WHAT ARE MICROAGGRESSIONS AND HOW DO THEY IMPACT LEARNING?

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CENTER FOR TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING
OUTLINE

• What are microaggressions?

• How do they appear in classrooms and what are their impacts?

• What can we do about them?

• Announcements
SOME ASSUMPTIONS

Our society is one in which there exists individual, institutional and societal biases.

We have inherited the biases of our ancestors, institutions and society.

Biases can be expressed in invisible, unintentional, and subtle ways and yet remain consequential.
TODAY’S CONVERSATION

- Open
- Generous

We can never judge the lives of others, because each person knows only their own pain and renunciation. It’s one thing to feel that you are on the right path, but it’s another to think that yours is the only path.”
~Paulo Coehlo
WHAT IS MICROAGGRESSION?

The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs or insults (whether intentional or unintentional) that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages to target persons based upon their marginalized group membership.

The cumulative effect has a larger impact.

Sue, 2010
MICROINEQUITIES

The ways in which individuals are "either singled out, or overlooked, ignored, or otherwise discounted" based on an unchangeable characteristic such as race or gender.

A microinequity generally takes the form of a gesture, different kind of language, treatment, bias or even tone of voice.
TYPES OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

• Micro-assaults – conscious and intentional actions or slurs
• Micro-insults – (often unconscious) verbal and nonverbal communication that subtly convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person’s identity
• Micro-invalidations – (often unconscious) communication that subtly excludes, negates or nullifies the thoughts, feelings or reality of a marginalized

Sue (2010)
microaggressions

microinsult

- Ascription of intelligence based on race
- Pathologizing cultural values & communication styles
- Assumption of criminal or other status
- eg. Rolling eyes when someone speaks of their culture

microassault

- Purposeful hurtful, discriminatory actions. Direct, publicly expressed bias
- eg. Fraternity video
- eg. Avoiding working with others in groups

microinvalidation

- Alien in own land
- Color Blindness
- Interrupting a woman while speaking
- Denial of racism
- Valuing the contribution of a dominant student over a marginalized
COMPLICATIONS

- individualized bias
- promotes hierarchy of oppression/victimization
- confusion with all environmental indignities
- intent
EXAMPLES OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ScOA-_tsi-Y
Please do the worksheet
“Death by a thousand nicks…”
### Messages of marginalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race: Non-white</td>
<td>You &amp; your people are criminals; your achievements are because of affirmative action; you’re ugly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity: Not European-American</td>
<td>You’re not a true American; your food is weird; your name is abnormal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender/Sex: Female</td>
<td>You’re a sex object; you’re weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation: LGBT*</td>
<td>Your displays of affection are offensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion: Not Christian</td>
<td>Your religion is immoral or violent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability: Not Abled</td>
<td>You are deficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran status: Not Civilian</td>
<td>You are right-wing and violent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class/SES: Not Upper Class</td>
<td>You are tasteless and have no manners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MICRO AGGRESSIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

• inappropriate jokes
• singling out students/increased scrutiny
• project due dates on religious holidays
• stereotyping
• invalidation and distortion in curricular choices
• exclusion from groups
• responding more readily to inquiries from male students with European names
• consistently mispronouncing names
WORKING THROUGH SOME SCENARIOS

- What is the societal/hidden message that makes the question or statement a microaggression?
- How might this microaggression impact learning in this classroom?
- What are emotional, social, and physical costs of this microaggression?
IMPACT OF MICRO AGGRESSIONS

• invalidation of group identity or experiential reality
• devaluation of individual people and groups
• communication of being a lesser human being
• intimidation
• regulation to inferior status and treatment
• psychological and physical problems
MICROAGGRESSIONS AND LEARNING

• perception of negative or hostile campus climate

• decreased cognitive functioning

• students who witness bias display negative behaviors and/or devalue marginalized people’s activities and work

Salvatore & Shelton, 2007

Goodman, et. al., 2008
SCENARIOS

- What are potential responses from the instructor?
WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT?

- attempt to understand one's own biases
- learn about others’ cultures, histories, experiences. listen
- confront biased students
- present evidence that counteracts bias and stereotypes
- do not allow pejorative terms in class
- allow vernacular comfortable to the speaker
- humor
- questioning
- surprise
- ignore it
Range of intensity of responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct confrontation</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Private confrontation</th>
<th>Provide counter examples</th>
<th>Ignore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

decide based on goals:

• reduce bias choose high intensity or moderate intensity
• maintain comfort for target of bias choose moderate intensity
• maintain comfort for all students choose moderate intensity
• model unbiased behavior choose moderate intensity

**Highest levels of learning occur with moderate arousal**
REFERENCES


CENTER FOR TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING
ANNOUNCEMENTS

• April 10 - First Friday Roundtable

• April 22 - TLC: Stereotype threat and impostor syndrome

• June 1-4 Summer Faculty Institute

• Diversity Track - Submit interest by April 30

ctal.udel.edu
IMPACT

• psychological - anxiety

• physical - stress

• inequitable treatment (healthcare, education, employment, discipline)

• Such messages mark who belongs and who doesn’t, who is worthy of America’s promise and who is not, who is worthy of our national empathy, care, and resources and who isn’t.