

Microaggressions: They Aren't Being Too Sensitive



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CANSSI – May 4, 2023

The background of the slide is a grayscale photograph of a library. It shows rows of bookshelves filled with books, and a person is visible in the center, sitting and reading a book. The lighting is soft, creating a quiet and studious atmosphere.

learning OUTCOME

After participating, you will leave with a plan to explore, confront and recalibrate any personal, cultural, or gendered behaviors you see or experience that have the potential to cause harm.



AGENDA

1. What is a Microaggression

- Definitions
- Examples

2. How Can You Address a Microaggression in Real Time?

3. Barriers to Addressing Problematic Behavior

Ground Rules

- The facilitator's frame of reference is centered on experiences as a career administrator that occur in the United States. We acknowledge that there are participants from other countries and/or in faculty ranks who may have other experiences.
- We agree that I'm not here to teach you how to not be racist or biased or accuse you of being racist or biased.
- I will assume that everyone participating today is a good person.
- We need to agree that we are safe and not in any danger, even if we feel uncomfortable.
- We need to be willing to be uncomfortable.
- We will be honest in a way that prioritizes honesty, not what people think of us.
- We will resist the urge to get defensive.
- We will share and consider examples of our own behavior.
 - The Devil does not need an advocate in this space.
- We will give grace.

#1

What is a Microaggression?

What is a microaggression?

- Microaggressions are more than just insults, insensitive comments, or generalized jerky behavior.
- They're something very specific: the kinds of remarks, questions, or actions that are painful because they have to do with a person's membership in a group that's discriminated against or subject to stereotypes. A key part of what makes them so disconcerting is that they happen casually, frequently, and often without any harm intended, in everyday life.
- “The everyday slights, indignities, put downs and insults that people of color, women, LGBT populations or those who are marginalized experiences in their day-to-day interactions with people” ~Derald W. Sue
- Microaggressions expose subconscious bias

<https://www.vox.com/2015/2/16/8031073/what-are-microaggressions>

PRIVILEGED GROUP		MARGINALIZED GROUP
Late 30's to late 50's/early 60's	1. Age	Younger; Older
White	2. Race	Person of Color; People who identify as Biracial/Multiracial
Male	3. Sex Assigned at Birth	Female; Intersex
Cisgender	4. Gender Identity	Transgender; Gender Nonconforming; Gender Queer
President, Vice Presidents, Deans, Directors, Faculty, Supervisors	5. Hierarchical Level	Students, Graduate Teaching Assistants, direct service staff
Heterosexual	6. Sexual Orientation	Gay; Lesbian; Bisexual; Queer; Questioning
Upper class; Upper middle class; Middle class	7. Social Class	Working class; Living in poverty
Graduate or 4-year degree; highly valued school; private school	8. Educational Level; Credential; Certificate	High school degree; 1 st generation to college; less valued school; public school
Christian (Protestant; Catholic)	9. Religion/Spirituality	Muslim, Jewish, Agnostic, Hindu, Atheist, Buddhist, Spiritual, LDS, Jehovah Witness, Pagan, ...
U.S. born	10. National Origin	"Foreign born;" Born in a country other than the U.S.
Not disabled	11. Disability Status	People with a physical, mental, emotional and/or learning disability; People living with AIDS/HIV+
"American;" Western European heritage	12. Ethnicity/Culture	Puerto Rican; Navajo; Mexican; Nigerian; Chinese; Iranian; Russian; Jewish...
Fit society's image of attractive, beautiful, handsome, athletic...	13. Size, Appearance, Athleticism	Perceived by others as too fat, tall, short, unattractive, not athletic...
Proficient in the use of "Standard" English	14. English Literacy	Use of "non-standard" English dialects; have an "accent"
Legally married in a heterosexual relationship	15. Marital Status	Single; divorced; widowed; same sex partnership; unmarried heterosexual partnership...
Parent of children born within a 2-parent heterosexual marriage	16. Parental Status	Unmarried parent; do not have children; non-residential parent; LGBTQ parents...

CHAT



Based on this perspective, how often have I felt marginalized in my work?

CHAT



Based on this perspective, how often have I disregarded someone else's feelings of being marginalized?

#2

**How Can You Address a
Microaggression in Real Time?**

How Can You Address a Microaggression in Real Time?

- Benefit of the doubt:
 - I know you didn't intend this, but when you mispronounce my name, I feel...
- Ask questions that reflect/raise awareness
 - How do your parents feel about you being heterosexual?
- Bring attention to the PROCESS of the discussion
 - I'm noticing that whenever we talk about _____, someone changes the subject. I'm curious what others have noticed.
- Ask clarifying question
 - What has been your experience that led you to believe?

Common Microaggressions in Academia

- Job/Scholarship Postings stating “we are looking for *qualified* applicants from diverse backgrounds”
- Asking an Asian student/colleague to give their opinion on current issues in China
- Saying “I don’t see color”
- Saying “your name is too hard, do you have a nickname?”
- Telling a student with a disability that you will not make accommodations in your class because the world will not accommodate them in the future.
- Hosting food oriented events during Ramadan
- Using the explanation that because one person of a given race/gender identity/religion, etc. agrees with your views then no other person of that same race/gender identity/religion, etc. is allowed to disagree.
- Referring to an adult colleague as “kiddo” or telling them they “look like a student”
- Suggesting or stating that a colleague is too old to remain in their position.



BREAK

#3

Barriers to Addressing Problematic Behavior

BREAK OUTS



Consider this Scenario:

A post-doc student complains their Project Manager. The Project Manager has been consistently rude to them in the classroom but they are not rude to other students. They went to Dean Aggression and the Dean's response was "I can't mandate that a professor be nice. If you are the only person having the problem then maybe you are being overly sensitive". The student then comes to you for advice and confides that they are the only openly gay student in the course and believes that is the source of the treatment. They did NOT share this belief with the Dean.

Barriers to Addressing Problematic Behavior

1. What if I make a mistake?
2. What if I say something stereotypic or biased?
3. Will I be seen as a fraud?
4. What if I can't handle a situation?
5. If I don't manage this well, will people get hurt...
6. If I don't manage this well, it might hurt my relationships with others
7. Am I making this worse?
8. Am I ready to participate in this discussion?
9. People will get defensive and I won't know how to respond.
10. The conversation will "get out of control."
11. People will get too emotional and I won't have the skills to manage the situation.
12. I don't know enough to engage in the conversation effectively.
13. If I don't do this well, I'll let people down.
14. "Things won't change."
15. My comments will be dismissed.
16. I'll feel triggered by someone's comments or behaviors.

BREAK OUTS



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GROUP DISCUSSION



What, if any, differences occurred in your approach when you removed all fear-based responses?

TAKEAWAYS



- **Microaggressions are behaviors that have an impact regardless of intent.**
- **Many of our microaggressive behaviors are learned and generally accepted as innocent.**
- **Personal fear can get in the way of addressing behaviors that cause lasting harm.**

QUESTIONS?

Thank you!

Please remember to complete the *event evaluation*.
Your comments will help us continually improve the
quality of our programs.

<https://forms.office.com/r/0vKHiqg0Q9>

