
Understanding and Avoiding Microaggressions

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Objectives

1. Define microaggressions and related concepts
 2. Consider the impact of microaggressions
 3. Practice identifying and managing microaggressions
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“**Microaggressions** are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership” (Sue, 2010)

Suggested resource:

<http://www.microaggressions.com/>

Types of Microaggressions

1. **Microassault** – derogatory verbal or non-verbal behaviors; usually deliberate
2. **Microinsult** – insensitive or rude comments; usually unintentional
3. **Microinvalidation** – negating or nullifying the thoughts, feelings, or experiences of a member of a target group; usually unintentional

Macroaggression

In addition to microaggressions perpetuated by individuals, we must also consider those that are more macro, systemic, and/or environmental, usually directed toward an entire group of people, such as:

- Media coverage
- Political commentary/discourse
- Overheard conversations or comments
- Graffiti, t-shirts, bumper stickers



**Micro
Aggressions**

Intent vs. Impact

- Intention is somebody's hopes for how an action will affect someone.
 - Impact is how the person is actually feeling the action. Note that each person is the authority here, but only one has the potential to experience material harm.
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Impact

Microaggressions and their larger physical, mental and emotional impacts have been described using many metaphors, like:

- Death by a thousand papercuts
 - (Nadal, Issa, Leon, Meterko, Wideman, & Wong, 2011)
 - Pile-on-principle
 - (Cullen, 2011)
 - Like receiving a slap in the face
 - (Lawrence, 1990)
 - Mosquito bites
 - (Fusion Comedy, 2018)
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Gallery Walk

- We've placed pieces of paper on the walls around the room.
 - Gather around a specific sheet of paper and then unfold it for your group to read.
 - You will spend roughly two-minutes on reading each, and then will rotate clockwise on our direction.
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Gallery Walk Debrief

At your tables discuss:

- What did you notice?
 - What do you feel?
 - What impact does microaggression have on the department of psychology?
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Breakouts Sessions

- Faculty (Bryan 202)
 - Staff (OIE Conference)
 - Grad Students (EUC Kirkland)
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Planning for Success: Implementing Inclusive Strategies

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Impact

- Disengagement
 - Impatience
 - Mental health
 - Diminished sense of belonging
 - Hostile environments
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Strategies to Combat Microaggressions

Inclusive Language: Strategies to Avoid (Some) Language Pitfalls Around Social Identity

1. Press Pause! Let others take the lead on how and when to describe their own social identities.
 2. Show others you care through your language choices, rather than show that you're "politically correct."
 3. Avoid "correcting" language usage that you find "wrong"; instead, address the statement or word choice through "I" statements that share personal impact.
 4. Seek first to understand others' ideas about identity, then to be understood.
 5. Check your ego at the door.
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Strategies to Combat Microaggressions

Raise the B.A.R

- a. Breathe
 - i. Relaxing, centering, reduces responding on impulse
- b. Acknowledge
 - i. Actively listen, repeat what you heard, ask for clarity
- c. Respond
 - i. Understand in order to be understood

(Cullen 2008)

Strategies to Combat Microaggressions

4C's- a facilitation strategy to help deal with difficult statements

- a. **Clarify** the speaker's comment to get a sense of what they are saying.
- b. **Change** the conversation from generalizations/opinions to focus on pat experiences
- c. **Create** space for others to respond and share alternative perspective
- d. **Challenge** the statement with a **credible counterpoint**.

Adapted from The Sustained Dialogue Institute

Strategies to Combat Microaggressions

PAN and PAIR

1. **PAN**- Pay Attention Now)
2. **ASK** about the specifics behind the person's comment or behavior
3. **INTERRUPT** the dynamics
4. **RELATE** to the person or their comment/behavior (attempt)
5. **SHARE** about yourself ~ self---disclose with a story or example; your feelings in the moment; the impact of a comment or behavior, etc.