

Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Making the “Invisible” Visible

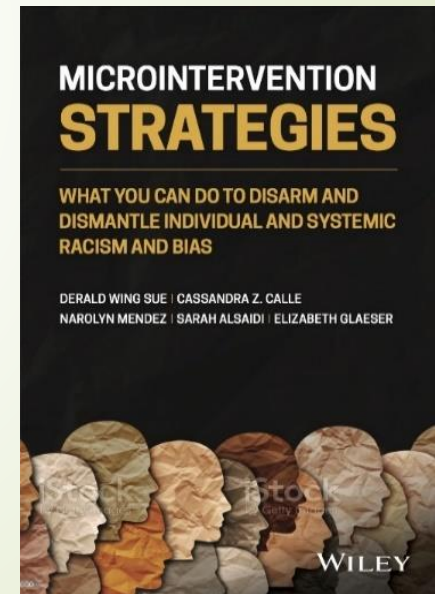
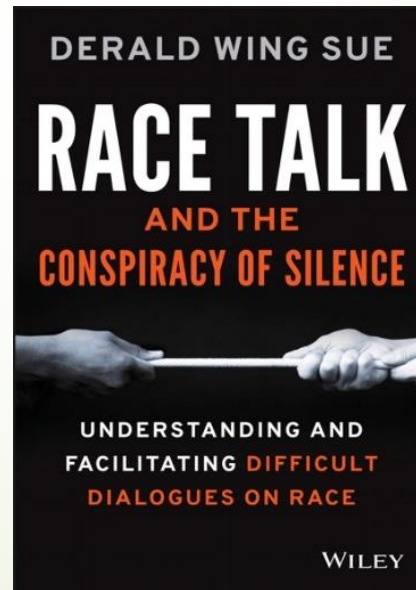
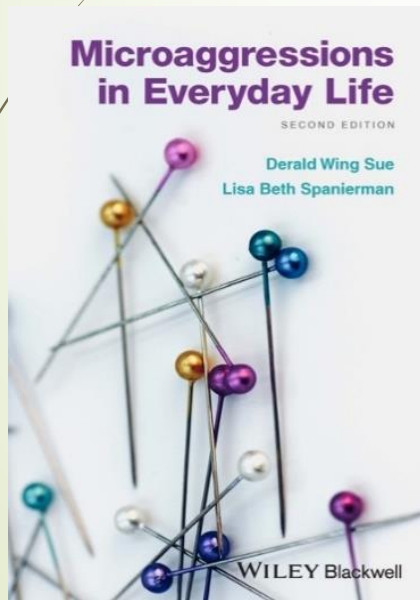
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Silence/Inaction Is Collusion

➡ *“We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people.”*

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Dedication

Maya Angelou

1928-2014

Still I Rise

**“You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may tread me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.”**



**“You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.”**



Impact of Microaggressions

➤ **Latina Student:**

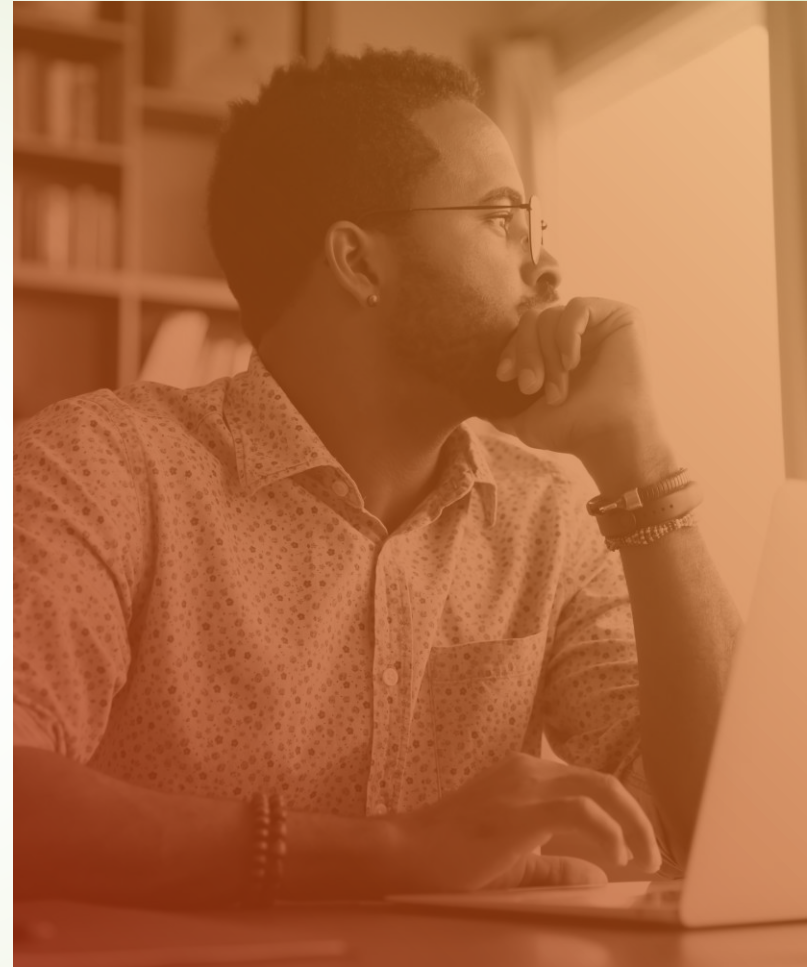
- *It seems to never end. “You’re different, you’re stupid, you don’t belong”....You get angry but have to hold it in. **How does it make me feel?** It hurts a lot, especially if it comes from your friends and even your professors. Explaining, doesn’t help. They will just say, **“It wasn’t my intention.”** **“Why are you always so sensitive?”** **“Can’t you take a joke.”** And, I can’t say anything because I am so emotional. I don’t want them to see me cry or they’ll think I’m weak.*

Impact of Microaggression

5 African American Male Student:

I have to stop and think sometimes. “Are they being racist? Or, is that just how they act? Or, are they just not being friendly because they had a bad day?”

I feel like there’s nothing I can do. Show my anger or say something, I’ll get in trouble. I try to walk away sometimes, but it just eats away at you. Then you take it out on yourself... **“Why didn’t you stand up for your rights?”** You begin to feel like a weak coward.



Microaggressive Examples

➤ Racial Microaggressions

A Black student is complimented by the teacher for being so articulate and bright. (Hidden Message: Most Blacks are inarticulate and lack intelligence.)

A third generation Asian American student is complimented by a White classmate for speaking such “good English.” (Hidden Message: Asian Americans are perpetual aliens in their own country.)

➤ Gender Microaggressions

A female resident (physician) wearing a stethoscope is mistaken by medical students for a nurse. (Hidden Message: Women should occupy nurturing and not decision-making roles. Women are less capable than men.)

Male students in private refer to a female teachers as “bitchy” while their male counterparts are described as “decisive and confident teachers.” (Hidden Message: Women should be passive and allow men to be decision makers.)

Microaggressive Examples

► LGBTQ Microaggressions

Students in class refer to a fellow straight student as “gay” (“That’s so gay!”) who is socially ostracized. (Hidden Message: People considered weird, strange, deviant or different are “gay.”)

A lesbian client reluctantly discloses her sexual orientation to a straight counselor trainee by stating that she was “into women.” The counselor indicates he is not shocked by the disclosure because he once worked with a client who was “into dogs.” (Hidden Message: Same-sex attraction is abnormal and deviant.)

► Other Socially Devalued Group Microaggressions

When bargaining over the price of a used book, one student says to the other “Don’t try to Jew me down.” (Hidden Message: Jews are stingy and money-grubbing.)

A blind student reports that teachers, staff, and fellow students raise their voices when speaking to him in the school. He responds by saying “Please don’t raise your voice; I can hear you perfectly well.” (Hidden Message: A person with a disability is defined as lesser in all aspects of physical and mental functioning.)

Racial Microaggression Impact: A Lifetime of Being an Outsider

- ▶ *"It gets so tiring, you know. It sucks you dry. People don't trust you. From the moment I [Black Man] wake up, I know stepping out the door, that it will be the same, day after day. The bus can be packed, but no one will sit next to you.....I guess it may be a good thing because you always get more room, no one crowds you. You get served last...when they serve you, they have this phony smile and just want to get rid of you....you have to show more ID to cash a check, you turn on the TV and there you always see someone like you, being handcuffed and jailed. They look like you and sometimes you begin to think it is you! You are a plague! You try to hold it in, but sometimes you lose it. Explaining doesn't help. They don't want to hear. Even when they ask, 'Why do you have a chip on your shoulder?' Shit...I just walk away now. It doesn't do any good explaining." (Sue, 2010, p. 87).*
- ▶ **Questions:** Is life as hard as this Black man describes? Is he exaggerating or misreading the action of others? Is he oversensitive or paranoid? Is he right in concluding that others don't want to listen to his explanations? Why is he so angry and resentful? Do you believe him or not? If not, what are your reasons?



Microaggression Manifestations

Verbal:

- ▶ “You speak excellent English!”
- ▶ “Where were you from?”

Nonverbal:

- ▶ An African American male student enters an elevator with a White female rider. She immediately stiffens and clutches her purse tightly.

Environmental:

- ▶ Campus Climate – Environmental Microaggressions



Basic Assumptions



- 1. We have been socialized into a society in which there exists individual, institutional and societal biases associated with race, gender and sexual orientation.
- 2. None of us are immune from inheriting the biases of our ancestors, institutions and society.
- 3. It is not “old-fashioned” racism that is most harmful to people of color, but the contemporary forms known as *modern racism*, *symbolic racism*, *aversive racism*, and *racial microaggressions*.



Old Fashioned Bigotry or Microaggressions?

In the United States, White EuroAmerican males are only 33% of the population:

1. **They occupy 80% of tenured positions in higher education.**
2. **Approximately 80% of the 117th Congress, despite being the most diverse in history.**
3. **92% of Forbes 400 Executive CEO level positions**
4. **90% of Public School Superintendents**
5. **99.9x% of Athletic Team Owners**
6. **99.97% of U. S. Vice Presidents**
7. **99.98% of U.S. Presidents**



Basic Assumptions

- ▶ 4. The characteristics of these forms of racism are their invisible, unintentional and subtle nature; usually outside the level of conscious awareness.
- ▶ 5. Racial microaggressions create psychological dilemmas for the perpetrator and recipient because it represents a clash of racial realities.
- ▶ 6. 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.

Microaggressive Themes: Marginalized Group Members

Research reveals that students and faculty of Color, Women, LGBTQ members often report that they:

1. Experience the campus, work, or social climate as isolating, alienating, extremely stressful, risky and invalidating;
2. often be “the only one” that leads to feelings of isolation and loneliness;
3. lack mentors who possess knowledge of the experiences of marginalized groups;
4. have their intelligence, competence and authority devalued and considered illegitimate;
5. have their racial, gender or other group identities assailed;
6. experience elevated levels of stress and distress;
7. are subjected to biased performance appraisal systems for grading, and promotion and retention decisions; and
8. have many more Whites question their qualifications or credentials.

Source: Sue & Spanierman (2020); Sue, Calle, Mendez, Alsaidi & Glaeser (2021).



Harmful Impact **Controversy**

1. Microaggressions are constant and continual without an end date (an everyday hassle may be time limited).
2. Microaggressions are cumulative and any one may represent the feather that breaks the camel's back
3. Microaggressions must be deciphered because they contain double messages (especially microinvalidations)
4. Microaggressions are constant reminders of a person's second class status in society
5. Microaggressions symbolize past historic injustices (enslavement of Africans, the Holocaust, and the taking away of land from Indigenous peoples).



Harmful Impact

Studies reveal, that microaggressions, while seemingly trivial in nature have major consequences for marginalized groups in our society because they:

- 1. increase stress in the lives of people of color (APA, 2017),
- 2. deny or negate their racialized experiences (Lewis & Haggerman, 2016),
- 3. lower emotional well-being (Ong, Burrow, Fuller-Rowell, Ja & Sue, 2013),
- 4. increase depression and negative feelings (Nadal, Griffin, Wong, Hamit & Rasmus, 2014),
- 5. assail the mental health of recipients (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008),

Harmful Impact (continued)

- 6. impede learning and problem solving (Harwood, Huntt, Mendenhall & Lewis, 2012; Salvatore & Shelton, 2007),
- 7. impair employee performance (Holder, 2019),
- 8. take a heavy toll on the physical well-being of targets (Clark, Anderson, Clark & Williams, 1999)
- 9. contribute to stereotype threat (Steele, Spencer & Aronson, 2002), and
- 10. contribute to the imposter phenomenon experienced by people of color (Cokley, Smith, Bernard, Hurst, Jackson et al, 2017).



Overcoming Microaggressions

- 1. Acknowledge and accept the fact that you are a product of cultural conditioning and have inherited the biases, fears, stereotypes of your ancestors.
- 2. Understand yourself as a racial/cultural being by making the “invisible,” visible. Race, culture and ethnicity is a function of each and everyone of us. It is not just a “minority” thing.
- 3. Be open and honest about your vulnerabilities.
- 4. Monitor and make sense of your emotional reactions.
- 5. Everyone commits racial, gender, and sexual orientation blunders. Don't become defensive. Recover, not cover up!

Types of Microinterventions

Microinterventions

Everyday anti-bias actions taken by targets, parents, significant others, allies, and well-intentioned bystanders to counteract, challenge, diminish, or neutralize individual (microaggressions) and the institutional/societal (macroaggressions) expressions of prejudice, bigotry and discrimination.

Microaffirmations

Small acts that validate and affirm a person's humanity, racial/cultural identity, experiential reality, and worth or value. They make a person feel welcomed, seen, heard, respected, valued, supported, and affirmed.

- **Microcompliments**
- **Microsupports**
- **Microvalidations**

Microprotections

Everyday actions from parents or influential figures that (a) teach the young to understand the reality of racism, (b) send messages or engage in actions that promote ethnic pride, and (c) equip them with the tools to deal with bias and discrimination.

- **Develop racial literacy/critical consciousness**
- **Promote ethnic pride**
- **Prepare for racism**

Microchallenges

Direct action that challenges and attempts to disarm, end, neutralize, or deflect the biased behavior or policy. They are much more forceful and confrontational forms to combat discrimination and bias.

- **Challenge and confront biased perpetrator behavior**
- **Challenge and confront biases, policies and practices**
- **Engage in social advocacy**
- **Engage in civil disobedience**



Microaffirmations:

Microcompliments, Microsupports and Microvalidations

- Researchers identified three forms of microaffirmation: (a) *microcompliments*, (b) *microsupports*, and (c) *microvalidations*.
- **Microcompliments** are statements or actions that imply praise, admiration and respect for the person's identity, heritage, or for taking courageous actions in the face of trying and difficult times. *"That took courage."*
- **Microsupports** are communications that are provided in situations where the person feels unwelcome or "invisible." It may also communicate to targets or socially devalued groups that they are valued, understood, and not alone. *"I'm with you."*
- **Microvalidations** are communications that express appreciation for the lived realities of people of color, their thoughts, abilities and feelings. *"I believe you."*



Microaggression and Microaffirmation Examples

- ▶ An African American student had just finished answering a challenging question posed by the White male professor. Surprised but impressed by the student's analysis, the professor loudly exclaimed, "**Jamal that was a most articulate and surprisingly insightful explanation!**" Although seemingly a compliment, Jamal felt uncomfortable as the professor continued his lecture. While the professor and many White students seemed oblivious to the possible offensive statement (microaggression), **nearly all the students of color made immediate eye contact with Jamal (microaffirmation).**
- ▶ **During a meeting conducted by the Dean, Patricia, a Latina faculty member, made several suggestions about dealing with a college crisis. The White male faculty on the committee seemed to ignore her comments, cut her off in midsentence, and consistently talked over her (microaggressions). One of her male colleagues, however, noticed the ready dismissal of Patricia's ideas and made the following observation, "There are many good options here, but I'm interested in what Patricia is suggesting." Could you expand upon your solution (microaffirmation)?"** At that point, everyone turned to Patricia and listened to her ideas.



Microaffirmation Communications

- ▶ Note the nonverbal microaffirmation from students of color. When they all turned and made eye contact with Jamal, they were in essence telling him *“That was a microaggression. Do not doubt yourself. You are not crazy. It did happen.”* They were not only validating his experiential reality, but also providing him support. *“You aren’t alone. We are all in the same boat.”*
- ▶ When Patricia’s suggestions were ignored and her attempts to make contributions were cut off in mid-sentence by male colleagues, the professor who interrupted the dialogue by expressing interest in her ideas was communicating: *“You have good ideas that are worthy of consideration. I value you as a colleague. I view you as a competent member of this team, so do not give up. I support you. I see and hear you.”*



Microinterventions

They have three primary benefits.

First, they serve to **enhance psychological well-being**, and provide targets, allies and bystanders with a **sense of control and self-efficacy**.

- ▶ They also provide a **repertoire of responses** that can be used to directly disarm or counteract the effects of microaggressions by challenging perpetrators.

Second, they are interpersonal tools that are intended to **counteract, change or stop microaggressions** by subtly or overtly confronting and educating the perpetrator.



Macro Impact of Microinterventions

Third, although some may perceive microinterventions to be **small and insignificant actions**, many scholars have suggested that the everyday interventions of allies and well-intentioned bystanders have a **profound environmental and contextual positive impact** in

- **A. creating an inclusive and welcoming environment,**
- **B. discouraging negative behavior,**
- **C. challenging false consensus,**
- **D. reinforcing a norm that values respectful interactions.**

In other words, microinterventions can have **a macro-impact** by creating a classroom and campus climate that **encourage the positive and discourage the negative.**



Microinterventions for Targets, Allies and Bystanders

Targets are marginalized group members who are objects of racial, gender or sexual orientation prejudice and discrimination expressed through micro/macroaggressions.

- The experience of a microaggression can often **feel isolating, painful and filled with threat.**
- In the race-related stress-coping literature, the first rule of thumb for targets is **to take care of oneself.**
- *It* is important to distinguish between the **internal (survival and self-care goals of the target),** and
- **the external (confronting the source) objectives** in dealing with bias and discrimination.



Microinterventions for Targets, Allies and Bystanders

- **Allies.** *Allies* are individuals who belong to dominant social groups (e.g., Whites, males, heterosexuals) and, through their support of non-dominant groups (e.g., people of color, women, LGBTQ individuals), actively work towards the eradication of prejudicial practices they witness in both their personal and professional lives.
- Allies surpass individuals who simply refrain from engaging in overt sexist, racist, ethnocentrist, or heterosexist behaviors (**nonracist**); but rather, they are motivated to take action at the interpersonal and institutional levels by actively promoting the rights of the oppressed (**anti-racist**).
- Like targets, allyship development involves internal and painful self-reckoning, and a **commitment to external action**.



Microinterventions for Targets, Allies and Bystanders

- ▶ **Bystanders.** *Bystanders* can be anyone who become aware of and/or witness unjust behavior or practices that are worthy of comment or action.
- ▶ Although anyone can be a bystander, including targets (witnessing discrimination against a member of their group), **we reserve this term for individuals who may possess only a superficially developed or a nebulous awareness of racially biased behaviors, and of institutional policies and practices that are not fair to a person of color or racial group.**
- ▶ These individuals do not fall into the classes of targets or White allies but represent the largest plurality of people in society



Microinterventions

Personal/Individual Level

What do I do?

“I am only one; but I am still one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do.”

Helen Keller

The strategic goals of microinterventions are fourfold:

- (1) Make the “invisible” visible.
- (2) Disarm the microaggression.
- (3) Educate the offender about the meta-communications they send.
- (4) Seek external support when needed.



Strategic Goal # 1: Make the “Invisible” Visible

- **Objectives:**

- 1. Bring the micro/macroaggression to the forefront of the person's awareness.
- 3. Indicate to the perpetrator that they have behaved or said something offensive to you or others.
- 4. Force the perpetrator to consider the impact and meaning of what was said/done or, in the case of the bystander, what was not said/done.

- **Rationale:**

- 1. Allows targets, allies and bystanders to verbally describe what is happening in a nonthreatening manner.
- 2. When allies and bystanders intervene, reassures targets that they are not “crazy” and that their experiences are valid.
- 3. When those with power and privilege respond, may have greater impact on perpetrator.

Strategic Goal # 1: Make the “Invisible” Visible

Tactics or Best Practices:

- *1. Develop Perspicacity*
- *2. Disempower the innuendo by naming it.*
- *3. Undermine the meta-communication.*
- *4. Challenge the stereotype*
- *5. Broaden the ascribed trait*
- *6. Ask for clarification of a statement or action.*
- *7. Make the meta-communication explicit via restatement/rephrasing*
- *8. Reverse and restate the compliment, action, and role as if it was meant for the perpetrator.*



Strategic Goal # 1: Make the “Invisible” Visible

- **1. Develop Perspicacity (Critical Consciousness)**
- For targets, allies and bystanders, the first rule of effective intervention is the quality of **perspicacity** (the ability to see beyond the obvious, to read between the lines, and to deconstruct conscious communications from meta-communications).
- Perspicacity **reassures targets** that they are “*not crazy*”, and that their perceptual reality is accurate. It also **allows allies and bystanders to accurately perceive the situation** or the hidden meta-communication. Thus they may be better able to offer social support and/or take needed interventions.
- Perspicacity is related to **high context** rather than low context analysis and communication.



Strategic Goal # 1: Make the “Invisible” Visible

- **2. Disempower the innuendo by “naming” it.**
- Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) said the first step to liberation and empowerment is **“naming” an oppressive event, condition or process** so it no longer holds power over those that are marginalized.
- It demystifies, deconstructs and makes the “invisible” visible.
- Naming is (a) liberating and empowering because it provides a language for people of color to describe their experiences, and (b) reassures them that they are not “crazy.”
- It forces those with power and privilege to consider the roles they play in the perpetuation of oppression.
- **“That’s a racist remark.”**
- **“That’s a microaggression.”**
- **“That’s a stereotype.”**



Strategic Goal # 1: Make the “Invisible” Visible

- ▶ **3. Undermine the meta-communication.**
- ▶ White teacher to 3rd generation Asian American student: ***“You speak excellent English!”***
(Microaggression = *“You are a perpetual alien in your own country. You are not a true American.”*)
- ▶ Asian American Student: ***“Thank you. I hope so. I was born here.”*** (Student acknowledges the conscious compliment, but undermines the unspoken assumption of being a foreigner.)



Strategic Goal # 1: Make the “Invisible” Visible

- **4. Challenge the stereotype.**
- African American student enters elevator with a White female rider and she suddenly tenses up and clutches her purse tightly. (Microaggression = “You are potentially a dangerous criminal.”)
- African American says to female passenger: **“Don’t worry, I might be black, but that doesn’t make me dangerous.”**
- White ally says.....
- Bystander says.....



Strategic Goal # 1: Make the “Invisible” Visible

- **5. Broaden the ascribed trait to a universal human behavior.**
- Rather than pointing out the inaccuracy of a stereotype, this tactic makes the trait applicable to many or all groups.
- *“I think that applies to everyone.”*
- *“I don’t think that’s a gender thing, men do it too.”*
- **Statement:** *“Why are all the Black kids seated together in the cafeteria? Why do they separate themselves from us?”*
- **Counter:** *“I could ask the same question about Whites. Why are all the White people sitting together in the restaurant?”*



Strategic Goal # 1: Make the “Invisible” Visible

- **6. Ask for clarification of a statement or action.**
- **GENERAL QUESTIONS**
- *“Robert, what exactly do you mean?”*
- *“Come again. Did I hear you correctly.”*
- *“Do you realize what you just said?”*
- *“I can’t believe you just said that. Tell me what you mean?”*
- **SPECIFIC QUESTIONS**
- *“Do you really believe all Latinos have a poor worth ethic?”*
- *“What experiences do you have with African Americans that lead you to that conclusion?”*
- The intent of these questions is to (a) force the perpetrator to stop and consider what they just said or did, (b) communicate your disagreement or disapproval, and (c) encourage a further exploration of the belief or attitude of the person.



Strategic Goal # 1: Make the “Invisible” Visible

- ▶ **7. Make the meta-communication explicit by restating/rephrasing the statement.**
- ▶ **Examples:**
- ▶ *“You’re telling me that you’re not going to consider Jamal for the manager position because White co-workers aren’t ready for a Black boss.”*
- ▶ *“In other words, you believe that women workers are less dependable than men because they will take time off to have children.”*
- ▶ *“You mean that Black students here at Columbia couldn’t have gotten into the University without some accommodated admissions program.”*
- ▶ *“What you just said, make me believe you are prejudiced against Muslims.”*
- ▶ This method of confronting a microaggression or any form of biased statements is much more challenging than the previous strategies. It is meant, however, to make explicit the biased attitudes/beliefs of the person and allow them to face the meaning of their words and actions. It is meant to let the person “hear” what they may have said. It is likely to evoke defensiveness but is aimed at peeling away naiveté or innocence of perpetrators.



Strategic Goal # 1: Make the “Invisible” Visible

8. Reverse, redirect or mimic the statements or actions of the offender as if it was meant for the perpetrator.

- ▶ This is a form of verbal or behavioral jujitsu that reverses the roles of perpetrator and target, and can be viewed as a form of humor or sarcasm.
- ▶ The perpetrator now becomes the target of the remark or action, and its impact can become a learning opportunity for the offender.

White student compliments an Asian American:

“You speak excellent English.”

The target responds:

“Thank you, John. You do too!”

White female teenager to a Black female friend;

“You’re pretty for a dark girl.”

Black female teenager to the White friend:

“Thank you. You’re pretty for a White girl.”

Reversal statements or actions are brief, succinct comebacks that have a powerful impact upon the offender.



Strategic Goal # 2: Disarm the Microaggression

► Objectives:

- 1. Instantly stop or deflect the micro/macroaggression.
- 2. Force the perpetrator to immediately consider what they have just said or done.
- 3. Communicate your disagreement or disapproval towards the perpetrator actions in the moment.

► Rationale:

- 1. Provide targets, allies, and bystanders with a sense of control and self-efficacy to react to perpetrators in the here and now.
- 2. Preserves targets' well being and prevents traumatization by or preoccupation with what transpired.
- 3. Allows perpetrator to think before they speak or behave in future encounters with similar individuals.



Strategic Goal # 2: Disarm the Microaggression

Tactics or Best Practices:

- 1. *Interrupt the communication and redirect it.*
- 2. *State values and set limits.*
- 3. *Express disagreement.*
- 4. *Describe what is happening.*
- 5. *Use an exclamatory short expression.*
- 6. *Remind them of the rules.*



Strategic Goal # 2: Disarm the Microaggression

- **1. Interrupt the communication and redirect it.**
- During the course of a conversation when a biased or misinformed statement is made, simply interrupt it by directly or indirectly stopping the monologue, and communicating your disagreement or displeasure. This is very effective when a racist or sexist joke is being told.
- *“Whoa, let’s not go there.”*
- *“Danger, quick sand ahead.”*
- *“I don’t want to hear the punchline, or that type of talk.”*
(Removing yourself from the conversation.)
- *Shaking your head and physically leaving the situation.*



Strategic Goal # 2: Disarm the Microaggression

➡ 2. State values and set limits.

- ➡ *“You know that respect and tolerance are important values in my life and while I understand that you have a right to say what you want, I’m asking you to show a little more respect for me by not making offensive comments.”*



Strategic Goal # 2: Disarm the Microaggression

➤ 3. Express disagreement.

- *“That’s not how I view the situation.”*
- *“I don’t agree with what you just said (or did).”*
- *“That doesn’t sound right to me.”*
- *“I don’t think that’s true at all.”*
- *“I think you’re making an erroneous assumption.”*



Strategic Goal # 2: Disarm the Microaggression

- **4. Describe what is happening.**
- *“Every time I come over, I find myself becoming uncomfortable because you make statements I find offensive and hurtful.”*
- *“What’s going on with you? You never seem to give due consideration to any of the ideas presented by the women on your work team.”*



Strategic Goal # 2: Disarm the Microaggression

- **5. Use an exclamatory short expression.**
- Say **“Ouch”** or something like **“Aaah C’mom”** Taken from *Ouch! That Stereotype Hurts*. Sunshower Learning (2007).
- This is a very simple technique intended to (a) indicate to the perpetrator that they have said something offensive to you or others, (b) force the person to consider the impact and meaning of what they have said or done, and (c) facilitate a possible more enlightening conversation and exploration of his/her biases.
- *“Those people all look alike.” Ouch!*
- *“He only got the job because he’s Black.” Aaah, C’mom!*
- *“I’m putting you on the finance committee, because you people (Asian American) are good at that.” Ouch!*



Strategic Goal # 2: Disarm the Microaggression

➤ 6. Remind them of the rules.

- *“That behavior is against our code of conduct and could really get you into trouble.”*
- *“In our company, we don’t tolerate denigrating behaviors to any employee. We expect everyone to abide by those rules.”*



Strategic Goal # 3: Educate the Offender

- ▶ **Objectives:**

- ▶ 1. Engage in a one-on-one dialogue with the perpetrator to indicate how and why their behavior is offensive to you and others.
- ▶ 2. Facilitate a possible more enlightening conversation and exploration of the perpetrator's biases.
- ▶ 3. Encourage the perpetrator to explore the origins of their beliefs and attitudes toward targets.

- ▶ **Rationale:**

- ▶ 1. Allows targets, allies and bystanders the opportunity to express their experiences while maintaining a relationship with the offender.
- ▶ 2. Lowers the defense of the perpetrator and helps them recognize the harmful impact.
- ▶ 3. Perpetrator becomes keen to microaggressions committed by those within their social circle and educates others.



Strategic Goal # 3: Educate the Offender

Tactics:

- *1. Help microaggressors differentiate between good intent and harmful impact.*
- *2. Contradict the group-based stereotype with opposing evidence by personalizing it to specific individuals.*
- *3. Appeal to the offender's values and principles.*
- *4. Point out the commonalities.*
- *5. Promote empathy.*
- *6. Point out how they benefit.*



Strategic Goal # 3: Educate the Offender

- 1. Help microaggressors differentiate between good intent and harmful impact.
- *“I know you meant well, but that really hurts.”*
- *“I know you meant it as a joke, but it really offended Aisha.”*
- *“I know you want the women on this team to succeed, but always putting them on hospitality committees will only prevent them from developing leadership skills.”*
- *“I know you kid around a lot, but think how your words affect others.”*
- *“I know you meant it to be funny, but that stereotype is no joke.”*



Strategic Goal # 3: Educate the Offender

- ▶ **2. Contradict the group-based stereotype with opposing evidence by personalizing it to specific individuals.**
- ▶ Many stereotypes or negative statements are related to stereotyping an entire group; “every member shares the same trait.” Asking specifically who the person is talking about or providing information that contradicts the overgeneralization challenges the group stereotype.
- ▶ *“Are you talking about someone in particular?”*
- ▶ **Statement:** *“Those Blacks just don’t have a good work ethic.”*
- ▶ **Counter:** *“I think Eric and Juanita (both African American) work very hard and put in more time than most workers.”*
- ▶ **Statement:** *“Those immigrants don’t even try to learn English.”*
- ▶ **Counter:** *“Actually, I’ve met many immigrants who have learned to speak English well. It’s not easy. Have you ever tried to learn another language?”*



Strategic Goal # 3: Educate the Offender

- 3. Appeal to the offender's values and principles.
- *"I know you really care about representing everyone on campus and being a good student government leader but acting in this way really undermines your intentions to be inclusive."*



Strategic Goal # 3: Educate the Offender

- 4. Point out the commonalities.
- *“That is a negative stereotype of Arab Americans. Have you actually talked to Maryam? You two have so much in common. Did you know she is also an aspiring doctor? I think she is also into cycling. Talk to her.”*



Strategic Goal # 3: Educate the Offender

➤ 5. Promote empathy.

- *“The majority of Latinos want the same things as you. Jesus works hard and wants to advance in his job and make enough to support his family. Do you know how he must feel to be described as being lazy and be deprived of a promotion opportunity? How would you feel if that happened to you? Can you place yourself in his shoes?”*



Strategic Goal # 3: Educate the Offender

- 6. Point out how they benefit.
- *“I know you are studying clinical psychology. Learning about why those stereotypes are harmful is going to make you a better clinician.”*




Strategic Goal # 4: Seek External Reinforcement or Support

- **Objectives:**

- 1. Partake in regular self-care to maintain psychological and physical wellness.
- 2. Check in with self and others to ensure optimal levels of functioning.
- 3. Send a message to perpetrators at large that bigoted behavior will not be tolerated or accepted.

- **Rationale:**

- 1. Mitigates impact of psychological and physiological harm associated with continual and cumulative exposure to microaggressions.
- 2. Reminds targets, allies, and bystanders that they are not alone in the battle.
- 3. Ensures situations of discrimination or bias do not go unnoticed.



Strategic Goal # 4: Seek External Reinforcement or Support

Tactics or Best Practices:

- *1. Alert Leadership.*
- *2. Report Incident.*
- *3. Seek Therapy/Counseling.*
- *4. Seek Spirituality/Religion/Community Support.*
- *5. Establish a Buddy System.*
- *6. Establish or Join a Support Group.*



Strategic Goal # 4: Seek External Reinforcement or Support

➤ 1. Alert Leadership.

- *There are many times in which individual efforts to respond directly to microaggressions may be contraindicated. Seeking help from a higher authority or someone who can intervene on behalf of the target may prove more effective.*



Strategic Goal # 4: Seek External Reinforcement or Support

➤ 2. Report Incident.

- *In many cases, it is best to establish a record of disturbing incidents (i.e., sexual harassment) that may best be documented for possible future actions. Informing someone in authority such as a manager, supervisor, or an ombudsperson establishes a record of undesirable and unacceptable actions; it further enhances credibility for future proceedings if needed.*



Strategic Goal # 4: Seek External Reinforcement or Support

➤ 3. Seek Therapy/Counseling.

- *Targets, allies, and bystanders oftentimes put themselves at risk by confronting others, and such efforts are oftentimes emotionally draining.*
- *For targets, racial battle fatigue may result in major emotional reactions that interfere with personal and professional functioning.*
- *Seeking formal mental health counseling may help alleviate stress, immunize advocates against invalidations, and provide suggestions of how to handle problematic situations.*



Strategic Goal # 4: Seek External Reinforcement or Support

- ▶ **4. Seek Spirituality/Religion/Community Support.**
- ▶ *For targets of microaggressions, research reveals that spirituality, religion and community attachments are monumental forms of support and validation.*
- ▶ *For social justice advocates turning to community leaders and other members also enhances resilience in the face of race-related stress.*



Strategic Goal # 4: Seek External Reinforcement or Support

➤ 5. Establish a Buddy System.

- *One of the greatest sources of invalidation and denigration is the impact of microaggressions. The result is often feelings of isolation and loneliness (being “the only one”). The experience of being the only one is often shared by allies and bystanders as well because of the reluctance or hesitation for others to act. In this case, silence is collusion.*
- *Choosing a close and intimate friend to share your thoughts and feelings with, process the discriminatory events, and to validate your experience strengthens your resolve and resilience.*



Strategic Goal # 4: Seek External Reinforcement or Support

➤ 6. Establish or Join a Support Group.

- *One of the most effective means of dealing with microaggressions and affirm one's desire to intervene is to seek a support group that meets regularly to offer encouragement, ideas, and sustenance in combatting bias and discrimination.*



What Should You Do When You Commit A Microaggression?

1. **Don't become defensive!** If you do, try to work beyond it.
2. **Don't blame the target:** “Don't be so oversensitive.” “Can't you take a joke?” “It's such a small thing, don't overreact.”
3. **Listen and don't constrict.**
4. **Be open to separating intent from impact:** “It wasn't my intention.”
5. **Be aware of bad apologies:** “I'm sorry you were offended.” “I'm sorry if you were offended.” These blames the person and avoids responsibility.
6. **Take responsibility:** “I'm sorry I hurt you.” “It was so insensitive of me.”
7. **Commit to change:** “I promise you, I'll try not to do it again.”
8. **Thank the person. It takes courage to call a person out:** “I know it was hard to tell me that, but thank you for doing so.”



FINIS

**What does this all mean
for you as faculty, staff,
and students?**

- **Reactions**
 - **Comments**
 - **Questions**
- 