holder & Esquilin, 2007). From our data analysis, we found a recurring theme: the professional skills and abilities of Asian Americans are doubted. Three excerpts from the Asian American participants who were interviewed support this theme:

- “I mean being in Utah has its... especially as a woman and [an Asian American], it has its own special set of challenges. You know, your classmates doubting whether you actually really belong, that you didn’t take the spot of a more qualified White male.”
- “So when [patients] come in, ... sometime I see a blank stare because I’m sure they were looking for an older white male which didn’t happen, and I am not sure they have ever seen a person from India, or so...”
- “Like rarely I will just get frank ridiculous comments like one person said, “I can’t understand your accent... “When do you have to go back...to where you came from?”

The findings suggest that Asian American physicians’ abilities are questioned despite their academic and professional achievements, and shows how Asian Americans experience racial microaggressions in the workplace.



References

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