



Faculty Anti-Bias Training Resources:

Recognizing and Addressing Microaggressions

January 2021

About this guide

This guide includes information, tools and resources to help you learn about, or facilitate a group in learning about, how to recognize and address microaggressions.

If you have questions about these materials or want to make suggestions for additions or changes, please email Susan Drange, associate vice provost and executive director of programs, Office of Faculty Development, Diversity and Engagement at sdrange@stanford.edu.

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How to use this guide

Suggested meeting/ workshop agenda

1. Self-study – review the materials at your own pace.
2. Resources for facilitating a group discussion or workshop – see suggested agenda below.

Here are some ideas for ways to use these materials with a small group. Depending upon the size of the group and the time available you may add to or delete portions of this suggested agenda.

Pework

- Select some of the materials to be assigned as pre-work for a meeting or workshop. You may want to assign one or more readings, videos or self-assessments to orient participants to the subject matter or to help them engage in introspection about the topic prior to the meeting or workshop.
- Assign one or more of the cases to be read before the meeting or workshop, with the instruction that the case(s) will be discussed during the meeting.

Meeting or workshop agenda:

1. Select some of the slides or create your own slides to be used as an overview of the topic. These may summarize ideas from the prework and/or explain key terms and concepts. Begin the meeting/workshop by reviewing the slides.
2. Have a small group (panel) of experienced faculty members (selected and briefed beforehand) discuss one or two cases (not the ones assigned as pre-work) and address the issues they see in the case(s) and how they would handle such a situation.
3. Break the group up into small discussion groups and have them respond to the cases that were assigned as pre-readings. Utilize a short set of questions to be answered by the small group and have them record their answers in a shared google document (so that all the groups can read each other's responses).
4. Bring the group back together as a large group and debrief the cases by asking the small groups to report out on their discussions. You may wish to refer to the shared google doc.

ALTERNATIVE: Have the group read the shared google doc and then have a large group discussion asking about some of the issues and strategies or enabling people to elaborate on the issues and strategies.

5. Ask the panelists (experienced faculty members) to also weigh in on the cases.
6. End by providing a handout that addresses the topic of the meeting/workshop and ask participants to consider the strategies discussed in the meeting/workshop and also the information from the handout when they plan for, or encounter, similar situations in the future. (An alternative approach is to provide the handout either beforehand as pre-work or as a reference during the program at the time you break into the small groups).
7. You may also want to provide information about offices on campus that may be able to provide additional help or websites where participants can learn more.

Faculty Anti-Bias Training Resources – Recognizing and Addressing Microaggressions

In recent years there have been increasing reports and complaints by students about bias and lack of awareness or sensitivity on the part of faculty members, other students and staff related to issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion and other identities that students hold. The kinds of situations that have sparked such complaints include examples like these:

- Assigned reading materials that contain offensive language demeaning to racial, ethnic or religious groups or descriptions of explicit sexual assault and degradation of women
- Frequent use of heteronormative examples and language
- Brushing off and minimizing complaints about biased remarks as being “jokes” or unintentional
- Ignoring instances of student-to-student bias
- Comments reflecting negative stereotypes about different identity groups
- Treating one group of students differently than others:
 - calling on males or Whites more frequently than others
 - not responding to emails from students whose names reflect Asian descent
 - providing different resources to individuals from a majority group vs. others
- Mentoring or advising without any regard for a student’s background or previous experience with higher education
- Making assumptions about career path and academic ability based on group stereotypes
- Downplaying the value of literary works from other cultural groups compared to those by White European authors
- Persistent mis-gendering of a student, despite being corrected many times
- Persistence mispronunciation of a student’s name and no attempt to pronounce it correctly or apologize for the error
- Mistaking one student for another of the same race/ethnicity – as if all look alike
- Assuming all students of the same perceived race/ethnicity are friends
- Assuming students are only comfortable in groups with others similar to themselves
- Relying on the only woman or BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person of Color) person in the group to speak on behalf of their identity group or be the “diversity” representative on committees

Unfortunately, this list could go on and on. All of these examples are rooted in forms of bias, and lack of consideration for others’

perspectives. The good news is that with self-awareness and increased empathy for others we can consciously avoid making these kinds of errors.

Student Demographics Are Changing

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The composition of the undergraduate and the graduate student bodies at Stanford have become more diverse over time. A changing student body requires faculty members to be more cognizant of who they are teaching. Pedagogy, curriculum, classroom behaviors and mentoring and advising techniques may need to be revised to better meet the learning needs of students today.

What I wish my professor knew – Video with first generation low income (FLI) students at Stanford

<https://ctl.stanford.edu/promote-inclusive-learning/flip-video>

Excerpt from National Institutes of Health website:

<https://diversity.nih.gov/sociocultural-factors/implicit-bias>

What is Bias and Implicit Bias?

What is bias?

Bias consists of attitudes, behaviors, and actions that are prejudiced in favor of or against one person or group compared to another.

What is implicit bias?

Implicit bias is a form of bias that occurs automatically and unintentionally, that nevertheless affects judgments, decisions, and behaviors. Research has shown implicit bias can pose a barrier to recruiting and retaining a diverse scientific workforce.

Implicit Bias

“...the concept of implicit bias: the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.”

“Operating outside of our conscious awareness, implicit biases are pervasive, and they can challenge even the most well-intentioned and egalitarian-minded individuals, resulting in actions and outcomes that do not necessarily sign with explicit intentions.”

Staats, C., Understanding implicit bias what educators should know, *American Educator*, Winter 2015-2016.

Mackenzie, L. N., Hackett-Provenzano, L. and Soule.S.A., [How do we become biased?](#), *FastCompany*, January 29, 2020.

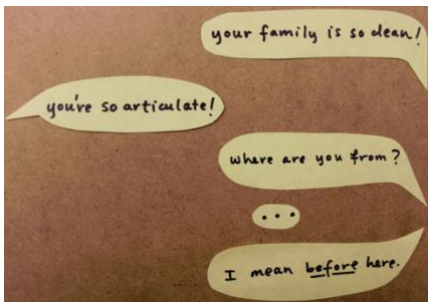
What are Microaggressions?

What are microaggressions?

From *Teaching.Washington.edu*

<https://teaching.washington.edu/topics/inclusive-teaching/addressing-microaggressions-in-the-classroom/>

Microaggressions are: “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” (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, et al., 2007, p.273). Although this definition focuses on racial microaggressions, microaggressions can target any marginalized group identity, such as race, socioeconomic class, gender, sexuality, nationality, citizenship, ability, etc. Microaggressions can cause students to experience serious cognitive, behavioral, and emotional reactions, making it very difficult for them to learn ([Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, Rivera, 2009, pp.187-8](#)).



In a [KUOW interview](#), Derald Wing Sue noted: “All of us are socialized into the society, and it really is the height of arrogance or naiveté to think that any of us are immune from inheriting biases that are deeply embedded in this society and culture. They come out in ways that we’re not aware of.” In other words, we are all socialized to commit microaggressions, even if we have good intentions. Understanding microaggressions and the most effective ways to address them can help create and maintain classroom environments where all students can learn.

<https://www.kuow.org/stories/youre-so-articulate-why-microaggressions-wear-people-down>

Recognizing Problematic Communications/Behaviors and Their Impact

Adapted from Sue, D.W., *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation*, Wiley & Sons, 2010.

Microaggression is a term for commonplace, verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights, snubs or insults, which may be intentional or unintentional, that communicate negative messages to target persons based on their marginalized group status. While the term uses “micro” this does not mean that these are unimportant or minor. It means they are frequently encountered and part of everyday life for targeted individuals, and their negative impact on physical and mental health builds up over time. Microaggressions have been described as “death by a thousand cuts.”

Three Types of Microaggressions

Microinvalidation – Often Unconscious		
Negates and excludes the feelings, psychological thoughts and experiential reality of a person from a marginalized group.		
Theme	Example	Potential Message
Myth of Meritocracy Statements which assert that gender or race/ethnicity do not play a role in life success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> America is the land of opportunity. Everyone can succeed in this society if they work hard enough. Men and women have equal opportunities for achievement. We hire for excellence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The playing field is even, so if women, BIPOC or LGBTQ+ people do not succeed, the problem is with them.
Color Blindness Pretense or statement that a person does not see or acknowledge race/ethnicity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All lives matter. When I look at you, I don't see color. There is only one race, the human race. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Denying the significance of a person's racial/ethnic experience and history.
Alien in One's Own Land Assuming Asian Americans, Latinx Americans and others who look different or are named differently than the dominant culture are foreign-born.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where are you from or where were you born? You speak English very well. What are you? How do you say it in Spanish? Continuously mispronouncing the names of students, not willing to listen 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. You do not belong here.
Denial of individual racism/sexism/heterosexism A statement made denying bias.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm not racist I have a Black friend. As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority. To a person of color: are you sure that security was following you? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because I know someone of a different race it is impossible for me to be biased in any way. All types of oppression are the same. If I am a victim of oppression, I cannot be biased. Your personal experience is not valid.
Heteronormativity Statements and behaviors that assume everyone is heterosexual.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only using examples or pronouns indicating male/female couples. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only heterosexual relationships exist and are valid.
Microinsult – Often Unconscious		
Demeans a person's heritage or identity through behavior/verbal remarks that convey insensitivity and rudeness.		

Theme	Example	Potential Message
Ascription of Intelligence Assigning a degree of intelligence to a person based on their social identity (BIPOC, gender, LGBTQ, etc.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To an Asian person, “you must be good in math, can you help me with this problem?” To a woman of color: “I would have never guessed you were a scientist.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Asians are intelligent and good at math/science. Women are not good at science. People of color are not as intelligent as others.
Pathologized cultural values/communication styles Assuming that values and communication styles of the dominant culture are ideal/normal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Why do you have to be so loud/animated? Calm down.” “Why are you so quiet? Speak up more.” Dismissing someone who brings up their race/culture in discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assimilate to the dominant culture. There is no room for communication/behavioral style differences. Leave your cultural baggage outside.
Sexist/Heterosexist/Gender Binary Language Use of terms and pronouns that devalue or deny the self-identity of women and/or LGBTQ+ individuals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of the pronoun “he” to refer to all people. Forms that force a choice of Male or Female. Unwilling to use “they” or a different pronoun to refer to a student, after being asked to do so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male experience is universal. There are only two genders. Your identity is invalid.
Assumption of criminal status Presuming someone to be a criminal, dangerous or deviant based on race/ethnicity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A store clerk follows a person of color around the store. While walking through the halls of the science building, a faculty member approaches a Black graduate student to ask if they are lost. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are a criminal and likely to steal. You do not belong here.
Second Class Citizen When member of targeted group is treated as less than a person of the dominant group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A BIPOC customer is ignored at a store counter and attention is given to a White customer. Saying “You people...” An instructor calls on male students more frequently than female students. A BIPOC faculty member is mistaken for a service worker. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whites are more important and more affluent. Everyone of your race/ethnicity is the same and less than the dominant group. Men have more valuable things to say than women. BIPOC people couldn’t occupy high status positions.
Traditional Gender Role Prejudice and Stereotyping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An advisor asks a woman if she is planning on having children while in postdoctoral training. Labeling an assertive woman as a “b___.” While describing a man with similar behavior as a strong leader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women are expected to have children. Women are not allowed to be forceful.

Microassault – Often Conscious

Violent verbal or nonverbal attack intended to hurt the victim through name calling, shunning or purposeful discriminatory actions. Examples include use of the N-word, or other epithets and slurs used to negatively describe a target group.

Adapted from Sue, D.W., *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation*, Wiley & Sons, 2010.

[Click here for handout, Recognizing Problematic Communications and the Impact of Their Messages.](#)

Additional Resources on Microaggressions



Yolanda Flores Niemann
Professor of Psychology,
University of North Texas

Videos:

PBS News Hour 2015 – (7:57)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgvjnrx6OCE>

Microaggressions in the Classroom (18:00)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZahtlxW2CIQ>

Articles:

Sue, D.W., Lin, A.I., Torino, G.C., Capodilupo, C.M., and Rivera, D.P., Racial Microaggressions and difficult dialogues on race in the classroom, *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 2009, 15:2, 183–190.

Perez Huber, L., and Solorzano, D.G., Racial microaggressions, what they are, what they are not and why they matter, *Latino Policy and Issues Brief*, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, November 2015.

Excerpt from National Institutes of Health website:

<https://diversity.nih.gov/sociocultural-factors/stereotype-threat>

Stereotype Threat – A Form of Internalized Bias



Claude Steele
Lucie Stern Professor in
the Social Sciences,
Emeritus,
Stanford University

Stereotype threat is defined as a “socially premised psychological threat that arises when one is in a situation or doing something for which a negative stereotype about one's group applies” (Steele & Aronson, 1995). According to stereotype threat, members of a marginalized group acknowledge that a negative stereotype exists in reference to their group, and they demonstrate apprehension about confirming the negative stereotype by engaging in particular activities.

See the classic paper by Steele and Aronson (1995) that describes stereotype threat, [Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans](#)

How might stereotype threat interfere with learning or academic performance?

Stereotype threat impedes the ability of individuals from marginalized groups to perform at their best. Reducing bias and implicit bias in the classroom or group setting would help to reduce the impact of stereotype threat on individual performance.

Additional Resources on Stereotype Threat

Videos:

Claude Steele - How Stereotypes Affect us and what we can do

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvLj3OIQHUE>

Claude Steele on Stereotype Threat

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvwwvbiwRkg>

Implicit Bias, Stereotype Threat, Growth Mindset – Russell McClain,
TEDx University of Maryland Baltimore

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiZQaE0q9BY>

What is Triggering?

What is Triggering?

Triggering occurs when any certain something (a “*trigger*”) causes a negative emotional response. The emotional response can be fear, sadness, panic, flashbacks, and pain, as well as any physical symptoms associated with these emotions (shaking, loss of appetite, fainting, fatigue, and so on). Triggering can vary in severity, and the most harmful triggering tends to happen when the trigger has been encountered without any prior warning.

Excerpted from:

Not sure what people mean by triggering? This article is your one-stop 1010, by Gillian Brown, 2015

<https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/06/guide-to-triggering/#:~:text=Triggering%20occurs%20when%20any%20certain,causes%20a%20negative%20emotional%20response>

What to Do if you Notice a Microaggression?

The following description and steps are taken from, *If you notice a microaggression, acknowledge it*, posted by the Eberly Center, Carnegie Mellon

<https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/design/teach/classroomclimate/strategies/microaggression.html>

As an instructor, be vigilant about the comments that may arise during discussion. Research has shown that students will take their cues from the instructor about how to react to a hot moment or difficult dialogue – if the instructor ignores it, it can further marginalize minority students and squander an opportunity to dispel stereotypes and promote mutual understanding (Huston & DiPietro, 2007; Sue et al., 2009; Bergom et al., 2011). There are many ways to respond to a hot moment, based on the context and your personal preference. Here are some examples of things you can do:

Specifically, here are some steps you can go through:

1. **Take a deep breath:** collect your thoughts before responding.
2. **Acknowledge:** know and recognize that the other person's perspective is their reality and truth.
3. **Inquire:** Give students the benefit of the doubt. First, ask the student to clarify, elaborate or further explain. This will give you more information about where s/he is coming from, and may also help the speaker to become aware of what s/he is saying.
 - Could you please say more about that?"
 - "Can you elaborate on your point?"
 - "It sounds like you have a strong opinion about this. Could you please tell me why?"
 - "What is it about this that concerns you the most?"
4. **Reframe:** Create a different way or perspective from which to view a situation.
 - "Could there be another way to look at this?"
 - "Let's reframe this to explore other perspectives/interpretations. Consider for moment that... What if...?"
 - "I'm wondering what message this is sending and how it's being received. Do you think you would have said this/drawn this conclusion if..."
5. **Identify:** Directly respond to student comment as problematic. Calmly and politely explain which specific words or phrases you experienced as disrespectful (or that someone else might have). Use an "I" statement to express feelings, as appropriate, rather than commenting on or labeling the speaker.
 - "Saying ____ often comes up in popular culture. Some might find it problematic because of ____"
 - "When you said X, I felt like Y. In the future, please..."
 - "This seems like a good time to revisit and remind ourselves about the guidelines for discussion that we agreed upon as class."

6. **Diffuse to allow productive re-engagement:** Sometimes, a hot moment can get out of control.
 - Ask students to pause and write individually for moment about what just happened and how they feel about it.
 - Use this time as an opportunity to formulate a strategy for re-engaging the hot moment in a productive, inclusive way.
 - Remind your students which discussion guidelines are relevant to the situation.
7. **Revisit:** Sometimes one is caught by surprise, misses an opportunity, or wishes s/he could have a do-over in response to a microaggression or “hot moment”. Even if the moment has passed, it’s ok to go back and address it later in class. Research indicates that an unaddressed microaggression can leave just as much of a negative impact as the microaggression itself.
 - “I want to go back to something that was brought up in our class.”
 - “Let’s rewind ___ minutes.”
 - “I think it would be worthwhile to revisit something that happened ____.”
8. **Check in:** in person, talk with the targeted student(s) after class. Let them know that you value their experiences and perspective and see if they have any suggestions about how to better support them in class.

References:

- Bergom, I., Wright, M. C., Brown, M. K., & Brooks, M. (2011). Promoting college student development through collaborative learning: A case study of hevruta. *About campus*, 15(6), 19-25.
- Burton, S., & Furr, S. (2014). Conflict in multicultural classes: Approaches to resolving difficult dialogues. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 53(2), 97-110
- Huston, T. A., & DiPietro, M. (2007). In the eye of the storm: Students perceptions of helpful faculty actions following a collective tragedy. In D. R. Robertson & L. B. Nilson (Eds.) *To Improve the Academy*. Vol 25. Resources for faculty, instructional, and organizational development (pp. 207-224). Bolton, MA: Anker.
- Sue, D. W., Lin, A. I., Torino, G. C., Capodilupo, C. M., & Rivera, D. P. (2009). Racial microaggressions and difficult dialogues on race in the classroom. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 15(2), 183-190.
- <https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/teach/classroomclimate/strategies/microaggression.html>

[Click here for handout, If You Notice a Microaggression, Acknowledge It.](#)

Additional Resources

[Pronoun Guide for Instructors PDF](#)

[Small Acts of Kindness: Micro-affirmations and Campus Climate](#)

Tools for Self-Discovery

Barnett, P.E., Unpacking teacher' invisible knapsacks: Social identity and privilege in higher education, *Liberal Education*, Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2013, 99:3.

Identify your hot buttons

<http://sparqtools.org/areyoureadytotalk-instructions/#step3>

Map Your Identities

Your sense of yourself that comes from being a member of certain groups — your social identities — shapes how you think and feel about many topics. The Map Your Identities tool (<http://sparqtools.org/map-your-identities/>), part of the Are You Ready to Talk? toolkit, will help you think about your own and other people's social identities and how they influence you.

Your Culture Sketch – Taxonomy and Activity

Examines social identity cultural influences and privilege.

<http://division45.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/CulturalPsychology.pdf>

Implicit Association Test

Take self-tests to assess implicit bias related to different categories e.g., race, religion, disability, age, weight, etc.

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

The American Dream - self assessment quiz

Identity aspects of your life that have assisted you in moving up in the U.S.

<https://movingupusa.com/>

[Social Identity Wheel Worksheet](#)

Stanford Resources

The **Stanford Center for Teaching and Learning** offers a number of resources and programs to help with [Inclusive Learning Strategies](#) through the **Stanford Teaching Commons** site, including:

[Strive for JUSTICE in Course Learning](#)

[Promote Inclusive Learning - Teaching Tools](#)

[ACT to Sustain Learning Through Current Events](#)

Stanford Medicine, Office of Faculty Development and Diversity

[On Demand Series X OFDD](#)

- Unconscious Bias
- Microaggression and Privilege

Stanford Business, Teaching and Learning Hub

[Handling Planned or Unexpected Class Discussions Involving Sensitive Topics](#)

[Foster an Equitable and Inclusive Learning Experience](#)

[Sensitive Moment Scenarios and Tips](#)

Stanford School of Earth, Energy and Environmental Sciences

[Practice Community Values – PDF Handout](#)

[Respectful Community Workshop Additional Resources](#)

Stanford SPARQ – Department of Psychology

[Stanford RaceWorks SPARQtools](#)

This toolkit is intended for educators or facilitators who want to develop students' or coworkers' racial literacy.