MICROAGGRESSIONS ON CAMPUS

EMILY BORRA

STUDENT SUCCESS CONFERENCE
MINNEAPOLIS, MN
FEBRUARY 15, 2017
What is a micro-aggression?
What messages do they send?
How can we recognize and respond?

Brave Space Guidelines

A community space where different points on a journey of learning and growing are acknowledged. Community members engage in critical dialogue through conscious questioning and active listening. While all are expected to make their best effort to be respectful, there is an understanding that someone may say something that results in unintentional offense and hurt feelings for those around. A primary assumption of Brave Space is that everyone speaks with the positive intent of seeking greater knowledge and understanding.
DEFINE

MICROAGGRESSION
Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal & 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 et al., 2007).
**DEFINE**

**MICROAGGRESSION**

**INSULT**
Behavior/verbal remarks comments that convey rudeness, insensitivity, & demean a person’s identity.

**ASSAULT**
Derogations meant to hurt through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions.

**INVALIDATION**
Verbal comments or behaviors that exclude, negate, or nullify the reality of marginalized groups.
MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

GOAL FOR UNDERSTANDING MICROAGGRESSIONS

Our goal is not to judge whether or not we interpret them as microaggressions or question why others see them that way. Rather, our goal is to generate an awareness of the fact that our intention may not have the intended impact. Recognizing the way others may be affected by our language or behaviors (even if well-intended) begins making the invisible visible.
MTV's
Look Different
Campaign
MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

According to a survey conducted by Binder (2014) on young adults:

- 94% of survey participants see bias — defined as “treating someone differently, and often unfairly, because they are a member of a particular group”
- 8 in 10 say they know someone who is biased, yet 59% deny they are personally biased; 60% say they have worked hard to eliminate their biases
- 9 in 10 believe small examples of bias can add up to major problems for society
- 53% believe “bias is a serious problem, but it is mostly hidden”
- 61% of respondents have been the target of bias, with those most affected including LGBT (85%), people of color (69%) and women (64%)
- Half of young people of color feel that “individual microaggressions, when added up, have had a serious effect on me”
- 60% of young people of color — including 74% of young Asian Americans — are often asked about their ethnic background vs. just 19% of young whites
MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

According to a study conducted at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2014):

- 51% of participants said they had been the victim of a racial stereotype in the classroom
- 39% reported feeling uncomfortable on the campus because of their race

According to a study by Boysen et al. (2009):

- 22% of undergraduates perceived themselves as the target of overt bias in the classroom. The most frequent characteristics targeted from overt bias were race or ethnicity (33%) and sex (term used in their research) (33%), followed by religion (14%), class (8%), sexual orientation (8%), disability (3%), and other (12%).
MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

Effects of Microaggressions

- Harm a person’s mental health & their chances for success (Ong et al., 2013; Sue, 2010; Sue, et al., 2007), including higher psychological distress, suicidal ideation, state anxiety, trait anxiety, & depression (Hwang & Goto, 2009)
- Lower self-esteem of the recipient (Nadal, et al., 2014)
- Create inequities in education, employment, and health care (Purdie-Vaughns, et al., 2008; Sue, 2010)
- Significantly increase anxiety & binge drinking (Blume et al., 2012)
- Create a hostile & invalidating campus climate (Solórzano et al., 2000)
- Perpetuate stereotype threat (Steele et al., 2002)
- Saturate the broader society with cues that signal devaluation of social group identities (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008)
- Lower work productivity & problem solving abilities (Dovidio, 2001; Salvatore & Shelton, 2007)
MICROAGGRESSIONS
HOW THEY IMPACT STUDENT SUCCESS

STRONG PRESENCE \( \rightarrow \) NEGATIVE EFFECTS \( \times \) STUDENT SUCCESS
THE PESSIMIST

Real Campus Example
EXAMINE

EXAMPLES IN AN ACADEMIC SETTING

- Courses & curriculum that only offer dominant group perspectives
- Faculty, staff, & classmates do not ask for/use someone's pronouns & mis-identify people
- Tokenization when specific subject matters are raised
- Expensive books and materials needed for coursework
- Bathrooms labeled on the gender binary
- Classroom seats that are too small or not accessible
- Lack of representation in faculty and university staff
NEXT STEPS

WHAT CAN WE DO RECOGNIZE & RESPOND?

Recognizing the form microaggressions take and their impact on the recipient is an important step toward addressing bias against marginalized group members (Nadal, 2013).
DISCUSS

RECOGNIZE MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Perpetuating stereotypes about identity groups
- Using objectifying or degrading language
- Blaming the victim/target
- Saying someone is "too sensitive" or "overly sensitive"
- Glamorizing violence and assault in any form
- Refusing to take rape accusations seriously
- Telling biased jokes
- Making derogatory comments about abilities, bodies, sexual orientation, documentation status, race, and/or gender identity
- Making racist, classist, sexist (and other) statements, questions, and/or jokes
DISCUSS

ACTIONS TO TAKE
WHEN WE WITNESS A MICROAGGRESSION...

- Set a tone of inclusion, safety, & respect (from the beginning)
- Pay attention to interpersonal dynamics
- Project comfort in addressing uncomfortable topics
- Legitimize the discussion
- Remain involved in the conversation & challenge microaggressions directly
- Validate students' feelings
- Accept the racial reality as described by SoC
DISCUSS

ACTIONS TO TAKE
WHEN WE ARE THE AGGRESSOR...

- Apologize
- Realize our privilege
DISCUSS

ACTIONS TO TAKE
WHAT CAN WE DO AT OUR CAMPUSES?

- What steps can you take to help your campus and community overcome microaggressions and communicate inclusively?
- How can you challenge microaggressions you hear, sent, or receive in a productive way?
- What resources/offices/departments do you have on your campus that can support you in addressing microaggressions?
DEFINE
What is a micro-aggression?

EXAMINE
What messages do they send?

DISCUSS
How can we recognize and respond?
THANK YOU

QUESTIONS?

CONTACT
Emily Borra, M.S.Ed, M.M.
she/her/hers

University of MN Duluth
Academic Affairs
Orientation & New Student Initiatives Coordinator

ekborra@d.umn.edu  |  218-726-8863  |  @EmilyBorra