

The Impact of Microaggressions

Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Clark College



B.U.I.L.D. TRAINING PROGRAM

Broadening Understanding,
Intercultural Leadership and Development



LEARNING OUTCOMES

Today, you will learn:

- How to define and identify the three types of microaggressions
- Examples of microaggressions that impact Systemically Non-Dominant Employees
- Tools for responding to and minimizing harm of microaggressions



AGREEMENTS

(adapted from Courageous Conversations)

“

Where there is
discomfort, there
is an opportunity
for growth.

- Create brave space
- Discomfort is a thing...and it is welcomed
- Respect each other
- Stay engaged
- Stories told stay here, knowledge leaves
- Speak your truth
- Expect and accept non-closure

Where are you from? Where are you really from? No, where are you really really from?

What are you?

You speak English so well.

You're not like other Muslim people.

What do your people think about that?

RACIAL
MICROAGGRESSIONS

What are Microaggressions?

You're really pretty, for someone so dark

You don't act

MICROAGGRESSIONS

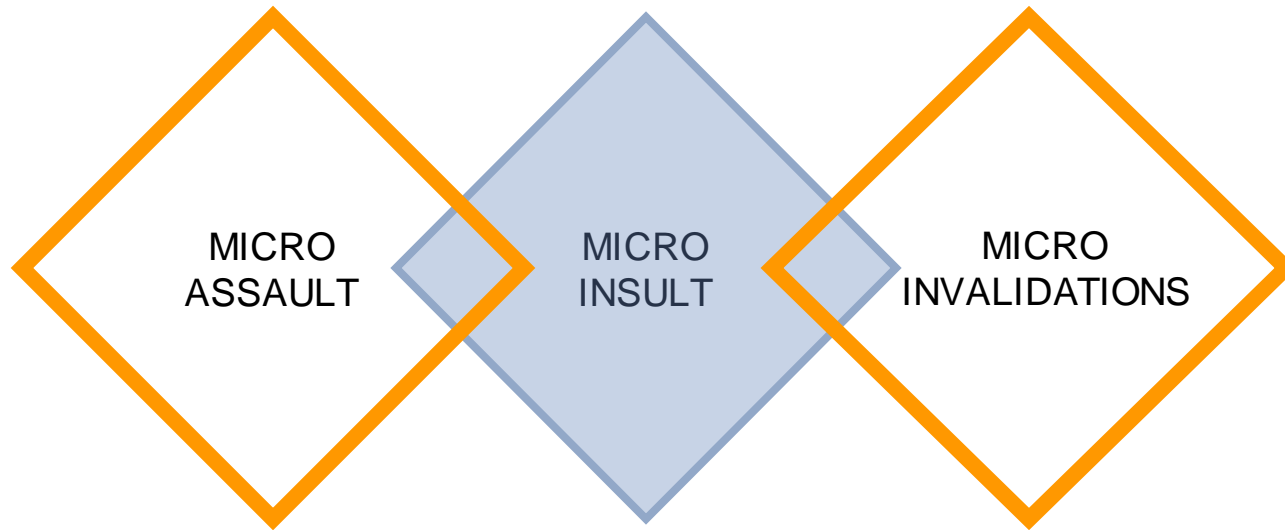
Individual

- "Every-day verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership" (Sue et al., 2007).

Environmental

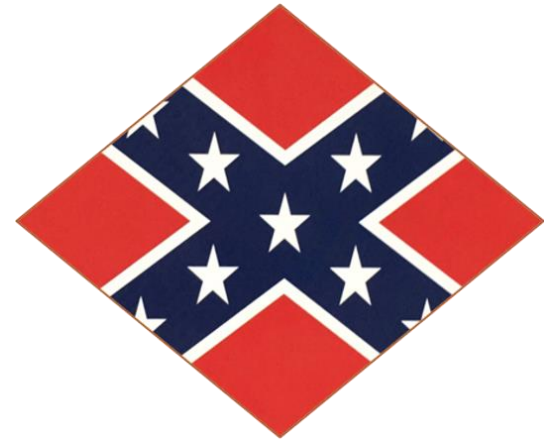
- World History classes that focus solely on European contributions to the world.
- Art that is not reflective of diversity.
- Staff and faculty are mostly White, cisgender, able-bodied and heterosexual.

THREE TYPES OF MICROAGGRESSIONS



MICROASSAULT

- A microassault is an explicit derogation characterized primarily by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions.
- Examples: swastika graffiti, other bias-based incidents, use of "n-word, r-word, f-word".
- "Old-fashioned racism/discrimination"



**A microassault is deliberate.
It is meant to hurt and be
hurtful.**



**There is normally some
form of anonymity to
the aggression. i.e., swastika
in the bathroom, or
anonymous hate on social
media.**



**Used when perpetrators
feel safe enough to launch
attack.**

MICROASSAULT

A microinsult is a form of microaggression that demeans a person's racial heritage or identity.

Often unconscious and the perpetrator may not know the level of insult.

Example: Not even trying to say an ethnic name because you "can't say it".

MICROINSULT

A microinsult is subtle
and generally
unconscious

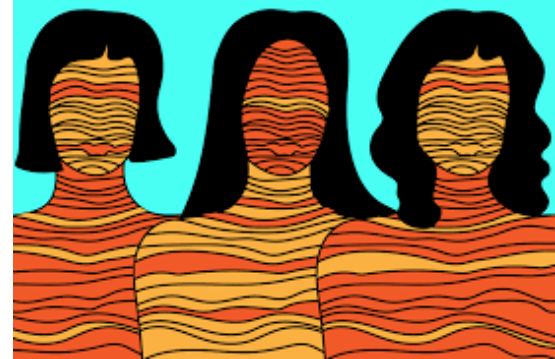
Can be verbal or
nonverbal

Example: moving people
of color to the back of a
room, locking your door
when a person of color
walks by.

MICROINSULT

MICROINVALIDATION

- A microinvalidation is a communication that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a systemically non-dominant person.



A microinvalidation is generally unconscious. The perpetrator is not necessarily intending it to be rude.



Microinvalidations can be so subtle that sometimes, neither the perpetrator nor the target know it is happening.



Example: "I don't even see color!"

MICROINVALIDATION



Read the scenario, and as you go through these, think about times **where you may have heard** something like this or times **where you have done or said** something like this.

Think about the message this sends to the receiver

We will share out to the larger group

THEMES AND MESSAGES

THEME	MICRO AGGRESSION	MESSAGE
<p>Ascription of intelligence Assigning intelligence to a person of color on the basis of their race</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. “You are a credit to your race”2. “You are so articulate”3. Asking an Asian person to help with a math or science problem.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. People of color are generally not as intelligent as White people.2. It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent.3. All Asians are intelligent and good in math/sciences.

THEMES AND MESSAGES

THEME	MICRO AGGRESSION	MESSAGE
<p>Alien in Own Land When Asian Americans and Latino Americans are assumed to be foreign born</p>	<p>“Where are you from?” “Where were you born?” “You speak good English” A person asking an Asian American to teach them words in their native language.</p>	<p>You are not American. You are a foreigner.</p>

THEMES AND MESSAGES

THEME	MICRO AGGRESSION	MESSAGE
<p>Criminality/ assumption of criminal status</p> <p>Assumption of promiscuity of gay or trans* folx</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A White man or woman clutching their purse or checking their wallet as a Black Latinx person approaches or passes• A store owner following a customer of color around the store• A White person waits to ride the next elevator when a person of color is on it• Assuming a person a gay or trans person will hit on you because they are of the same gender/identity or expression as you. OR assuming promiscuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Denying a person of color's racial/ethnic experiences.• Assimilate/acculturate to the dominant culture.• Denying the individual as a racial/cultural being.• Your sexual identity is the only thing that matters

THEMES AND MESSAGES

THEME	MICRO AGGRESSION	MESSAGE
<p>Color blindness Statements that indicate that a White person does not want to acknowledge race.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. “When I look at you, I don’t see color.”2. “America is a melting pot.”3. “There is only one race, the human race.”	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Denying a person of color’s racial/ ethnic experiences.2. Assimilate/acclurate to the dominant culture.3. Denying the individual as a racial/cultural being.

THEMES AND MESSAGES

THEME	MICRO AGGRESSION	MESSAGE
<p>Myth of meritocracy Statements which assert that race does not play a role in life successes.</p>	<p>“I believe the most qualified person should get the job.”</p> <p>“Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough.”</p>	<p>People of color are given extra unfair benefits because of their race.</p> <p>People of color are lazy and/or incompetent and need to work harder.</p>

THEMES AND MESSAGES

THEME	MICRO AGGRESSION	MESSAGE
<p>Denial of individual racism/homophobia A statement made when folx deny their racial or trans/homophobic biases.</p>	<p>Denying a person of color or queer person's lived experiences.</p> <p>Denying the individual as a racial/cultural being.</p>	<p>Assimilate/acclurate to the dominant culture.</p> <p>You don't belong here.</p>

THEMES AND MESSAGES

THEME	MICRO AGGRESSION	MESSAGE
Entitlement of information/Right to Information	Touching a Black person's hair Asking invasive questions about body, hair, personal information. Asking a trans* person if they have had "the surgery" or if they are a man or woman	I don't have power over my body or personal information.



INTENT VS.
IMPACT



THINK
PAIR
SHARE



Has there ever been a time where your intent did not match the impact of what you said or did? (Or if someone's intention had an adverse impact on you.) Discuss what you were trying to do and what actually happened.



DO YOU BELONG HERE?

MICROAGGRESSION DILEMMAS

Clash of Racial Realities

Invisibility of Unintentional Bias

Perceived Minimal Harm of
Microaggressions

Catch-22 of Responding to
Microaggressions

RETENTION

**SELF-
DOUBT**

PHYSICAL

HEALTH

**MENTAL
HEALTH**

SELF-WORTH

What does this mean specifically for your workplace?

Interactions/relationships with students and colleagues

Awareness of how Systemically Non-Dominant populations navigate the world around them.

Intentionality with our actions around interpersonal communications.

RESPONDING TO MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Restate or rephrase
“I heard you say...is that correct?”
- Ask for clarification/more information
“What do you mean by that?”
- Separate intent from impact
“I know you didn’t realize this, but when you ____ it was hurtful/offensive because ____.
Instead you could have said/done ____.”
- Express your feelings
“When you ____, I felt ____”
- Challenge
“Actually, in my experience ____.”
- Promote empathy
“How would you feel if someone said something like that about your ____.”
- Remind them of rules/policies
“Your behavior is against our policies...”
- Write it out
Sometimes writing helps get feelings out.



RESPONDING TO MICROAGGRESSIONS

WALK AWAY!

It is not your responsibility as the victim of a microaggression to always be the educator.

Empathy vs. Sympathy



Open The Front Door



Observe: Concrete, factual observations, not evaluative, “I noticed...”

Be able to agree on observations stated



Think: Thoughts based on observation, “I think...”



Feel: Emotions, “I feel...”

Actual feelings you have as a result of the conflict/observation



Desire: Specific request or inquiry about desired outcome, “I would like...”

Example using OTFD

I noticed we just had a difficult comment made that not everybody's comfortable with. I also feel a bit uncomfortable with what was said. I would like to hear what are people in the room feeling right now.

[if there's silence] Explain why the comment was problematic and gently offer an alternative perspective. Ask again how people in the room are feeling.

Practice Responding

Using any of the scenarios we saw in
our group activity

(or your own), write out a response
using OTFD

Then, pair up and role play how you
would respond either in the
moment, or afterward

We will share out a few examples as
a group

IF YOU'VE COMMITTED A MICROAGGRESSION

1. Don't be defensive!

Remember, that a person sharing with you that you have committed a microaggression is taking a risk in sharing this information.

2. Acknowledge harm and impact.

Apologize for the harm, but be sincere.

3. Reflect

Reflect on how you can change your interactions in the future so that you don't make this mistake again.

SHARE OUT



Something I learned today was...



I still wonder about...



Something I will do as a result of our session is...

THANKS!
