

Microaggressions

“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 solely upon their marginalized group.”
(Sue et al. 2007)

Theme	Microaggression	Subtle Message
<u><i>Alien in own land</i></u> Asian, Latinx & Muslim Americans are assumed to be foreign-born	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Where are you from?” - “Where were you born?” - “You speak good English.” - A person asking an Asian American to teach them words in their native language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You are not American - You are a foreigner
<u><i>Ascription of Intelligence or Effort</i></u> Assigning intelligence or effort to a person based on their social-group identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “You are so articulate” to a Person of Color, Southerners or Polish Americans. - “Wow, how did you become so good in math?” to a woman. - Asking an Asian person to help with a Math or Science problem. - Overweight person assumed to be unmotivated or unhealthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People of Color, Southerners, Polish-Americans viewed as not intelligent. - It is unusual for a woman to be smart at math. - All Asians are intelligent and good in math and sciences. - If you are overweight, you must be lazy and lack self-control.
<u><i>Color Blindness</i></u> Statements that indicate that a person does not want to acknowledge race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “When I look at you, I don’t see color.” - “People are just people, we’re all just human.” - “There is only one race, the human race.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Denying a person’s ethnic experiences. - Denying the individual as a racial / cultural being.
<u><i>Criminality – assumption of criminal status</i></u> A Person of Color or Muslim is presumed to be dangerous, criminal, or deviant based on their race.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A man or woman clutching their purse or checking their wallet as a Black or Latinx American approaches or passes. - A storeowner following a customer of color around the store. - A person waits to ride the next elevator when a Person of Color is on it. - People stare at Muslim family at airport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You are a criminal. - You are going to steal / You are poor / You do not belong. - You are dangerous. - You must be a terrorist.
<u><i>Pathologizing cultural values / communication styles</i></u> The notion that certain values and communication styles are ideal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asking a Black person or Italian American: “Why do you have to be so loud / animated? Just calm down.” - To an Asian or Latinx person: “Why are you so quiet? We want to know what you think. Be verbal, speak up more.” - Dismissing an individual who brings up race / culture in work / school setting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assimilate and acculturate. - Something is wrong with you. - Leave your cultural baggage outside.
<u><i>Second-class citizen</i></u> When target group member receives differential treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Person of color mistaken for a service worker. - Female doctor is mistaken for a nurse. - Having a taxicab pass a Person of Color. - Person of Color being ignored at a store counter. - A lesbian woman is not invited out with a group of girlfriends because they thought she would be bored if they were talking to men. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People of Color are servants. - Women occupy nurturing roles and could not possibly be physicians. - You are likely to cause trouble and / or travel to a dangerous neighborhood. - People of color are not valued customers. - You do not belong.
<u><i>Environmental microaggressions</i></u> Macro-level microaggressions, which are more apparent on systemic and environmental levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A college or university with buildings that are all named after one identity group. - Television shows and movies that feature predominantly one identity group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You do not belong / You will not succeed here. There is only so far you can go. - You are an outsider. - Other identities are deviant.
<u><i>Use of Sex / Sexual Orientation Biased Language</i></u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of pronoun “he” to refer to all people. - An assertive woman is labeled a “B***h.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male experience is universal. - Women should be passive.

Terms that exclude or degrade women and LGBTQ persons	- A heterosexual man who often hangs out with female friends more than male friends is labeled a "F*****t."	- Men who act like women are inferior (women are inferior) / gay men are inferior.
<u>Traditional Gender Role</u> <u>Prejudicing and Stereotyping</u> Expectations of traditional roles or stereotypes are conveyed	- A person asks a woman her age and, upon hearing she is 31, looks quickly at her ring finger. - A man is shunned for crying. - A woman is assumed a lesbian because she has short hair. - A man is ridiculed for being a "stay-at-home dad"	- Women should be married during childbearing ages because this is their primary purpose. - Not OK for a man to express feelings. - Lesbians are "butch," real women have long hair. - Men are the "breadwinners."
<u>Sexual Objectification</u> Women are treated as if they are objects	- A stranger puts his hands on a woman's hips or the small of her back to pass by her. - Whistles and catcalls as a woman walks down the street.	- Your body is not yours. - Your body / appearance is for enjoyment and pleasure.
<u>Assumption of Abnormality</u> Implication that there is something wrong with being LGBTQ	- Two men holding hands in public are stared at by strangers. - Students use the term "gay" to describe a fellow student who is socially ostracized. - A transgender woman is asked, "Are you a boy or girl?"	- You should keep your displays of affection private because they are offensive - People who are gay are weird and different. - People must fit into one category in a male-female gender binary.
<u>How to offend without really trying</u>	"Indian giver." "That's so gay." "I jewed him down." "We got gyped."	"That's so White of you." "She welshed on the bet." "You people ..." "Going off the reservation." "He's a retard." Imitating accents or dialects (food service workers, etc.)

Adapted from "Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation," by Derald Wing Sue, Ph.D.

Microaggression Discussion Scenarios:

Discuss what actions you might take in the following scenarios (please be specific and practice what specific language you will use):

- #1. A person continually interrupts a woman and/or takes credit for a woman's ideas in a staff meeting.
- #2. "The only reason he got the position is because of a quota!" (concerning a Latinx man).
- #3. Students imitating an accent of a female international student.
- #4. "Why do you have to be so loud / animated / angry? Just calm down." (to a Black woman).
- #5. "He's 'weak' and just not 'strong' enough" or "that's so gay" (to LGBT man).
- #6. "You are so articulate." (to an African-American football player).
- #7. Choose any of the "Stereotype/Bias" Examples and imagine someone in the context made such a comment.