Taking Different Perspectives:
Addressing Microaggressions In the School Setting

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Overview

• Defining Microaggressions
  • student-student, teacher-student, student-teacher

• Student Experiences
  • Outcomes

• Responding to Microaggressions
  • Social Perspective-Taking Ability
    • Example Activities for children and early adolescents
  • Diversity Dialogues for older adolescents
Microaggressions (Sue & Sue, 2016)

- brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership

- generally happening below the level of awareness of well-intentioned members of the dominant culture

- different from overt, deliberate acts of bigotry [i.e. old fashioned racism]
3 Forms of Microaggressions

- **Microassault**: an explicit racial derogation; verbal/nonverbal; e.g. name-calling, avoidant behavior, purposeful discriminatory actions
  - Avoiding interactions with a Muslim student

- **Microinsult**: [intended or unintended] communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity; subtle snubs; unknown to the perpetrator; hidden insulting message to the recipient
  - Helping someone in a wheelchair without asking them if they would like help

- **Microinvalidation**: communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person belonging to a particular group
  - Not calling a transgender student by their preferred gender label
# Research on Student Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student demographic</th>
<th>Microaggressions</th>
<th>Inaccurate/Unintended Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-12 students of color in</td>
<td>Mispronounced or Anglicized names</td>
<td>“Cultural meanings and language is not important”</td>
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<tr>
<td>general (Kohli, &amp; Solórzano,</td>
<td>一向化了名字。不重要。</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2012)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Black (Allen, et al., 2010,</td>
<td>Mexican → Black - criticized for dress, dance; lower expectations for Black students academically, higher expectations for sports; called out more often for trivial acts; Assumed inferiority (in overall school and curriculum)</td>
<td>“You are inferior/a criminal”; “You are academically incapable”</td>
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<td>2013; Hensfield, 2011;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stambaugh. 2015)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino (Huynh, 2012;</td>
<td>Assumed immigrant status and “undeserving”; “Why are you so quiet? We want to know what you think.”</td>
<td>“You don’t belong”; “Cultural values are not important – “Be more like White students”</td>
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<td>Stambaugh et al., 2015)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian (Chin, 2015; Huynh, 2012)</td>
<td>“Where are you from?”</td>
<td>“You don’t belong”</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBTQ+ (McCabe, 2012; Nadak,</td>
<td>“That’s so gay!”; Referring to effeminate boys as “weird”</td>
<td>“You are unworthy”; “You are deviant/abnormal”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Low-income (Stambaugh et al.,</td>
<td>“They didn’t show up to the meeting. They just aren’t invested in their child’s education”</td>
<td>“Everyone has equal access/ They are lazy”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gifted (Stambaugh et al., 2015)</td>
<td>“That word is bigger than you are. Stop using big words. Are you trying to show off?”; “I can’t believe you don’t know that. I thought you were gifted”</td>
<td>“You are insensitive, arrogant, and pretentious”; “You are only as good as what you know”</td>
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Outcomes

• **Internalization of microaggressions**
  - Shame about name, self, and family (Kohli, & Solórzano, 2012)
  - Stereotype threat – affecting intellectual inferiority (Allen, 2013)
  - Shape negative self-concept and racial identity development (assumptions of criminality and deviance) (Allen, 2013)

• **Depression, somatic symptoms, and anxiety** (Huynh, 2012)

• **Trauma symptomology** (Harrell, 1999, 2003; Torres & Taknint, 2015)

• **Poor student-student and student-teacher relationships; Sense of belonging**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDd3bZA7450&t=3s
Responding to Microaggressions: Social Perspective Taking Ability (SPT)
(Gehlback, 2004)

- The ability to understand how a situation appears to another person and how that person is reacting cognitively and emotionally to the situation...the ability to put oneself in the place of others and recognize that other individuals may have points of view different from one’s own. (Johnson, 1975)
  - Motivation to choose to take the perspective of another
  - Accuracy of a perceiver’s inferences about another’s thoughts or feelings
    - Empathy – is about affective inferences

- Important for conflict resolution and mediation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 - 6</td>
<td>Undifferentiated</td>
<td>Recognizes that self and other have different thoughts and feelings, but confuse who’s is who’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 - 9</td>
<td>Social-informational</td>
<td>Recognizes different thoughts and feelings and attribute this difference to each person having access to different information</td>
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<td>7 - 12</td>
<td>Self-reflective</td>
<td>Can “step into another person’s shoes” and recognizes that others can do the same</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 - 15</td>
<td>Third-party</td>
<td>Can take a third person perspective, thus being able to view self and other from an outside view</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 - Adult</td>
<td>Societal</td>
<td>Recognizes that the third person perspective can be influenced by larger socio-cultural values</td>
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</table>
SPT example activity: Thought Bubbles
Confronting Microaggressions
(Clay, 2017)

- When the individual is the **TARGET**
  - Consider the context – Instead of accusing, explain how you feel; consider physical safety
  - Take care of yourself – Talk with someone who might understand; Find role models, books or other resources; healthy sleep and self-care
  - Be aware that not all prospects are opportunistic

- When the individual is the **Bystander**
  - Be an ally – Know that your voice can be heard more powerfully than those being directly affected
  - Speak for yourself – Don’t speak on behalf of the other person
    - Instead of saying “You offended her,” say “Here is why I am upset...”

- When the individual is the **Perpetrator**
  - Be open and receptive – know that it is not always easy to hear feedback. It’s normal to feel angry or fearful
  - Focus on the IMPACT, not the INTENT: Acknowledge the other persons hurt. Ask the target to help you understand. Apologize and reflect
  - Recognize that overtime micro-aggression do contribute to social/psychological/ emotional harm
Context of school
(Allen, 2013; Kohli, & Solórzano, 2012)

- Understand the historical context of -isms in school systems (e.g., NM has a history...Indian Schools and Hispanos punished for speaking Spanish in the school)

- Recognize Eurocentric bias in the classroom and campus wide

- Identify and expand your cultural limits/Commit to further understanding cultural differences so that cultural selves can be fostered

- Honor the power you carry to influence a students sense of self and worldview

- Consider:
  - Discipline (Zero-Tolerance) Policies
  - Academic Tracking Policies
  - Hegemonic Curriculum
    - Need for culturally specific and empowering curriculum; that which is appreciative, pays homage, and affirming
Diversity Dialogues

This is the good stuff.
Modes of Interpersonal Communication: Debate vs. Dialogue

**Debate**

- *debate*
  - **noun**
    - 1. a formal discussion on a particular topic in a public meeting or legislative assembly, in which opposing arguments are put forward.
      - **synonyms**: discussion, discourse, parley, dialogue.
  - **verb**
    - 1. argue about (a subject), especially in a formal manner.
      - **synonyms**: discuss, talk over, through, talk about, thrash out, hash out, argue, dispute.

*“De” + “Batre” = “down or completely” “beat”*

**Dialogue**

- *dialogue*
  - **noun**
    - 1. **conversation** between two or more people as a feature of a book, play, or movie.
      - **the book consisted of a series of dialogues**
      - **synonyms**: conversation, talk, discussion, interchange, discourse.
  - **verb**
    - NORTH AMERICAN
      - 1. **take part in a conversation or discussion to resolve a problem**
      - “he stated that he wasn’t going to **dialogue** with the guerrillas”

*“Dia” + “Logos” = “Through or across” “talk, speech, word, discourse or meaning”*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Debate</strong></th>
<th><strong>Dialogue</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oppositional – two sides</td>
<td>Collaboration – 2 or more sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oppose each other and</td>
<td>work together toward common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attempt to prove each</td>
<td>understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other wrong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal is to win</td>
<td>Goal is to find common ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening is to find flaws</td>
<td>Listening is to understand another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the opponent and to</td>
<td>view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>counter-argue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defends assumptions as</td>
<td>Reveal assumptions for re-evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the truth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes critique of the</td>
<td>Causes introspection of one’s own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other position</td>
<td>position</td>
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Debate

Defending one’s own position as the best solution and excludes other solutions

Creates a close-minded attitude, a determination to be right

Prompts a search for glaring differences

Involves a countering of the other position without focusing on feeling or relationship and often belittles or deprecates the other person

Dialogue

Opens the possibility of reaching a better solution than any of the original solutions

Creates an open-minded attitude, an openness to being wrong, and an openness to change

Prompts a search for basic agreements

Involves a real concern for the other person and does not seek to alienate or offend
How each may sound/look like in action…

Debate

• “Don’t you think it would be better if you…”

• Questioning – “Why?”

• Making a point

Dialogue

• “What I understand is that you…”

• Reflecting (see above or “Tell me more about that!”)

• Telling a story

TALK

LISTEN
LET’S DIALOGUE!
The Agreements of Dialogue

- Safe space
- Honest engagement
- Risk taking, inquiry, & exploration
- Open and nonjudgmental attitude
- Opportunity for learning
- Focus on personal experience
Opening: Name Game

- Name game
  - Partner up and take turns

- *Story Teller* - Share with your partner:
  - Your full name
  - Your nickname(s)
  - Share how you got your name(s) and any cultural significance

- *Listener/reflector* - Actively listen and reflect what you heard your partner say. Check with your partner if you understood them and if there is anything they would like to add

- Once all are done sharing you will introduce your partner to the group
Diversity Dialogues

- Dialogue Prompts

  - Share your *earliest memory regarding diversity*

  - Share a *positive experience you’ve had with diversity*

  - Share an *awkward experience with diversity*
Group Process Questions

• How did you define “diversity”?

• What was surprising in each story you heard?

• What did you learn about yourself?

• Sharing “awkward” experiences (the –isms and microaggressions)
Final Thoughts...
References


