

Introduction - What are MICROAGGRESSIONS?

- First coined by Dr. Chester Pierce, Harvard psychiatrist, in 1970
- Everyday invalidations, insults, and exclusions from dominant group members to marginalized members
- Oppression in verbal, behavioral, and environmental forms
- Intentional and unintentional
- Resistant and elusive
- Reminds the marginalized person of their lower status
- Exists in every identity context (race, gender, ability, etc.)

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory Framework



- Microaggressions happen within the microsystem (can permeate the mesosystem as well)
- Responses to microaggressions can happen in both the mesosystem and exosystem
- A culture of microaggressions may cool up in a part of the macrosystem

Types of Microaggression

- Microassaults → "explicit racial derogation" (Sue et al., 2014) through verbal or nonverbal assault (e.g., name-calling, avoidance behavior, intentional discrimination)
- Microinsults → "communication that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity" (Sue et al., 2014) (subtle, typically done unconsciously in talking to a person of color how they get their job)
- Microinvalidations → "communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color" (Sue et al., 2014) (e.g., "You're the first black person I have had in my bio classes; it must be hard being an athlete and a biology major."

Responding to Microaggressions

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Intersectionality

- Someone who holds membership to more than one marginalized group in their intersecting identities means that they are facing multiple intersecting forms of discrimination and microaggressions.
- Ex: Saying "You don't act white" to a non-interacial person who is more white passing.
- You are denying them membership to a part of their identity because they do not fit the mold of your expectations.
- Brings the question of "where do I belong?" in their mind.
- Implying that there is something wrong that they do not act white

Who is affected by Microaggressions? And In what Context?

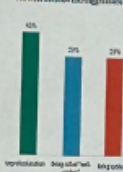
Microaggressions

- Microaggressions affect anyone who identifies with a marginalized group in their intersecting identities (Sue).
- Ex: Low economic status, Person of Color, LGBTQ, Women, etc.
- Beyond daily life, microaggressions can affect one's professional life.
- Ex:
 - A Woman of Color's hair being deemed as "unprofessional" for a work setting.
 - Being judged and discriminated against based on your piercings or tattoos.

The Controversy and Equity

- Many who had personal experiences with microaggressions believe the form itself is insulting and downplays the damage that a strand of words can cause (HBR).
- Just because it is subtle and goes unnoticed does not mean it is not as harmful if not more than other forms of discrimination.
- It is always happening, whether the person who is perpetuating the microaggression or even themselves recognize it or not.
- It sticks in your mind, makes you conscious of how you present yourself and speak and act.

The most common microaggressions



How do we address equity?

- Do we frame microaggression to emphasize the impact?
 - Would that bring attention to the cause or would it take attention away from the matter itself and shift focus on the debate about what we call microaggressions instead?
- How do we make people feel seen when it comes to sharing experiences regarding discrimination?

Americans and microaggressions



"Because you are X, you probably are/are not like/don't like Y" (Washington, 2022)

- Microaggressions affect all of us and in turn, we can also unintentionally be perpetrators of the same act.

Analysis - How do we recognize them in different settings—in systems, others, and ourselves?

Unlike microassaults, microinsults are often committed unconsciously and may seem more subtle, yet they cast a negative light on a particular personal characteristic or demographic group.

"You're the first black person I have had in my bio classes; it must be hard being an athlete and a biology major."
(African Americans are only in school for athletics.)

Of the three types of microaggressions, microassaults are perhaps the easiest to identify and most closely related to outright prejudice and discrimination.

"Really, it's ridiculous that anyone believes in God; you can't be a real scientist if you believe in God."
(Religious people cannot be scientists.)

Microinvalidations, in the words of Sue (2010, p. 37), are "characterized by communications or environmental cues that exclude, negate, or nullify the thoughts, feelings, or experiential realities of certain groups."

"The book is expensive, but it should be an issue: Just have your parents pay for it."
(Students' financial situations are not an issue in my class.)

Recommendations - How do we respond to microaggressions, in different ways and situations? The Three A's Towards Equity

- Attention!**
 - The most crucial part is to never completely ignore microaggressions even if you aren't certain if they are. Racism and discrimination affect marginalized groups, just because microaggressions are smaller in scale in comparison to the former doesn't mean it won't affect you! As many marginalized groups ignore or fail to acknowledge these microaggressions themselves, which give the privileged group a green light to continue as they have faced no opposition or consequence doing so.
- Ask?**
 - Ask yourself these questions before making a decision.
 - What is microaggression? Is what just happened to me a form of microaggression?
 - Will my life be in danger if I address it?
 - If I don't address it, will this interaction haunt me later?
 - Is this important for me to address it to this person?
 - How will it affect my relationship with them?
- Assess.**
 - Based on your answers to the previous questions, decide whether or not you will address the microaggression and how you will address it.
 - It can be helpful, in some cases, to address microaggressions with other like-minded individuals if you aren't comfortable doing so alone.
 - Some strategies you can use to address microaggressions include:
 - Helping them understand the impact of what they said.
 - In some cases some people don't understand that an action they take or something they say is hurtful, for these people this may be effective.
 - Expressing your own feelings.
 - If the person is already close to you and is likely to listen to what you have to say, this may make them understand that what they said was not okay.
 - Challenging the stereotype.
 - You can bring up examples that break the stereotypes brought up. Share your own experiences that conflict with what they said.
 - Bring up rules/policies.
 - In some situations such as the workplace, you can bring up that it is against company policy to act as they are.
 - Every situation is different, so use your best judgment when deciding when to and how to respond to microaggressions.

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