

MICROAGGRESSIONS IN ACADEMIC SPACES

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TEACHER EDUCATION AND LEARNING
SCIENCES

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

Listen to learn

Listen harder when you disagree or don't understand

Respect confidentiality

Talk in your breakout groups about what is OK to share outside the group



WHAT ARE MICROAGGRESSIONS?

Microaggressions are subtle and often unintentional verbal or nonverbal slights that demean an individual based on their membership in a marginalized group.

“You speak English so well!”

“You must be good in math, can you help me with my assignment?” (to an Asian person)

“Why do Black people have to be so loud? Just calm down.”

“That’s so gay”

Assuming a student of color has cheated when they get a high score

A teacher calling on males students more than female students

Take a moment to think of a microaggression you experienced. How did you respond?

MICROAGGRESSIONS HURT

For college students in particular, microaggressions have been linked to anxiety, depression, binge drinking, and poor academic performance (Blume 1971; Brown et al. 2015; Ong et al. 2013; Solorzano et al. 2000; Torres et al. 2010; Wong et al. 2014)

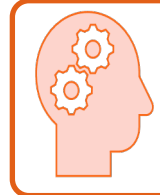
Their subtlety and ambiguity make it difficult to detect and respond to microaggressions and make it difficult for targets to receive support.



WHY CONFRONT IN THE MOMENT?

Research on discrimination in general and microaggressions in particular suggests that active coping strategies are associated with greater well-being later on (Dickter 2012; Grier-Reed 2010; Miller and Major 2000; Solorzano et al. 2000; Torres et al. 2010).

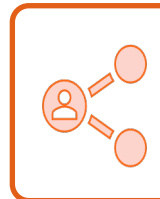
Confronting may not always be the best strategy.



It can reduce aggressor's bias (Czopp et al. 2012, 2006; Czopp and Monteith 2003; Gervais et al. 2010)



You may feel less guilty and are less likely to ruminate (Dickter 2012; Dickter and Newton 2013; Sechrist and Swim 2008; Shelton et al. 2006)



It sets a norm for others (Blanchard et al. 1994; Monteith et al. 1996)

SOME TYPES OF CONFRONTATION ARE MORE EFFECTIVE

Hostile confrontations generate more backlash and make the confronter seem more unlikeable (Czopp et al. 2006; Hyers 2010; (Saunders and Senn 2009)

Messages focused on fairness are associated with less prejudiced behavior later (Czopp et al. 2006)

Responses that are active, polite, and positive seem to be most effective for reducing **prejudice** for the aggressor and reducing **backlash** against the confronter (Hillard 2011; Nadal 2013; Plous 2000; Sue 2003, 2010; Swim and Thomas 2006)



THINGS TO CONSIDER

Your goal

- What do you want to accomplish?

Your role

- What is your relationship to the aggressor and bystanders?

HOW TO RESPOND

Appeal to values

- “You’re too smart to believe that!”

Express your feelings

- “That hurts my feelings.”

Get them to explain

- “What did you mean by that?”

Empathize with the underlying feeling

- “I know it’s hard to find a job after college, [but affirmative action isn’t the problem.]”

Give information

- “Actually, most people on welfare are White.”

Use humor

- “Are you Donald Trump now?”

Involve others

- “Did you hear that?”

Non-verbal response

- Roll your eyes

HOW THEY MIGHT REACT

Denial

Dismissal/minimization

Attack

Claim it was a joke

Try to explain your misinterpretation

Guilt

Freeze

Get others to agree with them

Apologize/try to make up for it

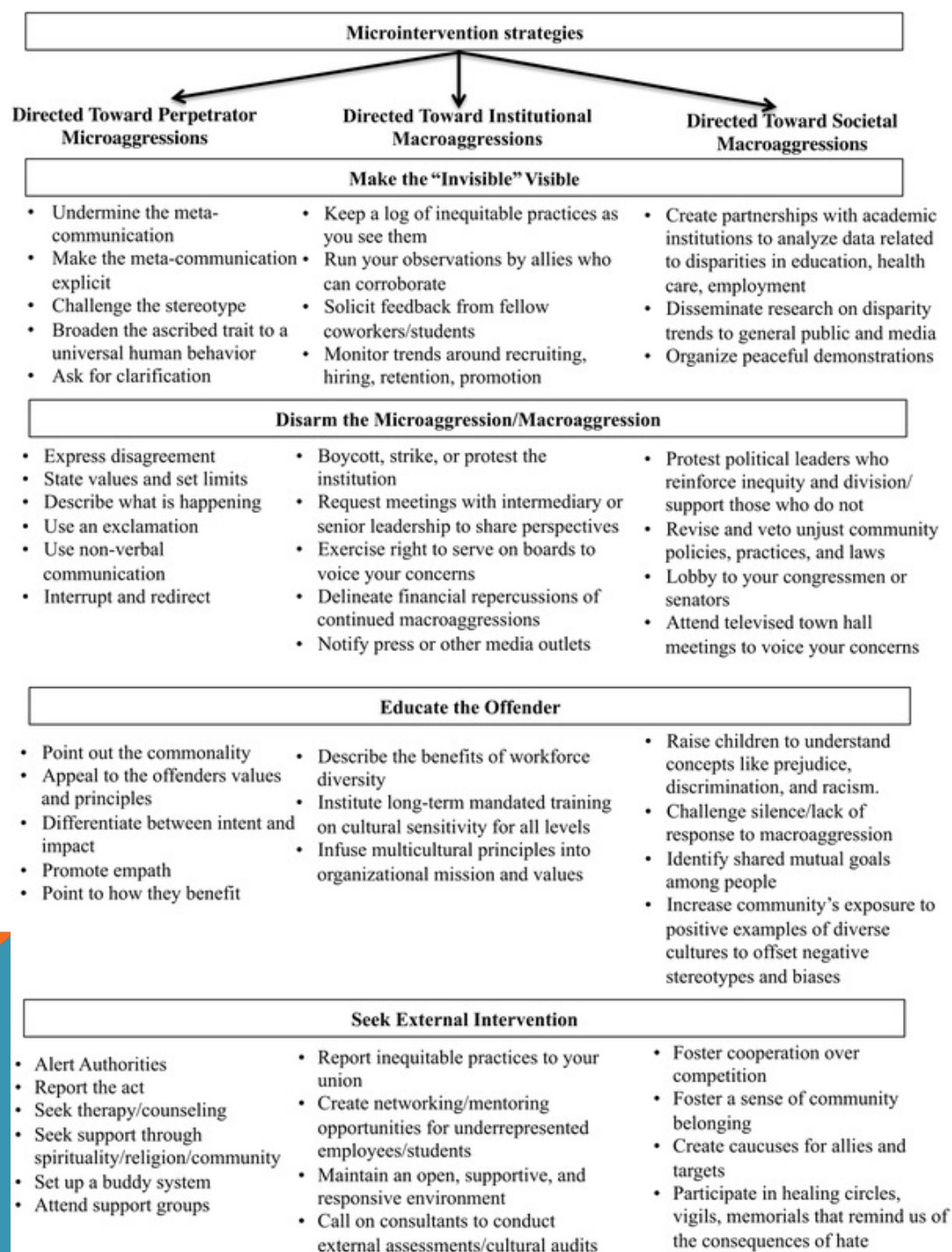
BREAKOUT ROOMS

If you feel comfortable, share your experience with a microaggression. If you confronted, which response did you use and did you feel it was effective?

Brainstorm alternative responses with your group. If you wish, practice saying them out loud.

Discuss what types of responses are most useful in different circumstances.





SUPPORT THE DEI TASK FORCE

Sense of Belonging Survey – open through Feb 23rd

Task Force Information: <https://ced.ncsu.edu/advancing-dei/>



RESOURCES

Byrd, C.M. (2018). Microaggressions Self-Defense: A Role-Playing Workshop for Responding to Microaggressions. *Social Sciences*, 7, 9. ([full text](#))

Sue, D. W., Alsaidi, S., Awad, M. N., Glaeser, E., Calle, C. Z., & Mendez, N. (2019). Disarming racial microaggressions: Microintervention strategies for targets, White allies, and bystanders. *American Psychologist*, 74(1), 128-142.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000296>