

Micro-aggressions and Micro-inequities

Micro-aggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership. **The first step in addressing micro-aggressions is to recognize when a micro-aggression has occurred and what message it may be sending. The context of the relationship and situation is critical.** Below are common themes to which micro-aggressions attach.



Theme	Microaggression Examples	Message
<p>Alien in One's Own Land Example: When Asian Americans, Latino Americans and others are assumed to be foreign-born</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Where are you from? Or where were you born?” • “You speak English very well.” • “What are you? You’re so interesting looking!” • A person asking an Asian American to teach them words in their native language. • Continuing to mispronounce the names of clients after the client has corrected the person time and time again. Not willing to listen closely and learn the pronunciation of a non-English based name. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are not a true American. • You are a perpetual foreigner in your own country. • Your ethnic/racial identity makes you exotic / different.
<p>Ascription of Intelligence Assigning intelligence to a person of color or a woman based on his/her race/gender.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You are a credit to your race.” • “You’re so articulate.” • Asking an Asian person to help with a math or science problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People of color are generally not as intelligent as white people. • It’s unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent. • All Asians are intelligent and good in math/science
<p>Color Blindness Statements that indicate that a white person does not want to acknowledge race</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “When I look at you, I don’t see color.” • “America is a melting pot.” • “There is only one race, the human race.” • “I don’t believe in race.” • Denying the experiences of students by questioning the validity/credibility of their stories. 	<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

<p>Criminality – Assumption of Criminal Status A person of color is presumed to be dangerous, criminal, or deviant on the basis of their race.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A man or woman clutching their purse or checking their wallet as a black or Latino 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are a criminal • You are going to steal and/or You are poor • You don't belong / You are dangerous
<p>Denial of Individual Racism/Sexism or Heterosexism A statement made when bias is denied</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I’m not a racist, I have several black friends.” • “As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority.” • To a person of color: “Are you sure you were being followed in the store? I can’t believe it.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am immune to races because I have friends of color • Your racial oppression is no different than my gender oppression. I can’t be a racist. I’m like you. • Denying the personal experience of individuals who experience bias.
<p>Myth of Meritocracy Statements which assert that race does not play a role in life successes, for example in issues such as faculty demographics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I believe the most qualified person should get the job.” • “Of course he’ll get tenure, even though he hasn’t published much – he’s black! • “Men and women have equal opportunities for achievement.” • “Gender plays no part in who we hire.” • “America is the land of opportunity.” • “Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough.” • “Affirmative action is racist.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People of color are given extra unfair benefits because of their race. • The playing field is even so if women cannot make it, the problem is with them. • People of color are lazy and/or incompetent and need to work harder.
<p>Pathologizing Cultural Values / Communication Styles The notion that the values and communication styles of the dominant culture are ideal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking a black person: “Why do you have to be so loud / animated? Just calm down.” • To an Asian or Latino person: “Why are you so quiet? We want to know what you think. Be more verbal. Speak up!” • “Why are you always angry?” anytime race is brought up in discussion. • Dismissing an individual who brings up race / culture in a work or school setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assimilate to the dominant culture. • Leave your cultural baggage outside. • There is no room for difference.

<p>Second-class Citizen Occurs when a target group member receives differential treatment from the power group; for example, being given preferential treatment as a consumer over a person of color</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of color mistaken for a service worker. • Not wanting to sit by someone because of his/her color. • Female doctor mistaken for a nurse. • Being ignored at a store counter as attention is paid to a customer of the dominant race. • Raising your voice or speaking slowly to a blind client • Having a taxi cab pass a person of color and pick up a white passenger. • Saying, “You people...” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People of color are servants. They couldn’t possibly occupy high-status positions. • The dominant race is more valued than customers of color • You don’t belong. You are a lesser being. • A person with a disability is defined as lesser in all aspects of physical and mental functioning.
<p>Sexist/Heterosexist Language Terms that exclude or degrade women and LGBT persons.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of the pronoun “he” to refer to all people. • Being constantly reminded by a coworker that “we are only women.” • Being forced to choose male or female when completing basic forms. • Two options for relationship status; married or single • A heterosexual man who often hangs out with his female friends more than his male friends is labeled as gay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male experience is universal. • Female experience is invisible. • LGBT categories are not recognized. • LGBT partnerships are invisible. • Men who do not fit male stereotypes are inferior.
<p>Traditional Gender Role Prejudicing and Stereotyping Occurs when expectations of traditional roles or stereotypes are conveyed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a female student asks a male professor for extra help on an engineering assignment, he asks, “What do you need to work on this for anyway?” • “You’re a girl, you don’t have to be good at math.” • A person asks a woman her age and, upon hearing she is 31, looks quickly at her ring finger. • An advisor asks a female student if she is planning on having children while in postdoctoral training. • Shows surprise when a feminine woman turns out to be a lesbian. • Labeling an assertive female manager/ department head as a “b****,” while describing a male counterpart with similar characteristics as a “forceful leader.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are less capable in math and science. • Women should be married during child-bearing ages because that is their primary purpose. • Women are out of line when they are assertive.

<p>Environmental Microaggressions Macro-level Micro-aggressions, which are more apparent on systemic and environmental levels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A college or university with buildings that are all named after white, heterosexual, upper-class males. • Television shows and movies that feature predominantly white people without representation of people of color • Overcrowding of public schools in communities of color 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You don't belong / You won't succeed here. There is only so far you can go. • You are an outsider / You don't exist. • People of color don't / shouldn't value education • People of color are deviant
<p>How to offend without really trying</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Indian giver" • "That's so gay" • "I Jewed him down" • "That's so white of you" • "You people..." • "We got gypped!" • Imitating accents or dialects • Others? 	

Talking points to navigate through bias:

What is bias and why does it matter?

- Bias is the tendency to favor one thing over another
- Bias is a natural, normal human tendency
- Most bias is harmless
- It is really hard to acknowledge personal bias
- Stereotypes lead to bias if you believe them
- If you aren't aware of the stereotypes you believe, you can't overcome them
- Bias can get in the way of our personal goals and intentions
- Bias can give us blind spots that make it harder to see someone else's point of view
- Bias can be passed from generation to generation
- Positive bias can be just as harmful as negative bias

Start with you!

- Believing you have no bias is worse than knowing you do
- Topics that consistently make you angry may be hot-button triggers
- Hot button triggers are often linked to unconscious bias
- The skills you need to overcome bias can be taught, learned, and mastered
- Simply putting different kinds of people together does not reduce bias

In-groups & Out-groups

- Differences that people cannot control or change are biases we need to look out for
- Honor the differences while seeking similarities
- Don't be afraid to question your own beliefs and family values
- Be aware of your in-groups, but don't let them control your decisions. You are an individual first
- Know your advantages or risk tripping all over them
- Guilt is paralyzing. If you have it, let it go. You are absolved!
- Privilege is relative. Anyone can have it, and most everyone has some
- Identify your privilege and use it for good wherever you see bias
- Privilege does not make anyone better than anyone else. We are truly equals

Scan to Expand

- Having authentic relationships with people who think differently is the key to overcoming your bias
- Don't be afraid to expose your family and friends to new people and ideas

- Know your in-groups, then start including out-group members to reduce interpersonal bias

My Action Plan – Transfer of Learning

One action I will commit to....

One bias I will re-examine is:

One thing I learned about myself today is:

One thing I can begin to use immediately is:

