Subtle Slight:
Understanding the Impact of Unconscious Bias and Microaggressions

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Agenda

• Introductions
• Understanding Perceptions
• Unconscious Bias
• Microaggressions
• Case Studies
• Impact
• Implications
• Reflection
Perceptions

- Our perceptions are shaped by:
  - Expectations
  - Experiences
  - Education

- Our perceptions shape our lens... the way in which we view or understand what is happening around us.
UNCONSCIOUS BIAS
Unconscious Bias

Natural preferences that are imprinted through experiences, patterns, and associations we have learned.

What are some of the associations you tend to make without much thought?
Ex:

    Summer
Implicit Association Test

- Research about the associations people make about identifying characteristics of a person, group, concepts, or “other-ness”

- PROJECTIMPLICIT.NET
Taking the IAT

• 5 – 7 rounds in the instrument

• Practice

Round 1: Male or Female

Round 2: Male/Career Female/Family

Round 3: Male/Family Female/Career
Have you heard these messages before?

• In some ways, men are just more competent than women

• It would be better if we were a colorblind society

• In the United States, if you work hard, you will succeed

• Poor people are lazy
Messages

• For each statement, you will need to place 4 separate colored dots.
• Place each dot along the continuum representing whether that message is either deeply rejected or deeply held for the following groups:
  - The people who raised you
  - Your K-12 school system
  - Mass Media
  - Colleagues
Reflection

- Do you notice any patterns in the way the dots are placed?
- Are any of the messages in conflict?
- How might different messages make it difficult to hear and understand the experiences of someone else?
MICROAGGRESSIONS
Definition:

- “subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are ‘put downs’”
  - Chester Pierce, 1978

- “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignity that, either intentionally or unintentionally, communicates hostile, negative, or derogatory slights or insults on the basis of color, gender, or sexual orientation”
  - Dr. Derald Wing Sue, 2007
Forms:

- **Microassault**
  - Explicit verbal or non-verbal action of name-calling, avoidant behavior or purposeful discriminatory action.

- **Microinsult**
  - Rudeness or insensitivity that demean a person’s identity

- **Microinvalidation**
  - Verbal or non-verbal communication that dismisses or excludes the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experienced reality of a person of color

(Sue, et. al, 2007)
The Little Things People Say
What are we Communicating?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“When I see you, I don’t see color.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If you work hard, you can succeed.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“American is a melting –pot”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Where are you from?”</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CASE STUDIES
Points for Consideration:

- Are there identifiable, troubling behaviors or dispositions represented?
- Are there specific instances of microaggressions occurring in the following scenarios?
- What, if any, assumptions are you operating under?
- Do the actions or inactions appear intentional or unintentional?
- Who has the responsibility to provide corrective learning opportunities?
- What can be done to reduce the miscommunication, misperception, or incivility displayed?
Case Study One

During a faculty meeting, a junior faculty member offers a suggestion for consideration by the body. Immediately following this suggestion, a senior faculty member offers an alternate option without acknowledging the previous suggestion. Discussion of the senior faculty member’s contribution ensues with no discussion occurring on the previous suggestion.

- Adapted from Diverse Issues in Higher Education
Case Study Two

At a departmental climate committee meeting, a question was raised by a new member of the committee, a young man attending the first meeting of the semester. He asked why so few faculty from the department participated, and a graduate student replied that the group was lucky to at least have one present. The new member questioned what was meant by “one,” and the graduate student gestured to the older male at the head of the table. The new committee member replied that he was also a faculty member in the department.
Case Study Three

A University-wide committee of senior college leadership is meeting for one of its regularly scheduled monthly meetings. As the group discusses plans for collaborative projects across several units, a woman on the committee is providing insight into her experiences with leading projects similar to the one being discussed. At the other end of the table, a male member of the group who has been trying to contribute to the discussion begins to wave his hand and whistle to get the attention of the committee and interrupts his colleague to begin making his point.
Case Study Four

The Unit Administrator has created and charged a steering committee to help with the development of the unit’s next strategic plan. The steering committee is comprised of senior leadership and members from various offices in the department/unit. At one of the first meetings, one of the senior administrators in the department comes in to the conference room a few minutes late and has a seat at the table. Discussion around the table continues; however, the person seated on the right of the latecomer keeps their chair turned and body leaned forward effectively blocking the presence and participation of this other committee member.
CLIMATE IMPACT
Impact

- Lead to patterns or feelings of being overlooked, under-respected, and devalued \((Sue & Constantine, 2007)\)

- Decreased performance and productivity \((Dietch, Barksy, Butz, Chan, Brief & Bradley, 2003; Sue & Constantine, 2007)\)

- Perpetuate bias, stereotypes, and privilege \((Leiva, 2012)\)

- Create hostile work and educational environments \((Sue & Constantine, 2007)\)
Reflections

• Pay attention
• Be cognizant of your own lens
• Be willing to listen
• Seek feedback when unsure or when necessary
• Demonstrate/model the behaviors expected from all community members
• Provide education and insight
It’s a fan!
It’s a wall!
It’s a rope!
It’s a tree!
It’s a snake!
It’s a spear!
References:


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