

mi·cro·ag·gres·sion

/ˈmaɪkroʊəˌɡresən/

noun

a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority.



PSC Anti-Bullying Committee Members



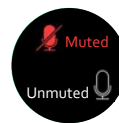
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Community Norms And Practices

Respect for every person's worth is fundamental - to a university, and particularly to CUNY, which was founded on principles of inclusion. We commit ourselves to nurture a work environment that honors the dignity of all, is respectful and free from discrimination, harassment or bullying; and we therefore, agree to respect each other's differences, and to create a healthy, safe and rewarding environment that nurtures, challenges and supports the community.

In order for our community to function in this way, it is useful for its individual members to make the following commitments:

1. I commit to conduct that is mutually respectful and not discriminatory, harassing, bullying or threatening.
2. I take responsibility for my actions and my personal perspectives, recognizing that there may be disagreements with another's.
3. I will respect everyone's contributions and honor the roles and responsibilities of all members through my words and actions.
4. I will be mindful and reflect on how I might be using or misusing my power and privilege in my interactions.
5. I will intend to be inclusive and support others with the same respect and compassion that I want for myself.
6. I am willing to be an active ally (upstander) by speaking, intervening, or acting on behalf of a person being attacked or bullied.
7. I will seek to understand others and assume best intentions in all interaction.
8. I will seek to understand other perspectives and avoid making assumption.
9. I commit to listen actively and with compassion at the workplace and in all union meetings.



<https://psc-cuny.org/about-us/psc-community-norms-and-practices/>



SPEAKER BIO. Professor Pamela Stenberg is an Adjunct Assistant Professor of English at City College and Hostos Community College; Vice Chapter Chair, PSC-CUNY, CCNY Chapter; PSC-CUNY Executive Council, Part-Time Officer

"Each and every one of us has the capacity to be an oppressor. I want to encourage each and every one of us to interrogate how we might be an oppressor and how we might be able to become liberators for ourselves and for each other."

—Laverne Cox



Microaggressions in Everyday Communication in the Workplace

April 18, 2023



HOST: PSC ANTI-BULLYING COMMITTEE
<https://psc-cuny.org/issues/anti-bullying/>

Summary & Outline

This presentation discusses daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory and negative insults to a target person or group of persons under the wider category of microaggressions. Often abilities are underestimated, gender, ethnic and racial inequities are stated, inappropriate comments are made, regarding mundane tasks, with the intent to exclude, marginalize or to bully others. Solutions for dealing with microaggressions, encouraging opening communication are provided.

Outline:

1. Create awareness surrounding the common occurrences of microaggressions.
2. Explore the outcomes associated with the experience of microaggressions.
3. Discover techniques to minimize the occurrence of microaggressions and ways to respond when someone has been microaggressive.

What are Microaggressions?

EVERYDAY INDIGNITIES

How unintentional but insidious bias can be the most harmful

National attention has been focused on overt racial tensions on college campuses across the country. But what about smaller, subtle, more persistent forms of racism? Special correspondent Charlayne Hunter-Gault speaks to Derald Wing Sue of Teachers College at Columbia University about the ways that everyday “microaggressions” can affect people.



**PBS Interview with Professor Derald Wing Sue, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology and Education, Teachers College**



<https://youtu.be/mgvjnxr6OCE>

Microaggressions Defined

“Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral (nonverbal), and/or environmental indignities whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of underrepresented communities and/or people perceived to hold less power.” (Pierce, 1970; Sue, 2010)

The structural and systemic arrangements that validate the interests/positions of a dominant group over non-dominant groups. This structure provides a foundation that justifies institutional oppression – from which microaggressions are able to persist. (Huber & Solorzano, 2015)

What are microaggressions?

How to recognize microaggressions?

Microaggressions

- Asking an Asian American “Where are you really from?”
- Commenting to an African American “You are so articulate.”
- Stating “I’m not a racist. I have several Black friends.”
- Mistaking a minority person for a service worker.
- Stating that campus buildings are named after white males or people on TV shows that feature white people

3 Common Types of Microaggressions

Microassaults

Microinsults

Microinvalidations

Microassaults

Explicit derogations characterized primarily by a violent verbal, nonverbal, or environmental attack to hurt the intended target through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions. Conscious and intentional discriminatory actions.

Examples:

- using racial epithets
- displaying White supremacist symbols – swastikas
- displaying the hood of the Ku Klux Klan
- refusing service to sexual minorities
- discouraging interracial interactions

Microinsults

Verbal, nonverbal, and environmental communications that subtly convey rudeness and insensitivity that demean a person's racial heritage or identity. Not intentional! Typically occur due to underlying biases and prejudices outside of awareness.

Examples:

- Asking an African American or Latino co-worker "How did you get your job?" (implying position was obtained through affirmative action)

Microinvalidations

Communications that subtly exclude, negate or nullify the thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of a targeted person. Not intentional! Typically occur due to underlying biases and prejudices outside of awareness of one's race.

Examples:

- White people often ask Latinos where they were born, conveying the message that they are perpetual foreigners in their own land.
- Asian American individual who was born and raised in the US is complimented for speaking good English.

Other terms

Microinequity: the pattern of being overlooked, under-respected, and devalued because of one's race or gender. Small events which are often ephemeral and hard-to-prove, events which are covert, often unintentional, frequently unrecognized by the perpetrator.

Macroaggression: big, systemic forms of oppression rather than interpersonal forms of bias or discrimination.

Example: Corporations taking advantage of impoverished populations.

EVERY DAY MICROAGGRESSIONS: WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE?



The Impact of Microaggressions

- Reinforces and perpetuates oppression, including marginalization
- Three-part decision-making model
 - *Did this microaggression really occur?*
 - *Should I respond to this microaggression?*
 - *How should I respond to this microaggression?*
- Choose NOT to confront: feel regret, remorse, isolation, guilt, and/or shame
- Choose to confront, may feel fear:
 - Of appearing like a negative representation of their social group (i.e., race)
 - Of retaliation from the person(s) confronted
 - That they choose an ineffective method of communication

The Impact of Microaggressions

- Hurts and re-traumatizes people who already experience oppression in the larger world. This can significantly affect one's ability to be present and learn as they are consumed by their need to take care of their emotions.
- Feelings of pain can accumulate and affect a person's overall health and well-being and possibly retention.
- Erodes any trusts and credibility established with the faculty, staff, or student and seen as someone who "doesn't care about people like me."
- By not "leaning into" and examining the situation, we miss learning opportunities for everyone involved.

Psychological Consequences of Microaggressions

Associated psychological impact

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Sleep Difficulties
- Diminished Confidence
- Helplessness
- Loss of Drive
- Intrusive Cognitions (e.g., internal dilemma)
- Diminished Cognition

Responding to Microaggressions

MICROINTERVENTIONS • MICRORESISTENCE • MICROAFFIRMATIONS

Responding to Microaggressions

Microinterventions: everyday words or deeds, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicates to targets of microaggressions (a) validation of their experiential reality, (b) value as a person, (c) affirmation of their racial or group identity, (d) support and encouragement, and (e) reassurance that they are not alone.

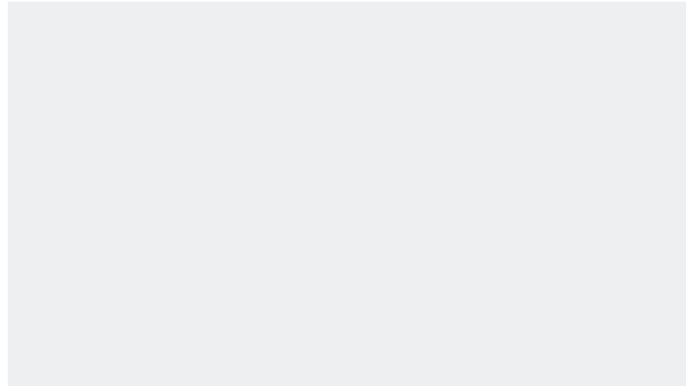
Microresistance: reframing defense to microaggression into proactive focus on the structural nature of the problem; incremental daily efforts to challenge privilege.

Microaffirmations: acts kindness of that occur wherever people wish to help others succeed

5 Tips on Responding to Microaggressions

By Theresa Rangel

<https://youtu.be/cDpg8zEeCkE>



Handling Microaggressions When They Occur

1. Explain good intent and explain impact.
"I know you mean well, but that hurts."
2. Ask a question.
"What do you mean?"
3. Interrupt and redirect.
"Let's not go there."
4. Broaden to Universal Human Behavior.
"I think that applies to everyone."
5. Make it individual.
"Are you speaking of someone in particular?"
6. Say ouch.
"OUCH!"

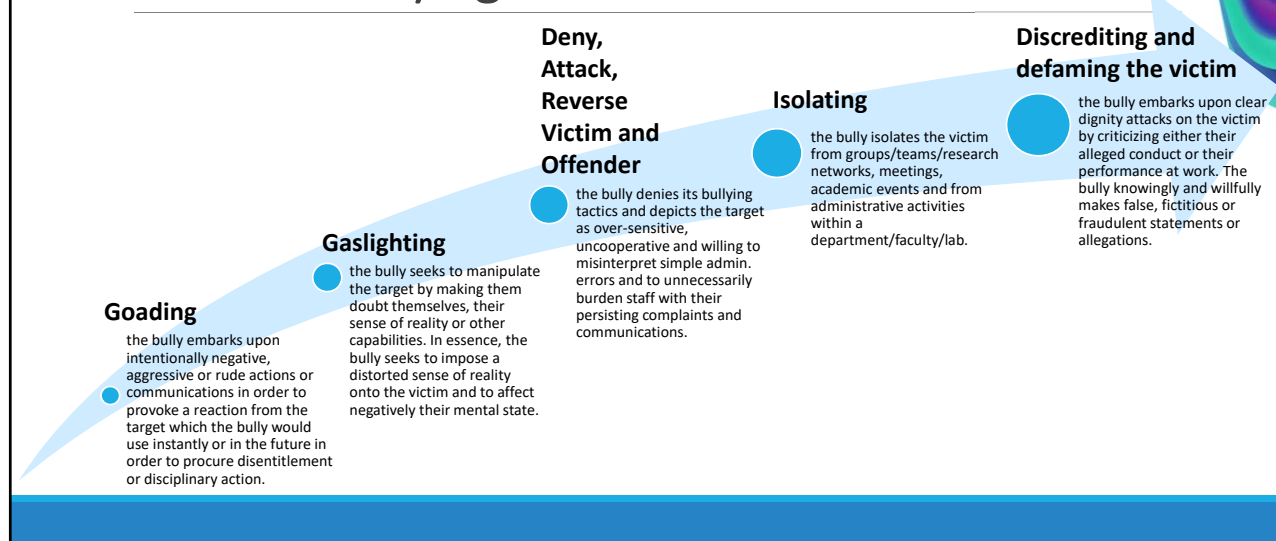
Educate the Offender

- Appeal to the offender's values and principles
- Differentiate between intent and impact
- Encourage empathy and collaboration
- Describe the benefits of workplace diversity
- Institute long-term mandated training on cultural sensitivity for everyone
- Infuse multicultural principles into organizational mission and values
- Identify shared mutual goals for everyone
- Increase community's exposure to positive examples of diverse cultures to offset negative stereotypes and biases
- Set up buddy system – seek therapy/counseling
- Report inequitable practices to your union

Microaggressions and Bullying

- Bullies engage in intimidating behavior that are often covert and hard to detect (over a period of time)
 - Misuse their influence and power to manipulate others into following their lead. This can be done through microaggressive behaviors by isolating opposing voices and leaving others out.
- Both have negative impact on individuals, workplace climate and entire organization
- Both deal with verbal abuse, conduct which is threatening or humiliating and both can sabotage by interfering with one's job.
- Both create a hostile, offensive and toxic workplace

Early warning signs of microaggressions within a bullying context



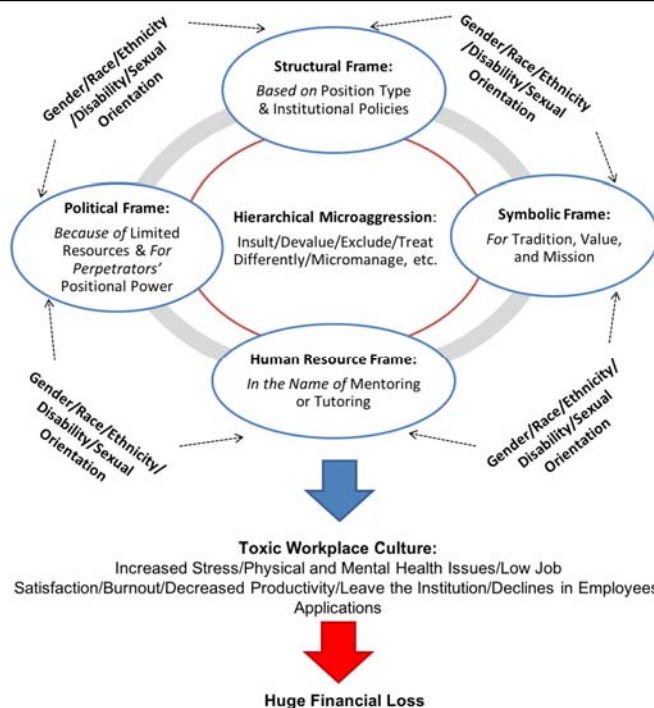
Comparisons between resolving microaggressions and resolving bullying

Remove Microaggressions	Remove Bullying
Active listening	Recognize it
Communicate effectively	It is not about you; it is about the bully
Learn to interact with people different than you	Think through options and take action for target
Be open to discussing one's biases	Gather a record/log of negative actions
Be an ally and stand against bias	Evaluate, review employee handbook and collaborate

Understanding A Conceptual Model of Hierarchical Microaggressions in Higher Education Settings

Adopted from Hierarchical Microaggressions: Anyone Can Be a Victim, Perpetrator, or Bystander by Ahlam Lee

University of Michigan
National Center for Institutional Diversity



Getting rid of microaggressions in the University setting

INDIVIDUALS • INSTITUTIONS • SUPERVISORS • ALLIES

Individuals

- Recognize that dismissive attitudes are harmful
- Engage in self-reflection to identify times that you may have been microaggressive in your personal and work life
- Participate in continuing education activities
- Avoid making assumptions and labeling individuals

Getting rid of microaggressions in your work environment

Institutions

- Foster inclusive and supportive environments.
- Collaborate with groups and organizations who are committed to addressing issues of diversity and inclusion.
- Offer trainings and opportunities for continuing education and diversity workshops.

Getting rid of microaggressions in your work environment

Supervisors

- Recognize that microaggressions occur on a daily basis so foster an environment that discusses this openly.
- If supervisee sees that supervisors have expressed microaggression, approach supervisor and acknowledge the action.

Getting rid of microaggressions in your work environment

Allies

When a microaggression happens, be an ally that C.A.R.E.S.

- **CONSIDER** how what one said was harmful
- Be **ACCOUNTABLE** for your actions and willing to apologize
- **RETHINK** harmful assumptions or stereotypes
- **EMPATHIZE** with those on the receiving end of microaggressions
- **SUPPORT** by offering resources and asking how you can help

Getting rid of microaggressions in your work environment



Role Play / Scenario

MEDICAL SCHOOL EXAMPLE

Scenario

Today is Dr. Jennifer Wu's first shift as an emergency medicine (EM) intern in the emergency department. Her team consists of an EM attending, third year EM resident, and herself. Her attending Dr. Smith asks each member of the team to introduce themselves and share where they are from. Dr. Wu tells them her name and states that she is from Jackson, Mississippi. Dr. Smith says, "You don't sound like you are from Mississippi. Where are you originally from?"

Assigns roles: (1) Divide into groups of two; (2) Assign the roles of Dr. Wu and Dr. Smith
Run the role play for 5-10 minutes

Debrief:

- As Dr. Wu, how did you feel about the interaction?
- As Dr. Smith, how did you feel about the interaction?
- What are some other ways to respond in this situation?
- How would you respond if you were a third year EM resident witnessing this interaction?
- How would you respond if you were a fourth year medical student witnessing this interaction?

Scenario Reportbacks

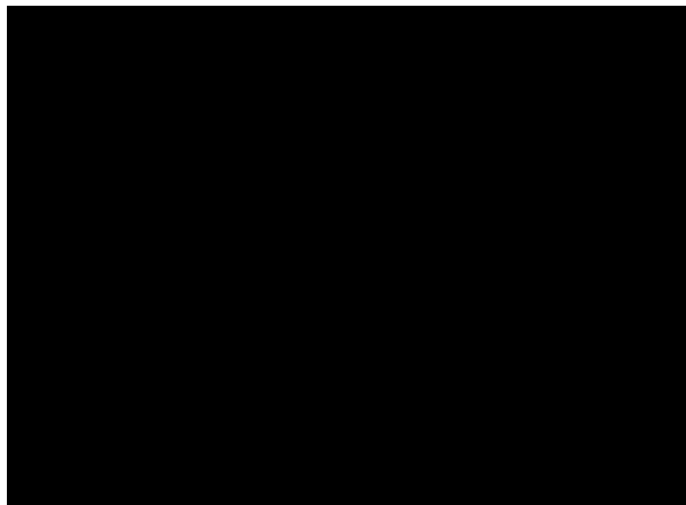
Reactions and Responses to Microaggressions

From Pacific Lutheran University's LISTEN campaign.

The LISTEN campaign is a collection of individual stories that provide multiple perspectives from students, faculty and staff on what it means to be a community that not only embraces diversity, but also works actively in community to promote positive change.



<https://youtu.be/C3LFB4mJ0DI>



Resources

- How unintentional but insidious bias can be the most harmful - <https://youtu.be/mgvjnxr6OCE>
- Implicit Bias and Microaggressions: the Macro Impact of Small Acts - <https://youtu.be/Nrw6Bf5weTM>
- Microaggressions in Academia - <https://youtu.be/x-ffd1F5t4>
- Derald Wing Sue: Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence - <https://youtu.be/XQuhE6Wlv5I>
- Derald Wing Sue. Microaggressions and Implicit Bias presentation to University of Houston Department Chairs.
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Thank You!





Appendix



Brief history of “microaggression” terminology

The term “microaggression” was first coined by Dr. Chester Pierce, an African American psychiatrist in the 1970s who described microaggressions as “black-white racial interactions [that] are characterized by white put-downs, done in an automatic, preconscious, or unconscious fashion.”

The prefix “micro” was used because the acts are commonplace in everyday interactions and not because the acts are insignificant. This concept was further popularized by Dr. Derald Wing Sue in 2007. He described racial microaggressions as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group.”

Microintervention Strategies

Figure from Sue

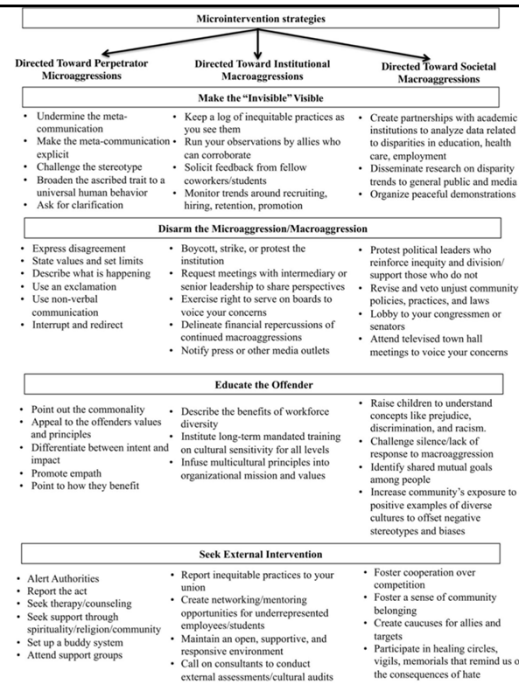


Figure 1. Microintervention strategies.

Proposed frameworks include

"Open the Front Door" (Observe, Think, Feel, Desire) This approach encourages open communication that allows an individual to handle conflict without the other party becoming defensive. An example response could include, "When you said (microaggression), it made me think that you (negative opinion). I feel concerned about this because (reason), and I would like us to discuss this further so we can come to an understanding."

The ACTION framework

- Ask clarifying questions
- Come from curiosity, not judgment
- Tell what you observed in a factual manner
- Impact exploration—discuss what the impact of the statement was
- Own your own thoughts and feelings
- Next steps

Proposed frameworks include

The RAVEN Approach

- Redirect the interaction
- Ask probing questions
- Values clarification
- Emphasizing your own thoughts
- Next steps

XYZ Approach

- I feel X when Y because Z.