



COEPS

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# PERSONAL BIAS AND MICROAGGRESSIONS

# BIAS

**Bias** is a prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another usually in a way that's considered to be unfair. Biases may be held by an individual, group, or institution and can have negative or positive consequences.

# UNCONSCIOUS BIAS (ALSO KNOWN AS IMPLICIT BIAS)

**Unconscious biases** are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these biases stem from one's tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing.

Unconscious bias is far more prevalent than conscious prejudice and often incompatible with one's conscious values. Certain scenarios can activate unconscious attitudes and beliefs. For example, biases may be more prevalent when multi-tasking or working under time pressure. ( Renee Navarro, PharmD, MD, UCSF School of Medicine)

# MICROAGGRESSIONS

**A comment or action that is subtly and often unintentionally hostile or demeaning to a member of a minority or marginalized group** (Merriam Webster)

Microaggressions are “**brief, everyday exchanges** that send **denigrating** messages” to a target group like people of color, religious minorities, women, people with disabilities, and LGBT individuals.

These microaggressions are often subtle in nature and can be manifested in the **verbal, nonverbal, visual, or behavioral realm**; they are often enacted automatically and unconsciously (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

# HOW THIS LOOKS IN HIGHER ED?

With two or three people try to come up with 3 microaggressions that may be displayed on campus or you have witnessed or experienced.

- Staff to staff interaction
- Staff to student interactions
- Student to student interactions

# WHAT DO MICROAGGRESSIONS SAY ABOUT US?

Once I accept that microaggressions have real-life effects on those who are the target, then I ask myself: **Do I want to be someone who contributes to a stressful and hostile environment for people around me?**

**Microaggressions create, foster, and enforce marginalization of those in a position of less privilege.**



# MICROASSAULT

Blatant verbal, nonverbal, or environmental attack intended to convey discriminatory and biased sentiments (e.g., epithets like spic or faggot).

# MICROINSULT

Unintentional behaviors or verbal comments that convey rudeness or insensitivity or demean a person's racial heritage/identity, gender identity, or sexual orientation identity (e.g., Arnold Schwarzenegger calling his Democratic opponents, “girlie men”).



# MICROINVALIDATION

Verbal comments or behaviors that exclude, negate, or dismiss the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of the target group (e.g., “The most qualified person should get the job”).

# MICROAGGRESSIONS

Well-known research has focused on toward members of socially stigmatized groups, such as African-Americans [People of Color], women, and the LGBTQ community.

# BOOK OF RULES

## Book of Rules

- (We all have a book of rules based on our beliefs)

## Schema

- (shapes what we see and what we don't) our age, color
- Schema: how we look at the world.
- Schema shapes what we see and what we don't

## Background

- (like a contact lens put over our eyes...the lens in which we see the world) Our life experiences have filtered the way we see the world. Background creates context and context

# SOLUTIONS

Study campus climate: a sense of belonging, with historically marginalized communities not only being tolerated but *appreciated*.

Bias and microaggressions: eliminating discriminatory language, especially on the internet and social media sites.”

Student training and education: Diversity programs will also be conducted *outside* of the classroom.

Faculty, staff, administrator training: Mandatory trainings will be conducted at faculty orientations and will include instruction on how to value others. In performance reviews, staff will be evaluated negatively for failing to intervene or missing opportunities to “educate others.”

Diversity issues in the curriculum: Faculty will be required to offer a *more* diverse curriculum in their classes.

- “Difficult Dialogues”
- Vigilance

Bias Incidence reports



# RESPONDING TO OUR MACROAGGRESSION

Recognize and accept that you have bias (Howard Ross)

- Remove guilt and start taking responsibility

Use a flashlight on yourself

- Are there certain people who trigger us more
- Are there certain circumstances in which we feel a little antsy?
- Are there certain ways of being that causes us to make reactions more easily?



# RESPONDING



Explore awkwardness and discomfort

- Ask what's triggering me here

Engage with people you consider “others” and expose yourself to exemplars from that group

Get feedback

- Give feedback in a compassionate way. That persons actions may not have been done in an intentional, especially where diversity

# BUT AREN'T YOU JUST BEING OVERLY SENSITIVE?

It would be a sterile world indeed if we never acknowledged each others differences, and some people respond to the idea of microaggressions by rolling their eyes and saying:

You are being too sensitive.

You are being overly PC.

You are just looking for something to get offended about.

People refer to these examples of "everyday" sexism/racism/ableism/homophobia/prejudice as death by 1000 paper cuts. Any individual comment isn't that big of a deal, but accumulatively these micro-aggressions take a huge toll.

