“Why haven’t you found a husband yet?”

“You were born in Canada?”

“You have a mental disability? You seem perfectly normal to me.”
MULTICULTURAL STUDENT CENTER

- The MSC exists to make sure students from all racial and cultural backgrounds are successful and welcomed at UW-Madison

- Find Support – Advocacy, Resources
- Build Leadership Skills – Workshops, internships
- Hang Out – Lounge, Study Space, Classroom, Kitchen
- Talk About Social Justice – Workshops, Speakers, Peer Educators

Follow us @UWMulticultural
WHAT ARE MICROAGGRESSIONS?

Microaggressions Defined:

• verbal, behavioral, or environmental slights
• Often automatic an unintentional
• Occur in brief instances on a daily basis
• Communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative worldviews

https://youtu.be/xAlFGBiEsbQ
# MICROAGGRESSIVE THEMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Microaggression</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;You are a credit to your race&quot;</td>
<td>Ascription of Intelligence</td>
<td>People of color are generally not as intelligent as whites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking an Asian person for help with math or science.</td>
<td></td>
<td>All Asians are intelligent and good at math/science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Where are you from?&quot;</td>
<td>Alien in Own Land</td>
<td>You are not American.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;You speak good English.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>You are a foreigner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I don’t see color.&quot;</td>
<td>Colorblindness</td>
<td>Denying a person of color’s racial/ethnic experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;There is only one race, the human race.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Microaggressions** are subtle remarks that may seem harmless but can lead to emotional distress or feel invalidating. They often involve stereotypes and generalizations, internalizing societal narratives, and undermining individual identity.
ENVIRONMENTAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

Macro-level aggressions, which are more apparent on systematic and environmental levels.

Examples
- A college or university with buildings that are all named after white heterosexual men.
- TV and movies that only depict white people, with no representation of people of color.

2016 Oscar Nominations

- Best Actress: Female
- Best Actor: Male
- Best Supporting Actor: Male
- Best Supporting Actress: Female
- Host: Male

#OscarsSoWhite
IT MIGHT BE A MICROAGGRESSION IF...

• “Why are you being so sensitive?”
• “OMG, I was just joking!”
• “You are overreacting”
• “I’m not trying to be racist/sexist/homophobic, but…”
WE’VE ALL BEEN THERE!

Describe a time when you committed a microaggression. What was the underlying message? What was the impact? What did you do?

Describe a time when you personally experienced or witnessed a microaggression. What was the underlying message? What was the impact? What did you do?

“You’re going to stay home with the baby? Are you really going to let your wife wear the pants in the relationship?”

“Do you know where I can buy marijuana?”
MICROAGGRESSIVE STRESS

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWynJkN5HbQ
INTERNAL DILEMMA

Experiencing a microagression may lead us to think...

- Did I interpret that correctly?
- Did they say what I think that they just said?
- What did they mean by that?
- Should I say something?
- Saying something may make it worse.
- They will probably think that I am overreacting.
- Speaking up is going to hurt more than it helps.

“You speak really good English for an immigrant.”
WHAT’S THE IMPACT?

Racial microaggressions create a hostile and invalidating climate for people of color, saps their spiritual and psychic energies, and their cumulative nature can result in depression, frustration, anger, rage, loss of self-esteem, anxiety, etc...

(Derald Wing Sue)
WHAT’S THE IMPACT?

To name a few...

• Hostile and invalidating environment
• Devalue social identities
• Perpetuate stereotype threat (when people feel they are or feel themselves to be at risk of confirming negative stereotypes about their social group)
• Physical and emotional stress
• Isolation
• Fear or Mistrust of systems, people, and places
MICROAGGRESSIONS CAN IMPACT RELATIONSHIPS

Professional and/ or personal relationships may be affected, therefore damaging established rapport and trust...

- Student – Student
- Student – Instructor/ Advisor
- Colleague – Colleague
- Supervisor – Supervisee
- Advisor – Advisee
- Professor – Student
- Employer – Employee
- Provider – Patron
MICROAGGRESSIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

- **Start with the culture**
  - Do employees feel comfortable speaking up or addressing concerns
  - Have you set ‘norms’ re: mutual respect, managing conflict, and interpersonal communication

- **How are those norms modeled, communicated, and enforced**

- **Remember: microaggressions pile on**
  - Cumulative impact/ hostile environment

- **64% of employees of color report facing microaggressions daily, weekly, or monthly**

MICROAGGRESSIONS AND WORKPLACE PERFORMANCE

How does an experience of microaggressions affect workplace productivity for people of color?

- Sad: may affect how I think others perceive me
- Cautious: may affect someone’s view of my confidence
- Affected: I continually look for another job
- Hopeless: Try to just get through the day – glad to have a job
- Angry: May affect someone’s view of my attitude
- Depressed: May affect my productivity and relationships
RESPONDING: ASSESS THE SITUATION

- Find a way to pause from assuming or reacting right away. If it the first time and the incident is new, you could ask the person to repeat what they said or did.
- Your first concern must be that you are safe from physical, emotional, or psychological abuse of any kind.
- Ask yourself...
  - What kind of risk will I be taking if I do this?
  - Is this particular action worth my time and effort?
  - Do I know what I want to achieve?
RESPONDING: MODEL THE BEHAVIOR

• Model the behavior you want from the person or people you are confronting.

• Try to avoid being sarcastic, snide, mocking, or arrogant – even though this may be tempting.

• Remember – the goal is education. The goal is not to win a point or make someone feel bad or wrong. Help someone understand something from another/ different perspective.

• Use yourself as an example. None of us were born with the knowledge that we have now about microaggressions, social justice, or diversity. It may be helpful to use your own stories of how you’ve “unlearned” certain hurtful, inaccurate, and misleading information.
Research has shown that an unaddressed microaggression can leave just as much of a negative impact as the microaggression itself.
COMBATTING MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Learn from our own biases and fears
- Experiential reality is important – interact with those different from us
- Avoid getting defensive
- Be open to discussing your own attitudes and biases and how they have hurt others in the past
- Be an ally: stand personally
- It’s not easy, we all make mistakes
- Do your best, get a sense of the situation
- Learn from one another and practice
Become aware of our own unconscious bias

Be observant – notice reactions

Listen when someone raises a concern

Be open to feedback

Interrupt microaggressions

Recognize the role you play (inaction can speak louder than words)

WHAT CAN WE DO?
Inquire
Paraphrase & Reflect
Reframe
Use Impact & “I” Statements

Use preference statements
Re-Direct
Use strategic questions
Revisit

HOW CAN WE INTERVENE?
QUESTIONS?
GABE.JAVIER@WISC.EDU
REFERENCES


Portions of this presentation adapted from:

Breaking the Prejudice Habit: http://breakingprejudice.org/teaching/group-activities/microaggression-activity/


Presentation originally developed by Chelsea O’Neil Karcher for the Multicultural Student Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2015.