

Supplementary Material for Finding Microaggressions in the Wild: A Case for Locating Elusive Phenomena in Social Media Posts

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Abstract

This is the supplementary material for the EMNLP submission titled “Finding Microaggressions in the Wild: A Case for Locating Elusive Phenomena in Social Media Posts”.

1 List of Manually Selected Subreddits

- Advice
- asktransgender
- askwomenadvice
- AskWomen
- BreakUps
- cars
- changemyview
- CollegeBasketball
- DIY
- fantasyfootball
- gaming
- justneckbeardthings
- lgbt
- malefashionadvice
- MensRights
- motorcycles
- niceguys
- ProgrammerHumor
- relationships
- science
- seduction
- socialanxiety
- sports
- techsupport
- Tinder
- TrollXChromosomes
- TwoXChromosomes
- unpopularopinion

2 Annotation Guidelines

Figure 1 shows the guidelines that we show to the annotators.

3 Microaggressions Themes

Attributive assigns an attribute to an individual based on their identity as a member of a marginalized group.

- “Attribution of Stereotype”—a statement that explicitly or implicitly links some attribute to an individual based on their identity. Due to the breadth of this category and how often it co-occurs with other sub-themes, this is the most common sub-theme in our corpus (32.4%). Examples:
 - “You people make a lot of those, don’t you?”—explicitly links stereotype to group, most common version of this.
 - “I was so surprised when you [requested accommodations]. You’re so smart and so pretty!”—implicitly links stereotype by surprise at its defiance.
 - “You’re too pretty to be gay.”—combination with other sub-theme, in this case “Erasure”.
- “Assumption of Abnormality”—a statement that indicates that marginalized individuals are abnormal. Unlike Attribution of Stereotype, most examples of this sub-theme are subtle and implicit.
 - “I’m shopping for a birthday card for my dad. He’s black. All the cards are for white dads.”—assumes all members of audience are members of dominant group, implicitly frames marginalized individuals as outliers. Not always “directed” at targets.
 - “Granted, you won’t have a normal family.”—explicitly labels marginalized groups as abnormal. Rare compared to implicit examples.
- “Alien in Own Land”—a statement explicitly or implicitly stating that marginalized indi-

Overview

The following study is designed to measure the offensiveness of comments on social media. You will be presented with a set of comments and asked to rate the following: If this comment was said to you, how offended would you be? You can answer "Not Offended", or pick one of the scale from 1 to 6, with 1 representing "Slightly Offended" and 6 representing "Extremely Offended".

Ex. A comment like "So happy for you :)" or "Yeah sorry I don't remember where they were exactly" might be classified as "no offense".

Ex. A comment full of slurs, direct attacks, and targeted insults might be classified as "extreme offense". Note that some of these comments might consist of indirect insults, ambiguous phrasing, or other instances where you might not know for sure whether the author of the comment intended to cause offense. For the purposes of this study, the original intent of the author is irrelevant. All we are interested in is whether you would feel offended by such a comment. Not all comments will contain offensive language.

WARNING: Because the aim of the study is to measure levels of offense caused by internet comments, it is possible some samples might contain distressing or insulting language, including unmarked triggers and uncensored slurs. Before proceeding with this study, please be sure you are willing to risk exposure to these sort of comments.

Steps

1. Read the original post
2. While taking note of the gender of the person responding (highlighted in yellow), click on "Read Response"
3. Mark one of the seven options on how offended you feel when reading the comment

Rules & Tips

- We would like to know people's natural responses to certain styles of comments
- We recommend you to make judgments under 5 seconds after you finish reading the comment

Figure 1: The annotation guidelines given to the crowdworkers.

viduals are foreign.

- “But where were you before moving here?”—assumes members of marginalized groups must be foreign.
- “She doesn’t know that movie, she wasn’t born here!”—assumes members of marginalized groups lack skills or knowledge common to the “native” group.

Institutionalized reflects biases in institutions like employment, law enforcement, and legislation.

- “Second-Class Citizen”—a statement where members of a marginalized class are assumed to belong to low-status positions in society, or are implied to deserve lower status.
 - “I assumed you were my nurse.”—assumes member of marginalized group has job perceived as low-status.
 - “One of the men asked only the women if one of them would take notes...”—assumes member of marginalized group will do task perceived as low-status.
- “Assumption of Criminal Status”—a statement linking a person’s identity to criminality, danger, or illness.
 - “Customers sometimes sneak in alcohol. He always only checks ME”—assumes member of marginalized group is engaged in criminal behavior.
 - “Those kids are SCARY. I was afraid I’d get stabbed.”—assumes individual’s identity makes them more frightening
 - “My coworker joked I should be sent to the loony bin.”—frames individual’s identity as a health issue, something to be contained and fixed. This type of the sub-theme also intersects with ableist stereotypes that the mentally ill are inherently dangerous.
- “Objectification”—a statement diminishing the humanity of a marginalized group.
 - “I find girls with short hair ugly.”—equates an individual’s worth with how attractive a member of the dominant class finds them.
 - “I want to steal a black baby. Black babies are just so much cuter than white babies!”—reduces an individual to an accessory for a member of the dominant class.

Teaming repositions the target as being the same as the perpetrator.

- “Denial of Lived Experience”—a statement which minimizes the experiences of a member of the marginalized group. A common sub-theme as it often occurs as a follow-up to some other microaggression.
 - “Don’t you think your reaction was offensive to others as well?”—implies that the feelings of marginalized groups are not accurate reflections of reality.
 - “I (a lesbian) requested training for my coworkers on working with LGBTQ clients...I was told this was not necessary...A straight male colleague requests this and it is immediately organized.”—gives more weight to the experiences of the dominant group in discussions of discrimination
- “Myth of Meritocracy”—a statement which assumes that discrimination has already been ended, and thus differences in treatment are due to one’s merit.
 - “I got told I was the ‘ethnic diversity’ of the company.”—assumes that members of marginalized groups are given unfair advantages through affirmative action.
 - “If you give them handouts, these people don’t work.”—assumes that success is a direct measure of merit.
- “Ownership”—a statement or action that asserts members of the dominant class have some claim to a marginalized group’s experiences, identity, or culture.
 - “I walked by a white woman dressed as a geisha, with her face painted and hair darkened.”—assumes members of the dominant class can own parts of a marginalized group’s culture.
 - “I love your curly hair! Are you mixed?”—assumes members of the dominant class have a right to details of an individual’s background.
 - “Why do people feel like it’s appropriate to randomly touch my hair?”—assumes members of the dominant class have a right to an individual’s body.

Othering repositions the target in relation to some “othered” group.

- “Monolith”—the assumption that all members of a marginalized group are identical, includ-

ing the target of the microaggression.

- “She calls all Asians ‘Chinese’.”—assumes all members of a broad group of marginalized individuals are functionally identical.
- “A young white woman asked me if I was related to another Black woman.”—assumes all members of a marginalized group are closely connected.
- “Erasure”—the assumption that because all members of a marginalized group are identical, the target does not belong to that group.
 - “You probably aren’t bisexual.”—denies target’s identity.
 - “But you’re not REALLY disabled.”—asserts that target’s identity does not “count”.